

ANDRAGOGY IN EUROPE: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

In recent years adult education in Europe has celebrated a number of significant anniversaries. German *Volkshochschulen* celebrated their centennial in 2019. Since their inclusion in the 1919 Weimar Constitution, *Volkshochschulen* have played a very important role in the sub-system of adult education in the German education system. DVV International was established in Germany in 1969 and celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 2019 (Hinzzen & Meilhammer, 2022). In Great Britain the same year marked the centennial of the final report of the Adult Education Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction of 1919 and on the occasion a new vision and guidelines were published for adult education and lifelong learning in the 21st century (Centenary Commission on Adult Education, 2019; Field, 2019). Also in 2019, within the framework of the ESREA 9th Triennial European Research Conference, colleagues from Serbia celebrated 40 years of the Chair for Andragogy and Study Group for Andragogy at the Faculty of Arts, University of Belgrade (ESREA 9th Triennial European Research Conference, 2019). Three leading European adult education journals also recently reached important milestones: the *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults* celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2019 (Fejes et al., 2019), *Studies in the Education of Adults* its fiftieth anniversary in 2020 (Zukas & Crowther, 2020) and the *International Journal of Lifelong Education* its fortieth anniversary in 2021 (Holford et al., 2021). And finally, in 2022 the ESREA 10th Triennial European Research Conference in Milan commemorated the thirtieth anniversary of ESREA, which was established in 1991 (Formenti et al., 2023).

This year also marks an important anniversary in Slovenian adult education, namely fifty years since lectures in *andragogy* began at what is now the Department of Educational Sciences at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana. These were the beginnings of andragogy as an independent scientific discipline and of higher education for adult educators (andragogues) in Slovenia. Credit for these key initial steps goes to Ana Kranjc, who began her lectures in andragogy in 1973, established andragogy as one of the three study tracks of the pedagogy study programme in 1976, and finally launched andragogy as an independent higher education study programme at the Faculty of Arts in 1992 (Govekar-Okoliš & Ličen 2008; Krajnc, 2018). A second cycle two-year master's studies programme in andragogy was established in 2010 as part of the Bologna reform in higher education and (with some minor modifications) is still offered by the Faculty of Arts today.

The term "andragogy" (*Andragogik*) was first used in 1833 by the German professor Alexander Kapp to mean the formation of character and self-knowledge. It encompassed

both general and vocational education. Nearly a century later, the term was revived in the 1920s by the German researcher Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy, to whom it signified a philosophy different from humanistic liberal adult education or vocational education, which enabled people to connect to their human and spiritual nature in the service of social development, and is based on the interaction of knowledge and experience. The latter calls for a new manner of teaching and aims to address social issues and bringing about a better society. Franz Pöggeler, a German professor, published the book *Einführung in die Andragogik* in 1957 and was the first to try to establish a scientific basis of andragogy (he defined the goals, motives, contents, methods, and institutions of adult education). Pöggeler advocated for an andragogy encompassing the teaching of all the systematic forms of adult education and learning. In the mid-1950s and first half of the 1960s, the term andragogy was adopted in Germany, Austria, Poland, the Netherlands and Yugoslavia; it established itself as the term for the academic teaching of adult education and its social context (Kranjc, 1989; Loeng, 2017, 2018; Reischmann, 2005; St. Clair & Käßlinger, 2021).

The term made its way from Europe to the USA (through Eduard Lindeman). It is Malcolm Knowles who contributed most to popularising andragogy. Characterising it as an art and a science of helping adults learn, he developed five basic assumptions about adult learners on which he based his model for planning, implementing, and evaluating adult education programmes. The model is founded on two basic attributes: autonomous and self-directed adult learners and an adult educator as a facilitator of learning. Knowles's conception of andragogy made it possible for a large number of adult educators to identify with it; however, his model was also criticised both in the USA and in Europe (see Merriam et al., 2007; Reischmann, 2005; Roessger et al., 2022).

In Slovenia and other countries in Continental Europe the term “andragogy” is not connected to a specific (Knowles) model of adult education, but with the development of academic and professional institutions, publications and study programmes in the field of adult education (Krajnc, 1989; Reischmann, 2005; Savičević, 1999). However, this definition and understanding of andragogy did not uniformly catch on across Europe. According to Fejes and Nicoll (2013), in the first decade of the 21st century this concept of andragogy is in use in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Poland, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, the Baltic states, and to a certain extent in Germany. It is predominantly terms such as *adult education*, *continuing education* or *adult learning* that are in use in Europe today (Fejes & Nicoll, 2013), which means that the understanding of andragogy as an independent scientific discipline or as a sub-discipline of educational sciences (or pedagogy) has not become established. The three terms instead centre on an understanding of adult education as an area of research, which is part of the social sciences and humanities.

