Julius-Maximilians-
UNIVERSITÄT
WÜRZBURG

AEACADEMY-GUIDE

Adult Education Academy

for master‘s students, doctoral students and practitioners

International and comparative studies in adult education and lifelong learning



01 - 12 February 2027

in Würzburg/Bavaria, Germany

+ Preparatory Phase Nov. 2026 - Jan. 2027

#AEAcademyWue

In cooperation with

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Bayero University Kano - Nigeria

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Structure of the Adult Education Academy

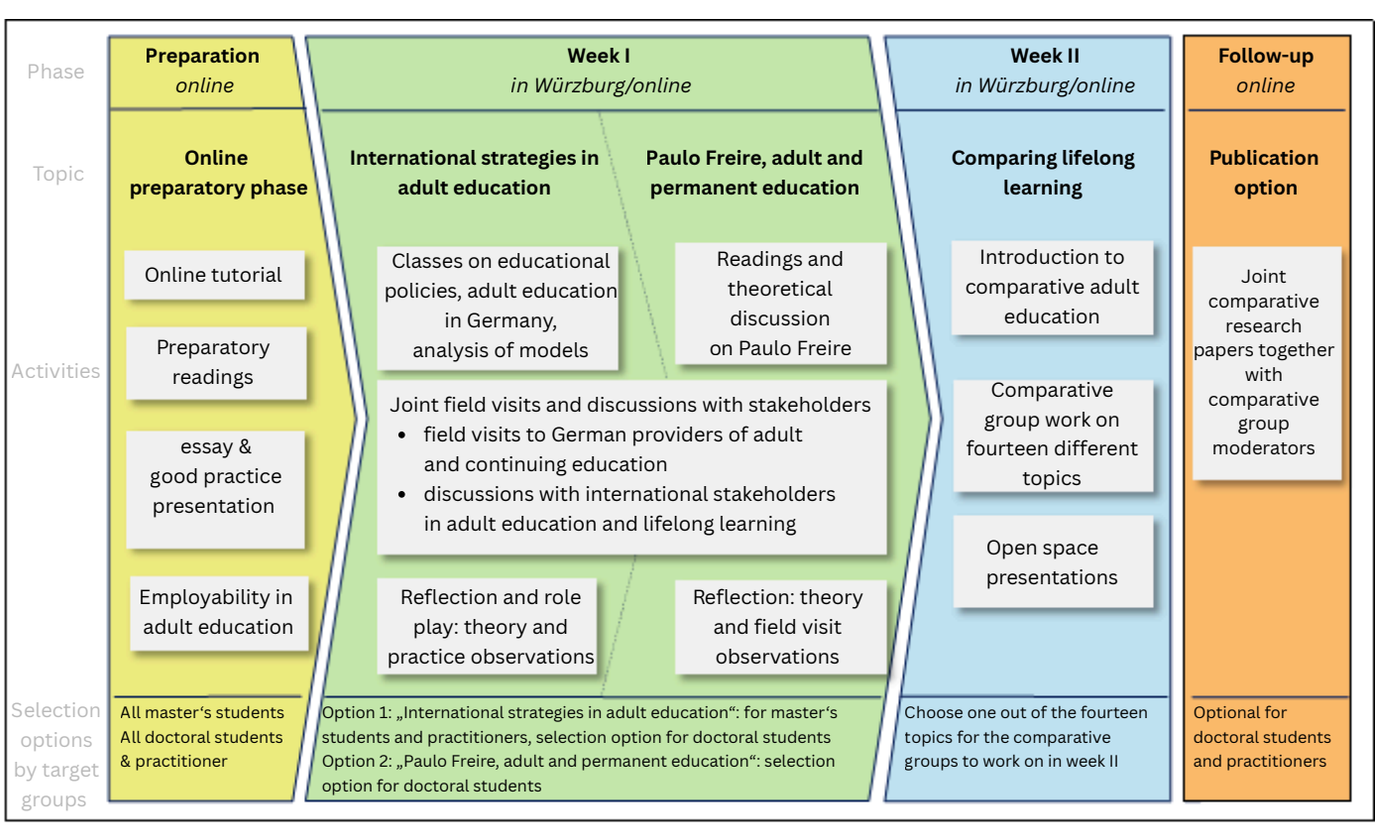
Since 2014, the Adult Education Academy promotes international networks in adult education and lifelong learning, aiming to foster a connection between academic learning and the field of adult education. During the preparatory phase and the two-week intensive programme, participants develop and refine their analytical and comparative skills in adult education in an international environment. They gain an understanding of internationally relevant educational policies in the context of lifelong learning, while strengthening their communication, teambuilding and critical thinking skills by working together in this internation al setting.

