Chapter 12
Teaching Methods and Professional Teaching in Adult Education: Questioning the Memorandum's Understanding of Professional Teaching

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Introduction

In its *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* (Commission of the European Communities 2000), the European Commission presented a strategy for lifelong learning at the beginning of the twenty-first century, which heavily focuses on the individual learner and on methods of self-directed learning. This focus coincides with the lifelong learning strategies of other international organisations such as the OECD and UNESCO. It sees learning as an activity that ultimately remains the responsibility of individual learners:

> In practice, the achievements of these [education and training, RE & PB] systems are dependent … not least upon the efforts of individuals themselves, who, in the last instance, are responsible for pursuing their own learning. (ibid., p. 5)

It sees "individual motivation to learning and a variety of learning opportunities" (ibid., p. 8) as "ultimate keys to implementing lifelong learning successfully" (ibid., p. 5).

The *Memorandum* seems to consider the role of teachers and trainers as marginal. They appear within "Key Message 3: Innovation in teaching and learning" with the objective to "develop effective teaching and learning methods and contexts for the continuum of lifelong and lifewide learning" (ibid., p. 13). The *Memorandum* emphasises self-directed learning and a new role for learning professionals:

> Teaching as a professional role faces decisive change in the coming decades: teachers and trainers become guides, mentors and mediators. Their role – and it is a crucially important

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one – is to help and support learners who, as far as possible, take charge of their own learning. The capacity and the confidence to develop and practise open and participatory teaching and learning methods should therefore become an essential professional skill for educators and trainers, in both formal and non-formal settings. (ibid., p. 14)

This demand goes hand in hand with the requirement for innovative teaching and learning methods. Therefore, the *Memorandum* sees high potential in ICT-based learning technologies. To bring these new teaching and learning methods into practice, the *Memorandum* requests teachers and trainers "to adapt, upgrade and sustain" (ibid., p. 14) their skills. This is requested from all education and training practitioners:

… whether as paid professionals, as volunteers or as those for whom teaching activities are a secondary or ancillary function (for example, experienced skilled tradespeople in the workplace or community development workers). (ibid., p. 14)

Under the perspective of professional teaching, the main focus of the *Memorandum* is on skills to develop and practise innovative teaching and learning methods. This paper questions the close link between teaching and learning methods on the one hand and professional teaching on the other. Thereby the paper focuses on teachers and trainers in adult education: under the perspective of professionalisation, the paper questions the role of teaching and learning methods within the professionalisation of teachers and trainers in adult education. Subsequently, the complexity of learning processes is scrutinised under the perspective of teaching and learning research. Under the perspective of evaluation studies, the paper also highlights empirical findings that deal with the effects of innovative teaching. These perspectives end in the conclusion, which summarises the position of teaching and learning methods within professional teaching in adult education.

Perspectives of Professionalisation of Adult Teachers and Trainers

In the transnational European context, one can find diverse competence models for adult learning professionals. Especially within European projects, diverse European experts and stakeholders have developed competence models aimed, for example, at the validation and/or development of competences of teachers and trainers in adult education.

The projects "Learning 4 Sharing" (Carlsen and Irons 2003) and "A good adult educator in Europe (AGADE)" (Jääger et al. 2006) identify 4 roles and 16 criteria, which teachers and trainers in adult education should fulfil. As roles for teachers and trainers in adult education, the projects formulate "teacher", "guide", "facilitator" and "trainer". The listed 16 criteria are grouped into two areas: (1) personal development, which is understood as the ethical dimension, and (2) professional development, which is subdivided into the three dimensions of (a) knowledge, (b) skills and (c) organisation. These three dimensions are attributed to the organisational stage, the performance stage and the evaluation stage of learning processes. In this model, "knowledge of methods in adult education (AE) and learning" (ibid., p. 18) could be found as one criterion within the organisational

stage of learning processes: "knowledge and ability to choose different ways of teaching and learning according to the content of learning and participants' interests, abilities and experiences". However, you can also find indirect hints towards teaching and learning methods within the performance stage: the "ability to motivate for learning", the "development of learning environment" and "skills to activate learners" also require expertise in using teaching and learning methods. In this model, teaching and learning methods are integrated into a complex competence setting of teachers and trainers in adult education.

