



## UNIVERSITY OF BELGRADE FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY

*ESREA 9th Triennial European Research Conference*

### **Adult education research and practice between the welfare state and neoliberalism**

*Hosted by the Department of Andragogy, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade,  
Serbia*

September 19-22, 2019

#### **Conference theme**

The past two decades have been marked by fundamental changes in economy, politics and ideology, reshaping significantly the concepts and practice of adult education. Technological changes, especially the increased use of information and communication technology (ICT), and marketisation and changing employment relations have increased the need for adult education and boosted certain branches and organizational forms of education and training. At the same time, many social goods have been transformed into service commodities, with an increasing tendency of state withdrawal from social services, including education, whose delivery is increasingly left to the regulation of the free market. The end of the welfare state marked the beginning of the new role of adult education, and new kind of challenges. The same tendencies shaped research and the academia, both in terms of methodology and topics, influencing the realm of scientific research on adult education.

The conference aims to explore what happens with adult education during this shift, how the post-modern world, marked by the neoliberal economies, the growing power of ICT and the privatisation of services, is influencing concepts, practices and research of adult education in its various fields (for example general, vocational, further, community and higher education of adults, literacy, education of specific target groups etc.). We invite researchers employing theoretical, empirical, historical, comparative and other approaches which explore these questions and topics to join us in Belgrade.

**Event website:** <http://www.aes.rs/esrea2019/>

#### **Organizers**

- *ESREA – European Society for Research on the Education of Adults*
- *Department of Andragogy, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, Serbia*
- *Adult Education Society, Serbia*

### ***Keynote speakers***

- **Catherine Odora Hoppers**, South African Research Chair in Development Education, University of South Africa
- **António Sampaio da Nóvoa**, Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences of the University of Lisbon
- **Steffi Robak**, Institut für Berufspädagogik und Erwachsenenbildung, Hannover

### ***Call for papers***

This conference explores the topic “Adult education research and practice between the welfare state and neoliberalism” is an opportunity to gather researchers and scholars – from all adult education disciplines and sectors, from academia, policy and practice – in order to discuss how the tectonic shifts in economic, political and social models shape adult education and the main challenges they raise, considering the multiple crises – especially the crisis of the welfare state – that affect modern times.

During the last century of its history, adult education has undergone serious shifts, mostly in terms of its societal and economic role, function and value, its focus and how the ‘responsibility’ for adult education is shared amongst various social actors, and its relationship with dominant ideologies. After being associated with social movements for a long time, adult education ‘boomed’ in the seventies and eighties, experiencing slow transformation and its main paradigm became lifelong learning. This shift was also made from an emphasis on human rights and social justice issues to concerns with professional development, employment and coping with new technologies.

The economic and political framework has also experienced a shift. The ‘Keynesian approach’, which was dominant until the 1970s, understood public education as a precondition of a strong, functioning state and stable international systems, and was the economic theory that, to a large extent, underpinned the European understanding of the welfare state, and which led to the intensive development of adult education in many countries. From 1990 on, the ‘Washington consensus’, labeled a neoliberal manifesto, changed the focus to the notion of human capital which understands education primarily in relation to its role in promoting economic growth. Not only did the marketisation and privatisation of education become mainstream, moreover, adult education was understood as the service offered to the customers, and the role of the state was to facilitate this process of liberalization.

Under the circumstances shaped by both Keynesian and Washington-consensus, a variety of hybrid social practices have been developed and various combinations and alternatives have been found (more or less neo-liberal, with varying notions of role of the state, with dominant or limited commercial values etc.) creating a broad range of adult education forms and mixed approaches to theory and practice of adult education.

In that context, considerations of two major discursive points of orientation in recent social history – the welfare state and neoliberalism – and their various alternatives and derived approaches, and how they impacted adult education, could be explored from multiple points of view: the philosophical approaches they imply; the economic principles and practices they promote; the policy and political environment they create etc. The conference invites to discuss the different meanings of these and related concepts, their various usage and understandings.