Target groups

Master's and doctoral students in adult education, as well as colleagues from the field of adult education and lifelong learning (hereafter "practitioners") are invited to join the Adult Education Academy in Würzburg. Practitioners should have experiences in adult education (e.g. teaching, programme planning, man agement in institutions of adult education associations). As a minimum requirement, all participants should hold a bachelor's degree (or equivalent) in a subject related to adult and lifelong learning.

Structure

The Adult Education Academy is divided into an (1) online preparatory phase, (2) a two-week intensive pro gramme featuring (2.1) the first week 01-05 February 2027 & (2.2) the second week from 08-12 February 2027 and (3) an optional follow-up. The two-week intensive programme will be organised online and on campus in Würzburg.



Preparatory phase

The preparatory phase is essential for participation in the Adult Education Academy. It provides participants with the necessary knowledge and abilities for the two-week Adult Education Academy programme in February 2027. The preparatory phase, which begins in November 2026 and ends in January 2027, can be divided into three parts. During the first part, participants are divided into two groups: one consisting of master's students and practitioners and another consisting of doctoral students. The master's students and practitioners will address the topic "International strategies in adult education", whereas the doctoral students can decide whether they want to join the same group or rather work on the topic "Paulo Freire, adult and permanent education". The second part takes place within the comparative groups. Last but not least, the third part addresses employability in adult education. The preparation will take place online. Materials provided during this phase include an online tutorial, readings and group sessions for discussions. At the end of the preparatory phase, master's and doctoral students submit an essay; practitioners submit a good practice presentation. The topics of the essays will depend on the comparative groups chosen by the participants. Central to the successful completion of the Adult Education Academy is the active cooperation and independent preparation of the contents and materials in the preparation phase by the participants for the two-week intensive programme in February.

Week I

The group "International policies in adult education and lifelong learning" (for master's and doctoral students as well as practitioners) will focus on a critical reflection of current education policies based on a theoretical model developed by Lima/Guimarães. The option "Paulo Freire, adult and permanent education" (for doctoral students) is based on readings and discussions of selected texts by Paulo Freire. During the first week of the Adult Education Academy, doctoral students have the opportunity to take a class on Paulo Freire's theories for "adult and permanent education". This class is based on readings and discussions of selected texts by Paulo Freire. The doctoral students will develop a theoretical-analytical perspective and will focus on more specialised theoretical knowledge to be able to synthesise different perspectives systematically and theoretically. If they prefer, doctoral students may also join the master's students and practitioners in the class on "International strategies in adult education". The theoretical insights in both groups (International policies in adult education and lifelong learning & Paulo Freire, adult and permanent education) will be accompanied by field visits to adult education providers in and around Würzburg. Furthermore, presentations of international adult education associations (European Association for the Education of Adults, International Council in Adult Education, DVV International, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning) are organised to serve as case studies for practicing the analytical models or the theories discussed in the two classes.

Week II

During the second week, the participants will work in comparative groups divided by fourteen different topics in adult education and lifelong learning. Participants will choose the topic of their essay based on the focus of the comparative group they will be assigned to prior to the Academy. On the last day of the Adult Education Academy, the results of the comparisons will be presented to all other groups.

Certification and follow-up

After participating fully in the Adult Education Academy and submitting either an essay or a good practice presentation, all participants receive a participation appreciation. In addition, there are two possibilities for enrolled students to receive ECTS credits. For more information, see page 33.

Doctoral students, practitioners and Master students have the possibility to get guidance for publishing a joint comparative paper after the Adult Education Academy.