The project "Learning 4 Sharing" refers to necessary variations in the use of teaching and learning methods as well as its manipulative potential:

> There is no one and only "salvation method" or "best for everything" method. The key word we should bear in mind is – variation! The more methods you master, the more you are able to vary. … In some way all of the methods are about manipulation. However, some of them are more manipulative than others. The adult educator has to be sure to have his/her "ethical compass" turned on. (Carlsen and Irons 2003)

The transnational project "VINEPAC" (Sava et al. 2008) developed a validation instrument for teachers and trainers in adult and continuing education. This model distinguishes between five competence clusters. It contains teaching and learning methods within the competence "training programme delivery" in the competence cluster "training management". Within this competence, the validation instrument considers the "… use suitable teaching strategies" as a performance criterion. Within the entire concept of the validation instrument, using teaching and learning methods seems to be only one small competence within a complex cluster of competences. The instrument includes a knowledge base focused on adult learners and group dynamics. It demands competences concerning needs analysis, the preparation of training programmes, training programme delivery and the use of technology and resources. Furthermore, the model validates competences concerning the assessment and validation of learning, motivation and counselling, as well as personal and professional development.

The study "Key competences for adult learning professionals" (Research voor Beleid 2010) was carried out on behalf of the European Commission. The study developed a competence model for adult educators. The basis of the model was the analysis of academic and policy-related documents, job descriptions, job advertisements, competence profiles and the learning outcomes of educational programmes. These were accompanied by several expert workshops. As a result, the model formulates seven generic and 12 specific competences. While the seven generic competences should be fulfilled by all professionals working in adult education, the 12 specific competences focus on requirements that an adult education organisation should fulfil. Teaching and learning methods can be found within the generic competences as "didactical competences", which should be fulfilled by all professionals "involved in the learning process or supportive in a managerial, administrative way" (ibid., p. 11). This competence focuses on:

> Making use of different learning methods, styles and techniques including new media and awareness of new possibilities, including e-skills and ability to assess them critically: being able to deploy different learning methods, styles and techniques in working with adults. (ibid., p. 50)

Compared to the other models, this model has the greatest tendency to see teaching and learning methods as a technique that should only be used within learning settings.

In contrast to these competence models, you can find, especially in the German context, an approach that is strongly influenced by a professionalisation discussion in an educational context. Based on this background, professionalism of adult educators is seen as a hermeneutic issue (cf. Egetenmeyer and Schüßler 2012). Based on the assumption of a "technology deficit"[1] of educational action, learning professionals are requested to challenge dubiety (Luhmann and Schorr 1982). Due to the complexity of education and learning processes, professionals cannot act according to a recipe or behaviour guidelines. There are no linear solutions for educational demands. Rather, educational situations have to be interpreted by teachers and trainers. Hereby, the ability to approach cases hermeneutically is the basic requirement for professional action.

Professionalism of adult educators consequently means "the ability to use broad, scientifically based and diverse abstract knowledge which is adequate in concrete situations. Or contrariwise: to acknowledge in just these situations which parts of the knowledge could be relevant"[2] (Tietgens 1988, p. 38). Gieseke (2010, p. 386) defines professionalism as "differentiated handling of research results of the discipline, together with interdisciplinary knowledge for the interpretation of an actor's situation in a specific practical field".[3]

But there is another dimension within educational action, which has to be handled by professionals in adult education: contradictions and antinomies (von Hippel 2011; von Hippel and Schmidt-Lauff 2012). Teachers and trainers in adult education have to deal with situations that are characterised by unsolvable contradictions on the level of knowledge, action and relationship. Therefore, the interpretation of these situations can be understood as a core competence. Professional action is thereby only possible on the basis of these interpretations.

From the perspective of professionalisation in adult education, the adaptation of innovative teaching and learning methods is missing. Besides, the reflection of the role of teachers and trainers in adult education, which is also mentioned in the *Memorandum* as a complex understanding of the competences, is missing. Furthermore, the *Memorandum* seems to have a technical understanding of the adaptation of teaching and learning methods. From the background of the characteristic of educational settings, this understanding ignores the complex needs of educational settings.

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[1] Translated by the authors. Original in German, "Technologiedefizit".

[2] Translation from Egetenmeyer and Käpplinger (2011). Original in German, "Professionalität heißt, auf die Kurzformel gebracht, die Fähigkeit nutzen zu können, breit gelagerte, wissenschaftlich vertiefte und damit vielfältig abstrahierte Kenntnisse in konkreten Situationen angemessen anwenden zu können" (Tietgens 1988, p. 38).

[3] Translation from Egetenmeyer and Käpplinger (2011). Original in German, "sondern den differenzierten Umgang mit Forschungsbefunden aus der Disziplin und mit interdisziplinärem Wissen zur Deutung von Handlungssituationen mit Handlungsanspruch in einem bestimmten Praxisfeld" (Gieseke 2010, p. 386).