These developments have been followed closely by ESREA researchers, who have examined various aspects of these changes. Recent ESREA network conferences have focused on many aspects of this big social, economic and political shifts:

- The network 'Active Democratic Citizenship and Adult Learning' – explored how adult education can support the struggle for democracy in precarious times;
- The network 'Education and Learning of Older Adults' analysed well-being in the world today and how education and learning can help older people to achieve it, and also how older people can find a 'voice' and take an action through learning for creativity;
- The network 'History of Adult Education and Training in Europe' took us back to the roots and the influential figures of 19th and 20th Centuries - initiators, leaders or inspiring examples in European adult education;
- The network 'Interrogating Transformative Processes in Learning and Education' was also dealing with the contemporary dilemmas around the meanings, theories and practices that are involved in the facilitation of transformative processes;
- The network 'Migration, Transnationalism and Racisms' prioritised one of the burning issues of the modern world - anti-racist adult education, and how to build solidarity;
- The network 'Between Local and Global: Adult Learning and Global Communities' examined national tensions and transnational challenges in a world on the move; and also critically examined bridges and gaps in global policy of Education 2030 and its impact on local communities;
- The network 'Life History and Biography' concentrated on personal aspects and how modern togetherness could cause discontent, and looked into the world we live in and how it benefits from the discourses we live by;
- The network 'Access, Learning Careers and Identities' enquired into learning contexts and its implications for access, learning careers and identities;
- The network 'Adult Educators, Trainers and their Professional Development' considered if the social change is still part of the mission of adult educators and their learning journey;
- The network 'Gender and Adult Learning' explored various issues related to gender – from history, philosophy, methodology and practice, related to the topics of diversity and intersectionality;
- The network 'Policy Studies in Adult Education' dealt with the urgent problems of the adult education policy – its sustainability, as well as equity and social justice.

All these considerations will flow into the analysis of the post-modern world, characterized by continuous changes of economic and social factors, sped up by information and communication technologies, and have had a significant influence on why and how adult people learn. Further, the question of responsibilities and priorities in adult education, the power of single actors/institutions and their hidden agendas should be examined. Serious questions need to be asked about changes in modern education structures and institutions, that once provided the stable foundations for well-ordered modern societies, and the far-reaching consequences this has had for individuals and communities. Beside the analysis of the development of these processes, the issue is also to determine what are the consequences for adult education, when conceived as a social movement, based on solidarity and common values? Is the disintegration of social structures and social services traditionally provided by the state, together with the disappearance of the network of social bonds 'killing' adult education as a source of transformative power in communities and societies? Is there space for adult education in

national and global policies, in international cooperation and aid, in local and community programmes?

With the disappearance of the welfare state, provision of adult education tends to be marked by consumerism with decreasing role of the state and increased regulation through the free market. The organizers of this conference would like to invite you to explore the consequences of these developments for adult education. Are there adult education sectors that benefit from such global economic and technological changes? What happens to specific and delimited areas of adult education (such as literacy or community education)? How far is research in adult education affected by these developments? Are vocational education and training of adults, career development and employment orientated adult education, cognitivist approaches to the learning of adults, distance and online learning benefiting from such developments? What are the risks inherent to these mutations? From a theoretical perspective, what may be the conceptual attempts to ground and shape new models of holistic, inter-sectorial approaches?

An important question in the “context of disappearing context” as the consequence of globalisation of information and communication technologies is: can it be seen as a significant opportunity for adult education to be more inclusive, to reach-out more diverse groups, or to become more efficient? Or are there new pitfalls linked to the shift of responsibility for education to the individuals and the reduction of public investments in education?

Lifelong learning as the dominant paradigm and the main framework for adult education was seen as a contribution of the humanistic, learner-centered approach. Did it turn to the opposite – a mean to turn individuals into selfish, competitive users of adult education as a commodity? Was adult education defeated by the entrepreneurial character of lifelong learning? ESREA networks have been exploring this paradigm shift. Since this tendency continues, and adult education is disappearing from the policy agendas, national and global financial schemes and moving away from the visions of the purpose of adult education offered by founding figures in adult education research, it is of the utmost importance to explore the causes, mechanisms and the consequences for further adult education conceptualisation and to offer research views and arguments about lifelong learning instead of policy ones. The consequences for the professionalisation, demarcation of the boundaries of the field and changes in academic profile should be explored too.