Keys

Groups of people



Master Students



Doctoral Students



Practitioners

#AEAcademy phases



Preparatory phase



Week I



Week II



Certification & Follow-up

Activities



Field visit



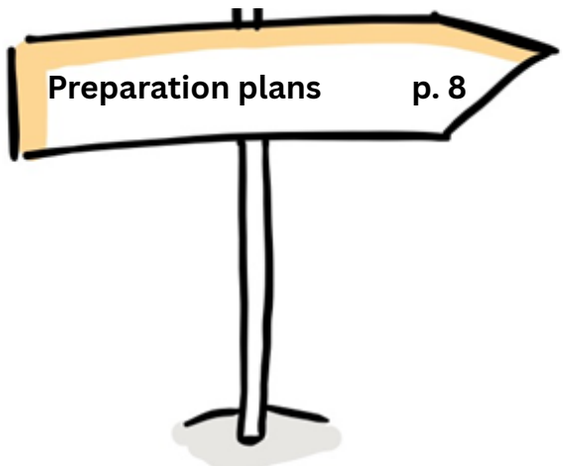
Good practice presentation

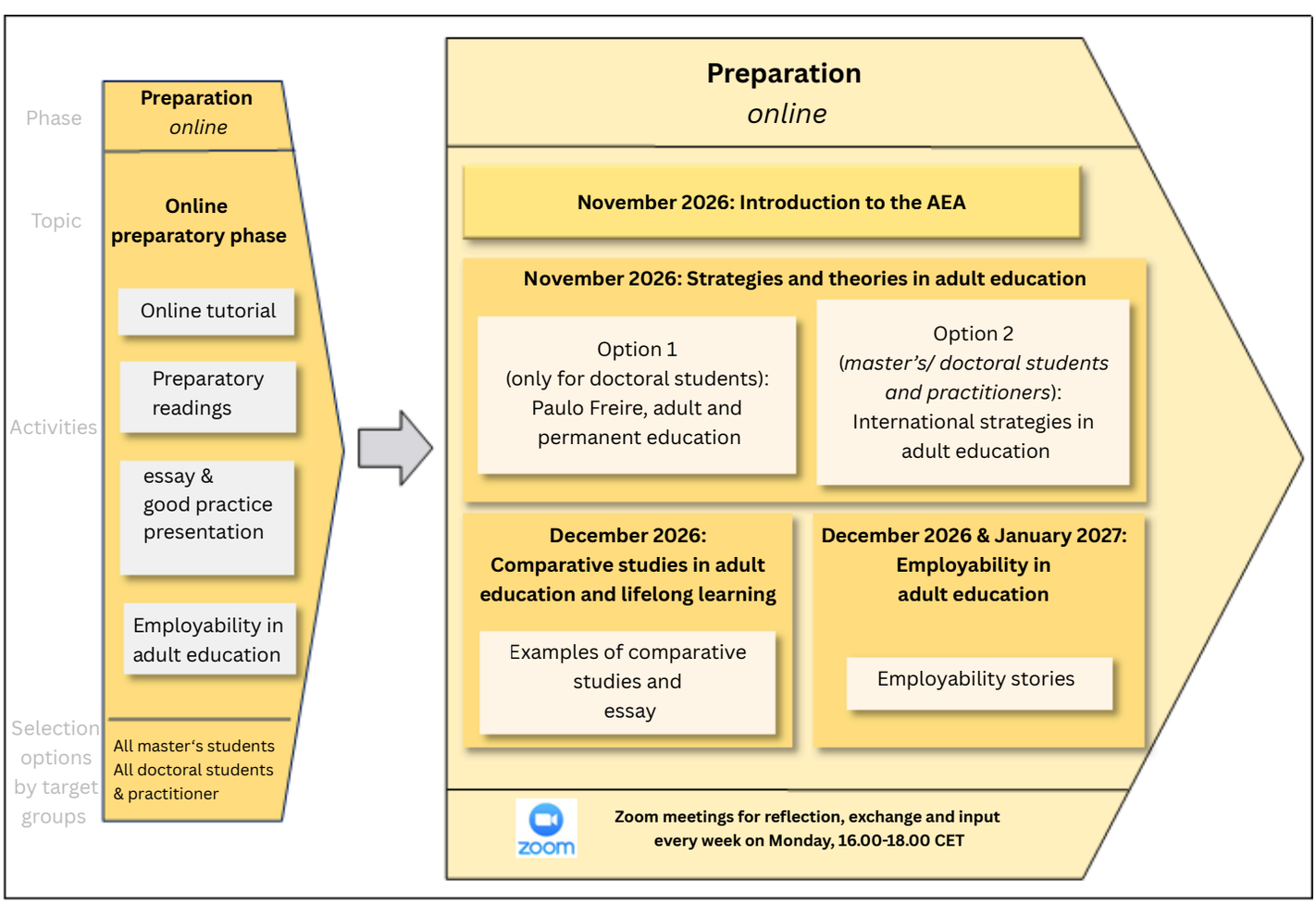


Comparative group presentation

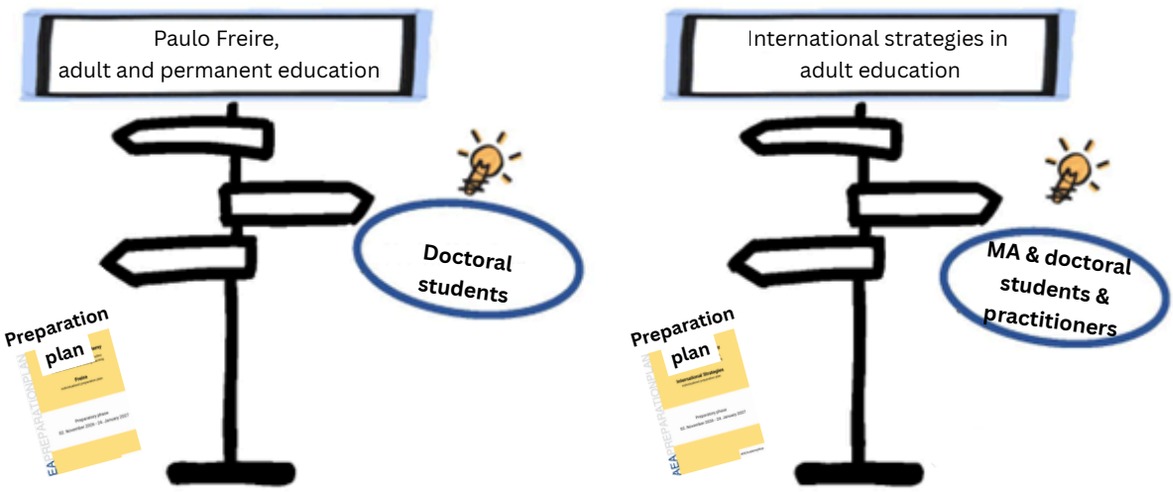
Preparatory phase
02 November 2026 - 24 January 2027







Preparation Plan: International strategies in adult education and lifelong learning & Paulo Freire, adult and permanent education

