

EDITORIAL

ADULT EDUCATION POLICIES IN THE STATES OF THE TERRITORY OF FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

Between the Legacy of State Socialism and European and Global Pressures

After the disintegration of former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, its political and economic development has often been the subject of scrutiny by historians, but the same cannot be said of the field of education. With the exception of some recent research (e.g. Protner and Vidmar, 2016; Protner and Vujisić-Živković, 2015), no great attention has been paid to the systematic study of the area of education, educational system and comprehensive comparative analysis of the newly emerged countries. This is also true of the field of adult education: studies taking a comprehensive and comparative approach to the subsequent development of adult education in the newly emerged ex-Yugoslav countries – the territory where andragogy was in fact conceptualised as a relatively independent branch of science in terms of university study and which boasted well-developed adult education practices with state supported infrastructure (Krajnc, 2011; Savićević, 1999) – have been few and far between (e.g. Klipa, 2011; Koulaouzides and Popović, 2017).

On the other hand, the European and wider international community has seen a growing interest in recent years in studying the systems of education and adult education in former communist and socialist authoritarian regimes in Central and Eastern Europe,¹ Africa (e.g. Ethiopia, Tanzania, Zimbabwe), the former Soviet Union (e.g. Russia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan) and Latin America. The focus has primarily been on the reforms and transformations of educational systems in these countries which were brought about by deep social change – the transition to a market economy and parliamentary democracy, i.e. the transition from socialism (communism) to (neoliberal) capitalism – in the early 1990s (after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989), complemented by renewed attention to some ideas

¹ These are the Baltic countries, the Visegrád Group, and Eastern and Western Balkan countries, with important differences in terms of their geopolitical and historical circumstances, culture and transition to market economy and parliamentary democracy. What gave rise to the similarities was the single-party political system and the communist doctrine as the dominant ideology (Halász, 2015).

that were never realised (e.g. of a social system with more justice and equality) and could today serve a vital role as a utopian and inspiring force against the growing inequality in the capitalist societies of the 21st century (Griffiths and Millei, 2013; Silova, Sobe, Korzh and Kovalchuk, 2017).

The communist and socialist systems of educations were the target of much criticism, for instance that education was a conduit for indoctrination, that the principal educational goal was the formation of a socialist personality, that education was used as a means of directly transforming the society (in line with the communist ideology) and modernising (industrialising) the economy (to serve the workers and new political elites) (Halász, 2015, p. 351). Conversely, some researchers today believe in going beyond the image of former socialist and communist countries as reactionary and dark spaces. As the socialist system of education indoctrinated learners in communism and its specific social roles, so does capitalism enforce its neoliberal ideology and the stratification of learners for specific social roles. What is more, the same utilitarian approach to education that was the target of reproach in socialist and communist systems of education was used after the regime change by many foreign donor organisations to promote the transition to market economy. It is also thought that (post)socialist contexts can teach us many lessons, such as focusing on learning and educating for the humanity, not only learning and educating for economy (Aydarova, Millei, Piattoeva and Silova, 2016), and seeing education as a basic human right that should be freely available (at no cost) to all people.

Halász (2015) finds that after the collapse of these authoritarian regimes, education policy in the newly emerged democratic countries mainly addressed goals related to state formation, strengthening political democracy, depoliticisation of the educational system, decentralising governance, alternative teaching models etc., as well as to modernising vocational and technical education in order to facilitate structural adjustments in transitioning from planned to market economy. In the field of higher education, the newly elected democratic structures mainly worked towards liberalising higher education institutions. Restoring university autonomy was seen as a key factor in justifying the reforms whose motto was “catching up with Europe”. As a consequence, this gave rise to two trends: the privatisation of higher education institutions and mass enrolment into tertiary studies (Dakowska and Harmsen, 2015). The field of adult education, a flagship sector in former socialist and communist countries, now saw the concept of lifelong learning, believed to be a means of raising the competitiveness of the economy and boosting human capital, transforming in a significant way the humanist and emancipatory orientation in 21st century adult education (Mohorčič Špolar, Holford and Milana, 2014). A crucial role in these efforts to introduce reforms at all levels of education was played by international organisations (such as OECD, World Bank, EU, ETF) whose educational agenda was backed both ideologically and financially, as well as the national governments in some Western countries which acted through bilateral assistance programmes and various private development agencies, charities and non-profits (Dakowska and Harmsen, 2015; Halász, 2015; Mohorčič Špolar et al., 2014).