Rubenson (2010) points out that adult education emerged as an area of research in the late 1920s and has since gone through three phases of development. The first phase was in response to the beginnings of the professionalisation of adult education. In the second

phase, which dates back to 1964, the research area began to develop in direct response to the needs of adult education as a field of practice; the number of university study programmes in adult education/andragogy also substantially increased in this period, particularly in Europe and North America, as well as in South America, Africa and Asia (the second half of the 20th century was also the most fruitful period of andragogy's development as a relatively independent scientific discipline; see Hake, 1992; Loeng, 2018; Note et al., 2020). In the third phase of development from the second half of the 1990s onwards, the increase of specialised university departments and programmes in adult education/andragogy, at least in Europe and North America, has not continued, and a new trend emerged: study programmes in adult education have either been combined into bigger departments with other fields of study, and in certain cases departments of adult education/andragogy have even been shut down. An increasing fragmentation of the field has been characteristic of this period (see also Rubenson & Elfert, 2015).

Adult education as a scientific discipline is now in its third developmental phase. Peter Jarvis and Agnieszka Bron (Bron & Jarvis, 2008) come from different traditions (see Biesta, 2015; Hake, 1992; Wyse, 2020): Jarvis from the Anglo-Saxon tradition that regards education as a field or object of research undertaken by various academic disciplines (psychology, sociology, philosophy of education) and coming from this tradition bets on "adult education" as a field of research, and Bron from the continental (eastern) European tradition that developed under the influence of German-speaking countries, which established education as an independent academic discipline (pedagogy, Ger. *Pädagogik*) and based on this tradition bets on "andragogy" as a scientific discipline (developed either as part (sub-discipline) of pedagogy or as an independent scientific discipline (Loeng, 2018, p. 6)). These two authors together conclude that adult education is a young scientific discipline that some call "adult education" and others call "andragogy" (Bron & Jarvis, 2008; cf. Popović & Reischmann, 2017). It is most commonly considered a sub-discipline of the educational sciences (pedagogy). It looks at adult education and learning both in formal and non-formal education (i.e. in organised forms of education) and learning in an informal context (in everyday life, at work, in families, civil society, and leisure activities), which represent its specific research field. It studies the educational and learning opportunities and conditions of adults, formation (*Bildung*) and socialisation, as well as their development, as the process of learning, which is lifelong, enables adults to continue developing, changing their lives and influencing each other. It has developed its own terminology and concepts, including specific conceptions of learning, lifelong learning, self-directed learning, continuing education, etc.

The research community (e.g., Egetenmeyer et al., 2019; Jarvis & Chadwick, 1991; Nuissl & Lattke, 2008) and international organisations active in adult education (e.g., Council of the European Union, 2011; DVV International, 2013) stress the importance of a well-educated workforce in the field of adult education. However, the scope of professionals working in this field is wide and diverse because adult education is connected to the socio-economic, cultural, and political traditions of each country and the low levels of regulation in adult

education systems (Jütte et al., 2011). Furthermore, in Europe adult educators face fragmented options both in terms of their initial education and continuing training, as well as precarious employment status. Many adult educators receive no formal preparation in teaching, counselling, programme development, etc. before they enter the profession (Andersson et al., 2013). Researchers are of the opinion that a university-level education (study programmes in adult education/andragogy) ensure that adult educators have the knowledge and competences which play a key role in developing professionalism in this field (e.g., Beszédes, 2022; Egetenmeyer & Kapplinger, 2011; Mikulec, 2019; Gravani et al., 2020).

As the concept of andragogy is not univocal and is understood in different ways in countries across Europe, and continues to be used in certain geographical areas but not in others (see Beszédes, 2022; Loeng, 2018; Savičević, 1999), the thematic issue in front of you today addresses the development of andragogy through time in various places across Europe. Authors have been asked to examine the following topics:

- The historical, theoretical and/or comparative perspectives in conceptualising andragogy in Europe.
- The influence of university studies in andragogy/adult education on “academic professionalisation”, i.e. the professionalisation of the profession of adult educators/andragogues and their professional development.
- The development of study programmes in andragogy/adult education at various (Eastern and Central) European universities.
- The influence of andragogy as a scientific discipline on the development of the professional identity of professors, students, and graduates in the field of adult education.
- The working fields and competences of andragogy/adult education graduates in European countries.
- The influence adult education as a field of practice has had on shaping andragogy as a scientific discipline in European countries from the 1950s onwards.
- Andragogy in contemporary European society, its goals and future challenges.