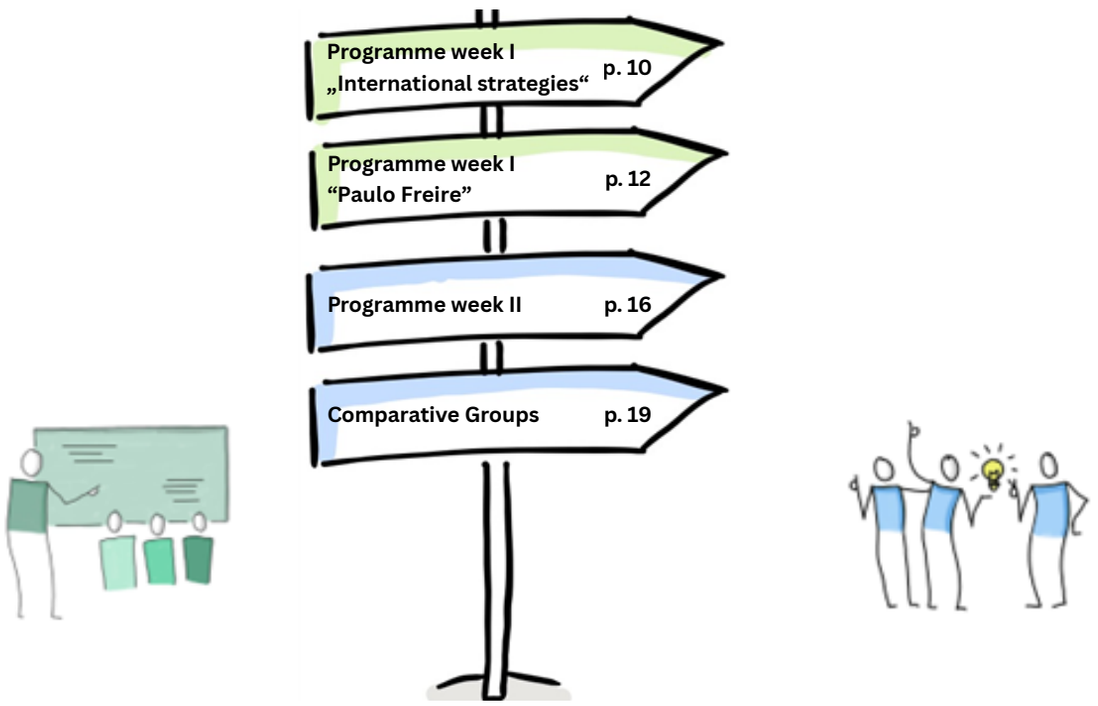


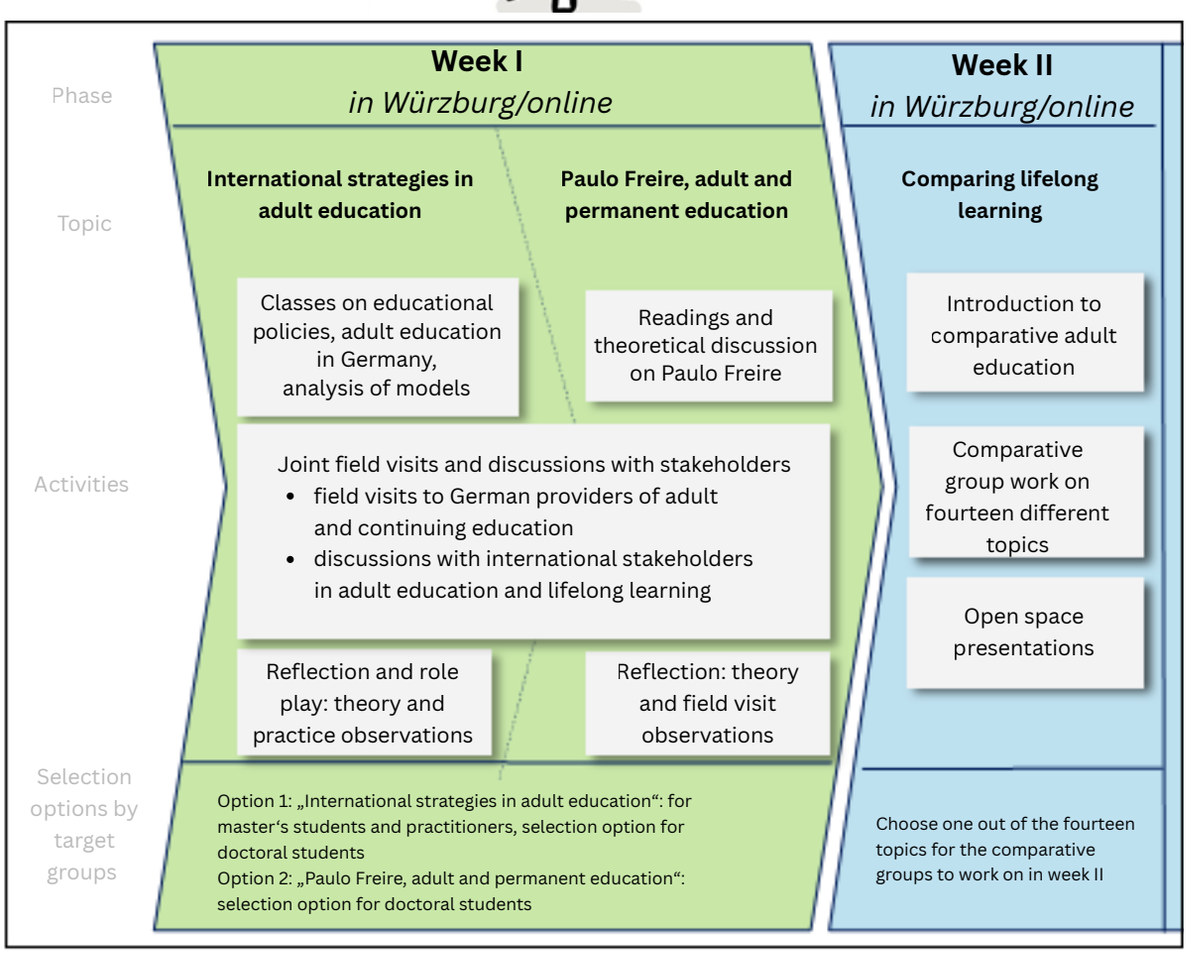
More detailed information about the online preparatory phase will follow in your **individualized preparatory guide**.
Zoom sessions during the preparatory phase:

International strategies in adult education & Paulo Freire, adult and permanent education

November 2026			
Monday	02.11.2026	16.00 - 18.00 CET	All participants
Monday	16.11.2026	16.00 - 18.00 CET	Only Freire group
Monday	16.11.2026	16.00 - 18.00 CET	Only Strategies group
Monday	23.11.2026	16.00 - 18.00 CET	Only Strategies group
Monday	30.11.2026	16.00 - 18.00 CET	All participants
December 2026			
Monday	07.12.2026	16.00 - 18.00 CET	All participants
Monday	14.12.2026	16.00 - 18.00 CET	All participants
January 2027			
Monday	11.01.2027	16.00 - 18.00 CET	All participants
Monday	18.01.2027	16.00 - 18.00 CET	All participants
Monday	25.01.2027	16.00 - 18.00 CET	All participants

Programme of the Adult Education Academy
01 - 12 February 2027





Week I:
International strategies in adult education

Master's students, doctoral students and practitioners working on "International strategies in adult education and lifelong learning" in the first week of the Adult Education Academy will use a policy analysis perspective. This perspective will enhance their analytical skills by integrating and analysing different perspectives. The theoretical analysis perspective is accompanied by field visits to adult education providers in and around Würzburg. Presentations of international adult education organisations (e.g. EAEA, ICAE, UIL, DVV International) will complete the programme. These insights will be applied to the analytical models as case studies.
Participants who choose this topic will be divided in four groups. These group arrangements are not identical to the comparative groups. Each group will be assigned a course room.

Monday, 1 February 2027	
8.00 - 9.00	Registration
9.00 - 10.30	Introduction and welcoming address
10.30 - 10.45	*Coffee break*
10.45 - 12.15	Get to know each other
12.15 - 13.45	*Lunch break*
13.45 - 15.15	Plenary lecture: The politicity of education: politics, policies, strategies— Introducing Paulo Neves Reglus Freire (1921-1997): Biography and bibliography
15.15 - 15.30	*Coffee break*
15.30 - 17.00	Plenary lecture: The politicity of education: politics, policies, strategies— Introducing Paulo Neves Reglus Freire (1921-1997): Biography and bibliography
18.00	Guided City Tour

Tuesday, 2 February 2027	
9.00 - 10.30	Levels of an analysis: "Mega, macro, meso and micro"
10.30 - 10.45	*Coffee break*
10.45 - 12.15	Levels of an analysis: "Mega, macro, meso and micro"
12.15 - 13.45	*Lunch break*
13.45 - 15.15	Social policy models
15.15 - 15.30	*Coffee break*
15.30 - 17.00	Social policy models

Week I:
International strategies in adult education

Wednesday, 3 February 2027	
9.00-10.30	Adult education providers in Germany
10.30-10.45	*Coffee break*
10.45-12.15	Adult education providers in Germany
12.15-13.45	*Lunch break*
13.45-14.45	Preparation for field visits
14.45-15.30	*Travel to the field visits*
16.00-18.00	**Field visits to providers of adult and continuing education in Würzburg** *to be announced*