When doing adult education research in the countries in the territory of ex-Yugoslavia, it should be remembered that this country was not a part of the so-called “Eastern Bloc” and in fact differed from it in important ways. Yugoslavia was not very centralised as a country but instead was decentralised and organised as a federation (of six republics and two autonomous regions) with a system of workers’ self-management. This meant that while the Central Committee of the Communist Party was behind all the important decisions in the country, the different parts of the federation implemented them in different ways. In a country with important differences in the level of economic development and with a variety of linguistic, cultural and religious traditions, the field of education was dealt with separately by each of the six republics, which also meant that the various territories differed in terms of how developed the field of education was. Differently from other socialist states, those under the influence of the Soviet Union, the 1960s in Yugoslavia saw a “liberal wave” in political and public life. But when the centralising forces wished to “harmonise” subjects such as mother tongue and literature, history and others throughout the whole of this multiethnic, multilingual and multicultural federation by launching the vocation-oriented education reform (with a negative impact on adult education as well) as an ideological reaction to socially critical and opposition movements in the 1970s (i.e. “a socially unacceptable phenomenon”) and the increasingly difficult economic conditions (i.e. “the non-alignment of the needs of the economy and the system of education”), this resulted in a wave of resistance which among other things revived the civil society and the process of gradual democratisation. At least in the case of Slovenia, this, along with other factors, led to independence in the early 1990s. This suggests that education was at the forefront of the transition and modernisation project in the early 1990s (Zgaga, 2016; Zgaga and Miklavčič, 2011).

The principal purpose of this thematic issue is to study the effects of this transition and transformation – i.e. the transition from a single-party political system and its dominant communist ideology to a liberal democratic system based on capitalist ideology – on the field of adult education in former socialist states over 25 years after this social and political transition took place, and we invited a number of contributions across all republics of former Yugoslavia (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia). We asked them to consider the following four sets of questions: (a) What was the socialist approach to designing adult education/andragogy, what role did it have in the socialist society of former Yugoslav republics, and has the Yugoslav conceptualisation of andragogy in any way influenced the field of adult education beyond ex-Yugoslavia?; (b) where the current policy and practice of adult education is situated with respect to the socialist past and neoliberal present of former Yugoslav republics?; (c) what were (or are, in the case of candidate countries) the demands in the process of entering the EU to adjust to “the European standards” in the field of adult education and lifelong learning, what are the effects of internationalisation and standardisation of adult education policies in former Yugoslav republics, and how do these countries cope with the growing commercialisation and commodification of adult education policies and practices?; (d) in what ways is their socialist past a positive or

a negative reference in the process of forming new democratic and emancipatory adult education policies and practices in former Yugoslav republics?

Our call resulted in contributions from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia, but there has unfortunately been no input from Macedonia and Montenegro, despite several inquiries.

This thematic issue begins with a contribution by Kristinka Ovesni which studies the professionalisation of adult education in newly emerged countries in the territory of former Yugoslavia, a highly topical issue both in the wider international research community in the field of adult education as well as in the policies of international organisations active in the field (such as the EU and UNESCO). When analysing the professionalisation of the field of adult education, the author brings forth an analytical model which makes it possible to distinguish three different dimensions of studying the profession of adult educator/andragogue: a sociological dimension which focuses on the cognitive component of the profession, i.e. the significance of formal professional training of experts in adult education; a philosophical and ethical dimension which puts emphasis on the creation of a professional code of ethics; as well as an andragogical dimension which stresses the importance of reflection in the process of professionalisation in adult education. The author finds that a number of different authors in socialist Yugoslavia set out a very progressive conceptual framework for the development of professionalisation in the adult education field, as they understood professionalisation as a dynamic continuum of factors related to knowledge and context which makes possible professional training of andragogues based on andragogy with domain-appropriate, research-based knowhow. Current scholars in the territory of ex-Yugoslavia likewise point out the need of andragogues and adult educators for professional training based on scientific knowledge acquired within the framework of disciplinary university studies. The results of the author's historical and comparative analysis of newly-emerged countries in the territory of former Yugoslavia suggest there has been important but as yet insufficient progress in the process of professionalising the field of adult education. An important achievement has been attained with the professional training of andragogues and adult educators at universities, including the possibilities of continuing professional education; on the other hand, progress in the area of establishing professional associations and developing a professional code of ethics is as yet deemed modest and (too) slow.