With fifteen accepted contributions, the response to our call for papers for this issue exceeded our expectations and the editorial team has decided to publish the thematic contributions in two issues. This issue contains articles on conceptual questions concerning andragogy, the development and status of andragogy in some European countries (the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Estonia), and the development of professionalism in andragogy and/or adult education. The first issue of 2024 will feature contributions on these questions in countries of the former Yugoslavia (see Mikulec & Kump, 2018): Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, and Serbia. All of the thematic contributions from the first issue of 2024 are already accessible on the journal’s website in the Online First section.

This issue of *Studies in Adult Education and Learning* consists of eight thematic articles.

The first two articles deal with the theoretical and comparative perspectives in conceptualising andragogy. *Towards the Essence of Andragogy – A Hermeneutical Reading of Grundtvig, Knowles, Lindeman and Savičević* by Anita Malinen and Arja Piirainen seeks out the

essence of andragogy based on a hermeneutical interpretation of four classic theorists representative of different andragogical approaches (Grundtvig, Knowles, Lindeman and Savićević). Based on the results, Malinen and Piirainen formulate three interwoven principles, which represent the essence of andragogy: life experience, mutual interaction, and “power with”. In the second article, *Pedagogy and Andragogy in Comparison: Conceptions and Perspectives*, Svein Loang discusses different approaches to comparing pedagogy and andragogy based on the ideas of well-known authors in adult education. He finds that a reliable comparison is only possible if both terms are elucidated and made clear; furthermore, he shows that progressive pedagogy has also significantly influenced the conceptualisation of andragogy.

The next two articles explore the historical development and contemporary status of andragogy in the Czech Republic and Slovakia respectively. Martin Kopecký and Michal Šerák use the historical method in *The Constitution of Andragogy in the Czech Context* to study the development of andragogy from the 1950s until today. They show how andragogy formed as an independent scientific discipline which endeavours to help adult individuals develop and improve through (but not exclusively) learning and education. Kopecký and Šerák point out that in recent years, Czech andragogy has lost some of its former ambitions, as the term has become a synonym for everything that the internationally established expression “adult education and learning” stands for. Meanwhile, Július Matulčík’s *Development and Current Status of Andragogy in Slovakia* focuses on the formation and development of andragogy in Slovakia by using historical analysis and by interpreting the scientific work of the foremost representatives of Slovak andragogy. Matulčík shows how from the 1990s onwards, the formation process of andragogy was based both on the tradition of adult education in Slovakia and on the works of foreign representatives of andragogy. He also focuses specifically on the system of andragogy, which comprises of the basic, the applied, and the border branches (e.g. andragogical psychology) of andragogy.

The final four articles address the development of professionalism in andragogy and/or adult education. In their article *Past and Present Developments in the Professionalisation of Adult Learning and Education in Hungary* Viktória Beszédés and Éva Farkas use the relevant literature and content analysis of primary sources to analyse the characteristics of adult education as a profession in Hungary, particularly focusing on university-level education for adult education professionals. The study shows that the legitimacy of adult education and andragogy in Hungary is today unfortunately uncertain, which is mirrored in the context of the social prestige of adult education, its regulatory environment and the professionalisation of adult education professionals, which have gone through a number of structural changes in the last seventy years. Larissa Jõgi’s *The Journey From Past to Present: From Academic Studies to Learning Experiences and Professional Identity in Estonia* deals with the development of andragogy as an academic discipline and of andragogical programmes at Tallinn University. Jõgi provides an overview of adult education in Estonia and discusses previous research studies on the learning experiences and professional identity of andragogy students and graduates. She has found that the academic

study programme in andragogy and the acquired learning experiences enable students to construct a strong learner identity which influences their professional identity as well. *Students' Reasons for Participating in International Teaching and Learning Settings in Adult Education Degree Programmes* by Monika Staab and Regina Egetenmeyer examines why adult education/andragogy students decide to participate in international exchange programmes. They interviewed the graduates in three master's programmes at universities in Würzburg, Belgrade, and Florence, and found that the reasons include academic, vocational, personal, social, and linguistic aspects, as well as external circumstances. The final article in this issue is *The Professional Status of Adult Educators: A Case Study From Cyprus in the Era of Pandemic*, in which Andri Piliri and Maria N. Gravani use qualitative methodology to study how adult education professionals employed in adult education institutions on Cyprus experience their professional status and what obstacles, particularly in the context of COVID-19, they face on their path to professionalisation. The study identifies a series of obstacles faced by adult educators in Cyprus and suggests improvements for their professional status that are based on the idea of humanisation, a multi-layered process that requires the participation of both the state and the adult educators.

*Borut Mikulec and Monika Govekar Okoliš,
Editors of Thematic Issue*

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