Perspectives of Teaching and Learning Research

If we take a closer and more sophisticated look at the aspects of successful teaching, we find a variety of factors. In the field of adult education, the range of tasks is quite widespread. Applying innovative teaching methods is only one aspect of professional teaching and training. Also important for a sustainable learning success is the quality of the relationship between teachers and learners (Wolf 2006) as well as the influences of the learning community (Mandl et al. 2004), the correct fit of the learning environment and the learners (Reinmann and Mandl 2006) and the teacher's ability to consider various aspects linked to learning processes (Kraft 2006; Illeris 2006).

By defining all personal relationships as depending on a specific history of interaction, Wolf (2006) states that these relationships always touch the present, the future and the past. The author concludes that it is a crucial aspect in the educational context of professional teaching to remember the history of interaction in order to build a fruitful relationship between teachers and learners. In this perspective, professional teaching increasingly depends on the teacher's ability to adapt his or her methods to the individual learning biography and learning experience. Consequently, social bonding is the main factor affecting all future learning experiences. It is the key to enduring educational productivity.

A similar statement is made by Mandl et al. (2004). The authors conclude that learning always takes place in a community. This implies certain cultural and social variables that influence the way we learn. Here, expertise is distributed in a specific way among the different persons to whom learners are connected. These communities can vary according to structural indicators (aims, microculture, interaction, organisational growth, life span and life cycles) and forms (learning communities, communities of practice, online communities and communities that enable continuing further education). If we follow the authors and assume that communities have a great influence on the learning process, we should question whether and in which way innovative teaching methods have an impact on the learning process.

Kraft (2006) takes a closer look at the meaning of learning in adult education and finds that a broader understanding of the concept, including "personal and social conditions of teaching and learning" (p. 212), has to be considered. In particular, self-directed learning demands a lot more than just the application of innovative teaching methods. Teachers and trainers are asked to support learners and keep in mind that they are dealing with different and individual ways of learning. A stable base of knowledge about adult learning and the ability to transfer this knowledge into practice seem to be more important than simply testing new didactical methods (cf. ibid.).

Reinmann and Mandl (2006) come to the conclusion that adapting teaching methods to the learners is the most promising way for a functioning learning environment. This adaptation can be realised in different manners, for example, by varying chronological interspaces, the way of adaptation or the purpose of adaptation. Such a procedure is supposed to enhance the learning output.

If we change our perspective from teaching to learning and consider theories related to the constructivist paradigm, some of these theories point towards a more or less humble influence of teachers on their learners. A constructivist view on learning considers the acquisition of knowledge to be an individual and internal process (cf. Pätzold 2011). It could thus be questioned how much those aspects that ostensibly do not deal with concrete teaching and learning situations (e.g. setting the right framework of the learning environment or the organisation and preparation of courses) gain a greater role in the learning process. These factors appear increasingly important in a constructivist view of learning. Looking at the *Memorandum*'s recommendations, innovative teaching has to consider this in order to be effective. In conclusion, the teacher's ability of context-based abstraction and reflection is considered to be an essential aspect for a fertile learning environment (cf. Faulstich 2003). These basic skills are a necessary foundation to foster teaching that adequately enhances individual learning processes.

In conclusion, innovation as a key to successful learning should not only be thought of in terms of teaching methods. Instead, a broader understanding of innovation implying different aspects of learning appears to be helpful. Facing the lack of empirical research in the field of innovative teaching, Mandl et al. (2004) propose design-based research or use inspired research studies. These approaches appear to give further insight into "how, when and why innovation in education can also in practice show positive effects" (ibid., p. 74). In researching learning with consideration to the close connection between theory and practice, the complexity of the phenomenon can be handled appropriately and innovative teaching is constantly evaluated and improved.

By defining three dimensions of learning, Illeris (2006) offers another perspective on the complexity of the phenomenon. Besides the interaction between individuals and their environment, learning occurs between the poles of recognition and emotion. In this framework, the dimensions recognition, emotion and environment are included in every kind of learning. Illeris, quite similarly to the community aspect mentioned by Mandl et al. (2004), adds that his model of a learning triangle is always embedded within a certain society. Here the question can be raised as to how innovative teaching can influence the different dimensions. It appears, for example, that emotional aspects of learning are most likely to defy direct methodological control.

The findings of teaching and learning research thus show the multiplicity of aspects linked to the success of learning. Regarding the professionalisation of adult teachers and trainers, they also show that it seems to be necessary to further discuss the idea of what the application of innovative methods can – and especially cannot – achieve.