Many of the recent ESREA conferences focused on the the existence of multiple crises (e.g., political, economic, social, cultural) as an important feature that characterizes the last decades, providing significant findings and arguments on single aspects of the crises. The persistence of the issue, especially in the increasingly neoliberal context, requires further exploration: What are the factors that can turn crises into opportunities for adult education? How have different sectors reacted and what are the consequences for various target groups (women, minorities, migrants, older people, etc.), for providers, policy makers and researchers? We are facing potentially disruptive changes and witnessing that hegemonic discourses are bringing us away from the essence of adult education, so there is a need to reflect it and to explore possible ways out of the crisis, or at least to open some hope of discussing findings that help build alternatives.

Papers and contributions exploring various aspects of these multifold issues and connections between modern economy, ideology and politics, on one hand, and adult education as an opportunity for changes and a transformative force, on the other hand, are welcome.

ESREA Triennial conferences aim to create space for the critical examination of the crucial problems of our times, and ‘transitional times’ seems to become permanent, generating incessant changes creating more risks than opportunities. Therefore ESREA seems to be a kind of

research bulwark, or flagship, that is inclusive of various approaches and also seeks to re-equilibrate what is happening in the field nowadays.

The conference topic speaks especially to the colleagues from Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. The adult education tradition has deep roots in the region, and some adult educators have played an important role internationally as the carriers and promoter of the renowned conception of Andragogy, were part of this historical shift in ideologies, paradigms and values, and witnessed their influence on adult education research, theories and practice. Moreover, these countries were/are exposed, especially after the fall of communism (and its specific 'understanding' of the welfare state), to the political and economic wave of neoliberalism, that wiped out many of the adult education structures and practices. Neoliberalism was offered and often imposed as the most rapid mean of transformation of the economic system, leading to commercialization and privatization. The conference invites to reflect these processes, and to look the way of balancing: positive adult education traditions with the challenges of modern technological and economic development; adult education as the tool for economic growth, employment as well as for democracy, human rights and social inclusion. The whole range of issues related to the 'transition', modernisation and European integration in and through adult education, experiences of colonisation and liberation, modern post-colonial education policy transfer etc. need careful attention in the East and South-East European context.

Contributions from colleagues outside of Europe are also very welcome.

The conference will include keynote speeches, plenary sessions and presentations and discussions in groups, as well as through various workshops, exhibitions and exchanges.

Participants at the ESREA conference are invited by the host, Faculty of Philosophy, to take part in the festivities celebrating 40-years anniversary of the Chair for Andragogy and Study Group for Andragogy, which will take place during the conference, culminating on Saturday late afternoon in the 'festive Akademie' to be held at the Faculty and the conference dinner on Saturday evening.



#### ***Scientific Committee***

- **Katarina Popović**, University of Belgrade, Serbia
- **Fergal Finnegan**, Maynooth University, Ireland
- **Laura Formenti**, University of Milano Bicocca, Italy
- **Miomir Despotović**, University of Belgrade, Serbia
- **Aleksandra Pejatović**, University of Belgrade, Serbia
- **Sabine Schmidt-Lauff**, Technische Universität Chemnitz, Germany
- **Balasz Nemeth**, University of Pecs, Hungary
- **Andreas Fejes**, Linköping University, Sweden
- **Bernd Käßlinger**, Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen, Germany
- **Barbara Merrill**, University of Warwick, UK
- **Georgios K. Zarifis**, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece

- **Simona Sava**, University of Timisoara, Romania
- **Maria Gravani**, University of Cyprus, Cyprus
- **Michel Alhadeff-Jones**, Columbia University, NYC
- **Emilio Lucio-Villegas Ramos**, University of Seville, Spain
- **Cristina Vieira**, University of Coimbra, Portugal
- **Jyri Manninen**, University of Eastern Finland, Finland
- **Marcela Millana**, University of Verona, Italy
- **Adrianna Nizińska**, University of Gothenburg, Sweden