Amina Isanović Hadžiomerović's paper studies the development of adult education in Bosnia and Herzegovina going from the country's socialist past to its modern efforts to become a member of the EU. Given the scarcity of systematic data about the historical development of adult education, the author supports her research with critical discourse analysis of the pivotal issues in adult education in studying both the country's socialist past and democratic present. In her analysis of the socialist era, Isanović Hadžiomerović points out (i) that it was precisely adult (mass) education that was the primary goal of the first socialist period in Bosnia and Herzegovina but with a utilitarian outlook and an ideological purpose (adult education was to form the new man and establish the new socialist

society); (ii) in the second socialist period (the 1970s), andragogy was established as a university subject but Bosnian scholarly activities in adult education did not see any great theoretical and methodological success in former Yugoslavia. The analysis of the socialist past in adult education thus shows it to be oscillating between romanticising and denigrating its achievements. After the breakup of Yugoslavia and the four years of war that followed in Bosnia and Herzegovina, adult education in the first democratic period mostly had to do with humanitarian (charity) work and therapy, while adult education in the second democratic period (after 2000) is mainly linked to global and European trends where adult education is seen as part of the processes of modernisation and Europeanisation (and where the socialist past of adult education is understood to be a burden to be discharged). It is in this period that an important role in conceptualising adult education is played by international organisations and their agenda of learning society, lifelong learning and knowledge-based economy, as well as by neighbouring countries, resulting in an increasing number of private adult education providers and an ever greater variety of education on offer. In this context adult education is positioned primarily as a “miracle cure” to “treat” social dysfunctions (unemployment and social insecurity) in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In his article, Tihomir Žiljak looks at the processes of Europeanisation in adult education in Croatia. He analyses the three cycles of adult education policy development by studying the policy goals, instruments and actors in the period between 1990 and 2018. The first cycle, from 1990 to 2000, is characterised by changes marking a political, ideological and institutional break with the past socialist system of education. Spanning the breakup of Yugoslavia, the formation of the newly independent state of Croatia and the military conflict that only ends in 1995, the process of education policy transition is set within the framework of Europeanisation and modernisation but also the strengthening of national values with a clear wish to sever all ties with the former socialist system. In this period adult education is marginalised: the crucial local adult education institutes known as *pučka sveučilišta* are seen as redundant remnants of the socialist system, the adult education journal established in 1969 – known first as *Andragogija* and then as *Thélème* – is discontinued in 1995, the Andragogical Institute and Open University are abolished, public adult education institutions are going private. The second cycle, from 2000 onwards, is marked by the process of Europeanisation in national education policy as part of Croatian accession negotiations to enter the EU. The process of Europeanisation includes the implementation of European structural suggestions and paradigms “top down” and a horizontal transfer of ideas from other European countries to Croatia. What comes to the fore is ideas from the Lisbon Strategy, primarily those of knowledge society and lifelong learning needed to promote the employment of workers and the competitiveness of the economy, and only to a lesser extent to promote social cohesion. Adult education university departments are marginalised and the only adult education journal in this period (*Andragoški glasnik*) is published by the Croatian Andragogical Society, but andragogy ceases to be controversial as a term (differently from the first cycle). It is in this period that various adult education professional organisations are formed and there is a growing

network of (private) institutional providers. Foreign (external) experts play an important role in changing education policy. The third and last cycle begins with Croatia's accession to the EU in 2013. In this period European funding is a key instrument supporting change in education but adult education is not seen as an important political priority. The focus is on the qualifications framework, learning outcomes and skills; the qualifications framework is a key reform tool also in the area of adult education.