Perspectives of Evaluation Studies

Further insight into the connection of innovative teaching methods and professional teaching can be found by taking a look at evaluation studies. Kehoe et al. (2004) found that it is not necessarily an improvement for learners if they have the choice

between alternative types of courses. Even if some of the students in this study seem to benefit from new forms of teaching and assessment, the authors point out that innovative teaching can lead to inferior learning results in other cases. Especially when the didactical design involves ICT, it is important to keep in mind the individual premises of the learners and their ability to engage in self-directed learning.

Further research indicates that, for example, the target group of elderly people can be put off by the implementation of ICT in the learning context – even if they are generally interested in learning with new media (cf. Gehrke 2008). As a result, they withdraw from learning. In order to prevent such a distortion, a fundamental role is seen in the preparation of courses, especially regarding the analysis of the target group. This should also be considered when new media are going to be implemented in learning contexts (cf. Weidenmann 2006). Professional adult educators need to critically analyse the application of ICT in order to avoid an inconsiderate following of trends. Particularly when it comes to the implementation of ICT, it is a challenge for every professional to keep the diversity of the target group in mind to really benefit from the potential.

In the course itself, empathy of teachers has proved to be a promising basis for adapting teaching methods to the skills of their learners (cf. Tippelt and Schmidt 2009). For example, elderly learners can then integrate their own expertise and life experience into the course. On the one hand, this serves as a valuable source for a whole course; on the other, the learners gain confidence and feel esteemed.

Rindermann (2003) analyses a variety of national and international evaluation studies in the context of higher education and refers to the question of which traits characterise good lecturers and good lectures. He points out that structuring and clarification are the main factors to be considered. In his multidimensional model of successful learning, Rindermann underlines the multitude of influences. Referring to higher education, the author states that "the quality of teaching in higher education exceeds the quality of courses. It covers content aspects as well as target, process and framework requirements …"[4] (ibid., p. 237). In this respect, "good teaching is not only achievable by particular didactically successful courses. Moreover, it has to be integrated into an appropriate subject-related environment, a university and adjuvant framework"[5] (ibid., p. 237).

Evaluation research thus confirms that successful learning depends on a multitude of impact factors. Innovative teaching can therefore be regarded as one aspect among many that can influence our learning in a positive way. It is essential to remember that it takes more than developing and applying new methods to obtain a sustainable basis for successful learning. Innovation is only useful when

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[4] Translated by the authors. Original in German, "Die Qualität der Lehre an Hochschulen geht über die der Veranstaltungen hin- aus. Sie umfasst inhaltliche sowie formale Ziel-, Prozess- und Bedingungsgrößen …" (Rindermann 2003, p. 237).

[5] Translated by the authors. Original in German, "Gute Lehre ist nicht nur durch einzelne didaktisch erfolgreiche Lehrveranstaltungen erreichbar, sondern muss in ein entsprechendes Umfeld eines Faches, einer Universität und förderlicher gesellschaftlicher Rahmenbedingungen eingebettet sein" (Rindermann 2003, p. 237).

there is a clear improvement – in this case for the learners in adult education and training – and it takes a further deepening of the professionalisation debate as well as more empirical research on the subject to get a more profound picture of the ways innovative teaching and learning success are connected. The argumentation of the *Memorandum* falls short in suggesting a clear link between these statements.

Conclusion

From the perspective of professionalisation, the application of methods for teaching and learning only serves as one of many competences. A complex cluster of competences is necessary to provide professional teaching for adults. Research shows that innovative teaching methods are less relevant than the appropriate adaptation of methods. Teaching methods cannot be applied in a universal way; they have to be adjusted to the target group, the topic, the framework and the situation to promote success in the learning process.

The adoption of ICT-based teaching methods requires particular attention. There are target groups that can be put off by such a learning scenario. This causes learning barriers that prevent an enhancement of learning.

Finally, the term "effectiveness" of methods does not seem to be the appropriate choice in the context of innovative methods and professional teaching. Rather, "adequacy" appears to be a helpful concept. Teaching and learning situations cannot be planned in a technological manner but require individual adjustment to the particular situation. Thus, teaching and training methods can be seen as one condition among others that have to be considered.

We therefore see a need for the further development of the issue of the *Memorandum*'s understanding of professional teaching. It needs to go beyond teaching methods and the role of professionals in teaching and learning scenarios. Adult education plays a central role in the realisation of lifelong learning in Europe. As adult education has various target groups, a fixed set of teaching methods is neither appropriate nor sufficient. To cope with the demands in adult education, this paper shows that a complex competence set is necessary for professional teaching.

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