### **Conference timeline**

21<sup>st</sup> January 2019 – Conference Registration begins

25<sup>th</sup> February 2019 – Deadline for submission of abstracts

1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 – Acceptance of abstracts will be confirmed

23<sup>rd</sup> April 2019 – Deadline for early bird registration (after this date the higher fee will apply)

18<sup>th</sup> June 2019 – Final deadline for registration and payment of the conference fee

20 July 2019 – Deadline for the submission of the final papers

### **Fees, bursaries and prizes**

Non-members: Early Birds € 200, later € 250;

Members: Early birds: € 150, later € 230;

Phd students: Early Bird € 70, later € 100.

As a way to support graduate student's participation in the conference, there will be several bursaries available in the form of free accommodation during the entire conference. To be able to apply, one needs to be a graduate student (e.g. doctoral student, Masters student); a member of ESREA (either individual or covered by an institutional membership) and have had a paper accepted for the main conference.

There will be a PhD prize for the best PhD student paper.

### **Conference venue**

**Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade** is the oldest and most prominent institution of higher education in Serbia and among the oldest in the South-Eastern Europe – it has been established 1808 in Belgrade. *Department of Pedagogy and Andragogy* has its roots in the first systematic lectures about popular education and learning at the Faculty of Philosophy in 1934/35 and 1935/36.

The Chair for Pedagogy as an independent part of the Faculty of Philosophy was established in 1950 and later became the Department of Pedagogy in 1962.

In 1961/62 Andragogy (adult education) was introduced for the first time into curriculum of Group of Pedagogy. There were some common courses (2 years), obligatory for all students of Pedagogy, and after that one of three majors could be chosen ('Theory of Adult Education with Methodologies of Adult Education' was one of them).



In 1979 the Study Group for Andragogy was established as the separate entity within the Department of Pedagogy and Andragogy.

At present, the Faculty of Philosophy teaching staff employs approximately 255 professors who work with 6000 students at all academic levels (Bachelor, Master and doctoral programs) for nine different renowned departments. The Study Group for Andragogy employs 18 professors and assistants. Most of them are engaged as researchers in the projects of the Institute for Pedagogy and Andragogy at the same Faculty.

Today, the Faculty of Philosophy is not only a place where lectures and science projects are being conducted; today, the Faculty of Philosophy is a place where students gather, a place of debate and sporting events, a place of book launches and conferences, a place of for the exchange luminous ideas, a place of civil courage where students and civic protests for freedom and democracy have occurred.

The Faculty is located in the very heart of Belgrade, in the pedestrian zone, 18-20 Čika Ljubina Street, Belgrade, 11000.



**Belgrade, the capital of Serbia** (Beograd - White City”) is one of the oldest cities in Europe and the only one built at the confluence of the Danube and Sava rivers.

Belgrade is a modern European city with a population of about 1.7 million people. It is an administrative, political and cultural center of the country, but since it has been inhabited from ancient times, you can find archaeological sites and traces of the long history in the city.

Belgrade is known as “the city that never sleeps” – famous for its vibrant nightlife and the vast variety of options it offers for having fun – floating clubs on the rivers and Skadarlija (the bohemian area) and plenty of good food everywhere.

The city is growing, and when it has crossed the river Sava, it became “new”. New Belgrade (Novi Beograd) and this is the center of business in Serbia. The headquarters of numerous international companies can be found there, but also major shopping malls and the Belgrade Arena – the largest event hall in the Balkans – that has already hosted some world famous events like the Eurovision song contest, Summer Universiade, and the Davis Cup finals.

In Belgrade you can also find one quite special monument – “The house of flowers” (Kuća cveća). It is the burial place of Josip Broz Tito, the former president of Yugoslavia and a person that has marked the second half of the twentieth century in this part of the world.

The most frequently visited place in Belgrade by is the Kalemegdan fortress, built on the confluence of two rivers, where the remains of the old fortress and city are located within the huge green area almost in the city center.

Belgrade is well-connected – many international airlines have regular flights from/to many world destinations from the “Nikola Tesla” airport.