The current state in the field of adult education in Slovenia is described by Zoran Jelenc and Ana Krajnc. Zoran Jelenc's contribution focuses on the systemic organisation of adult education and pursues two core hypotheses: that adult education in Slovenia has never been organised in a systematic way, despite its relatively successful practical development; and that after the disintegration of Yugoslavia the state of adult education in Slovenia differs significantly from the situation in other countries in the territory of former Yugoslavia due to the fact that after the independence the Slovenian government implemented a number of developmental measures in education. The author bases his findings on a historical analysis of the development of adult education in Slovenia across several time periods. He finds that the need for a systematic approach to andragogical practice and theory first arose in the time of former Yugoslavia, where the adult education system resulted from the interaction of state and political power as a response to the need to educate workers and the whole population (with a dominance of technical and vocational education as well as "socio-political" education, i.e. educating active citizens in a socialist society). Jelenc thus labels the period between 1952 and 1960 as the era when adult education in Slovenia more or less blossomed and was becoming systemically established in a relatively adequate manner. He further finds that the 1970s saw the formation of a good system of technical and vocational adult education developed by *delavske univerze* (workers' universities, a type of adult education institute) with the help of the Association of Worker Universities. In 1972 the first classes in General Andragogy began at the University of Ljubljana (Faculty of Arts, Department of Educational Sciences), and the Slovenian Adult Education Association was created in 1968. Despite these positive factors that encourage the systemic organisation and practice in adult education in Slovenia, Jelenc identifies the vocation-oriented education reform as the breaking point with a negative impact on further systemic organisation of adult education that marginalised the field of adult education within the system. The reform was a setback both in terms of systemic organisation of adult education and in terms of practice: adult education was forced into formal education, which brought about a significant decrease in adult participation in educational programmes, specialised services and adult education centres were abolished, the special law on adult education was repealed, special adult education programmes were being dissolved, there was a significant decrease in public funding for adult education. The period following the proclamation of independence gave a new impetus to the development of adult education throughout the 1990s as the state introduced an array of systemic measures – funding, establishing an adult education sector as part of the ministry in charge, passing a law on adult education, the national programme, the Council of Experts of the Republic of Slovenia for Adult Education, the study programme

in adult education – to promote the development of adult education, in conjunction with other supporting activities: development and research projects, continuous education programmes for adult educators, new (private) organisations and associations for adult education, a scholarly and professional journal (*Studies in Adult Education and Learning*), as well as mapping out a strategy for lifelong learning. Nevertheless the author concludes that contemporary Slovenia has not superseded the systemic organisation of adult education in the 1970s as the strategy and the principle of lifelong learning have not been implemented in practice, which means that adult education remains neglected in all areas of systemic organisation.

Ana Krajnc, a pioneer in adult education as a scientific discipline and university study in Slovenia, analyses the emergence of adult education, the development of adult education studies and the education and training of adult educators both when Slovenia was still part of former Yugoslavia and after the independence. Her analysis is based on accessible historical sources and the biographical method. The author finds that adult education in former Yugoslavia was primarily directed by practical needs; that adult education studies and the education and training of adult educators in Slovenia were formed based on those same needs as lack of generalisation and research into the basic principles and characteristics of these phenomena would have caused practical work to peter out as well; and that at the time of ex-Yugoslavia the development of adult education was strongly influenced not only by local idiosyncrasies in Slovenia but also by the most recent foreign findings about adult education, certain institutional models (the establishment of workers' and people's universities following the Danish model of folk high schools) and visible actors (university professors) in the global field of adult education. Due to the phenotypic character of adult education, the author believes that under the influence of globalisation adult education will adapt to the new social conditions required in today's world.

This thematic issue is a first step towards a more systematic study of adult education and andragogy in former Yugoslav states. Given the fact that some issues have not been dealt with yet and not all republics of ex-Yugoslavia are included in the contributions, further research into adult education policies and practices in the newly emerged countries in the territory of ex-Yugoslavia should benefit from support in the form of joint project collaboration among these countries and the organisation of conferences which would enable a more systematic and comparative approach to studying both past and contemporary factors working together to shape the science as well as the policy and practice of adult education in this part of the world.

The issue also contains two papers on other topics, two book reviews and some responses. The first contribution entitled "An International Comparison of Factors that Affect Early School Leaving" by Danijela Makovec looks at the factors that influence early school leaving and measures used to prevent it. The second paper on "Non-verbal Communication in Adult Education through the Roles of Lecturer and Listener" by Marija Paladin assesses the significance of non-verbal communication in adult education and finds that it can have a considerable impact on education outcomes. These are followed by two book

reviews: by Maja Mezgec on *Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in Southeastern Europe* with its insight into the current policies and practices in adult education and lifelong learning in Southeastern Europe (including some states of former Yugoslavia), and by Nives Ličen on the *Handbook of Lifelong Learning for Sustainable Development*, which deals with the role and significance of lifelong learning for sustainable development, a highly topical subject in the field of adult education. Responses marking Professor Ana Krajnc's jubilee bring the issue to a close. Congratulations and best wishes!

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