Thursday, 4 February 2027	
9.00-10.15	Guest lecture (tba)
10.15-10.30	*Coffee break*
10.30-11.45	Guest lecture (tba)
12.00-14.00	*Lunch break & travel to field vists*
14.30-16.00	**Field visits to adult education providers beyond Würzburg** to be announced
16.15	*Travel back to Würzburg*

Friday, 5 February 2027	
9.00-10.30	Role play: Social policy models and adult education practice
10.30-10.45	*Coffee break*
10.45-12.15	Role play: Social policy models and adult education practice
12.15-13.45	*Lunch break*
13.45-15.15	**Field presentations to international adult and continuing education associations** to be announced
15.15-15.30	*Coffee break*
15.30-17.00	Reflection of field visits

Week I:
Paulo Freire, adult and permanent education

In this heavily theory-based class for doctoral students, the participants focus on Paulo Freire's theories for international adult education. The participants will develop a theoretical-analytical perspective.
They will focus on much more specialised theoretical knowledge to be able to synthesise different perspectives systematically and theoretically. The theoretical insights during the first week are accompanied by field visits to adult education providers in and around Würzburg. Furthermore, presentations of international adult education associations are organised (e.g. EAEA, ICAE, UIL, DVV International).

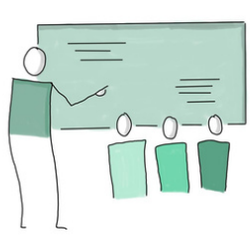
Monday, 1 February 2027	
8.00 - 9.00	Registration
9.00 - 10.30	Introduction and welcoming address
10.30 - 10.45	*Coffee break*
10.45 - 12.15	Get to know each other
12.15 - 13.45	*Lunch break*
13.45 - 15.15	Plenary lecture: The politicity of education: politics, policies, strategies— Introducing Paulo Neves Reglus Freire (1921-1997): Biography and bibliography
15.15 - 15.30	*Coffee break*
15.30 - 17.00	Plenary lecture: The politicity of education: politics, policies, strategies— Introducing Paulo Neves Reglus Freire (1921-1997): Biography and bibliography
18.00	Guided City Tour

Tuesday, 2 February 2027	
9.00 - 10.30	Why studying Freire today? The contributions of Freire to policy studies in ALE/LLL: critical encounters with Ettore Gelpi and Ivan Illich
10.30 - 10.45	*Coffee break*
10.45 - 12.15	Why studying Freire today? The contributions of Freire to policy studies in ALE/LLL: critical encounters with Ettore Gelpi and Ivan Illich
12.15 - 13.45	*Lunch break*
13.45 - 15.15	Revisiting the pedagogy of the oppressed to analyse adult learning and education
15.15 - 15.30	*Coffee break*
15.30 - 17.00	Group work on Freire

Week I:
Paulo Freire, adult and permanent education

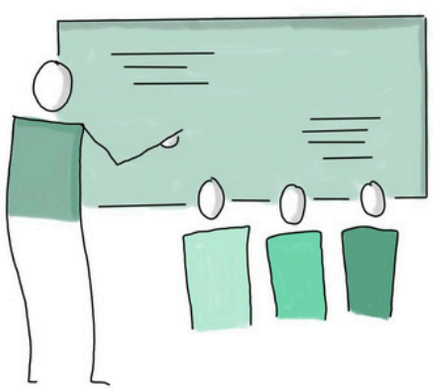
Wednesday, 3 February 2027	
9.00 - 10.30	Adult education providers in Germany
10.30 - 10.45	*Coffee break*
10.45 - 12.15	The opus magnum: the pedagogy of the oppressed and its main concepts. Radical democracy, liberation and participation; modernization and development. Extension or communication? Education as the practice of freedom.
12.15 - 13.45	*Lunch break*
13.45 - 14.45	The opus magnum: the pedagogy of the oppressed and its main concepts. Radical democracy, liberation and participation; modernization and development. Extension or communication? Education as the practice of freedom.
14.45 - 15.30	*Travel to the field visits*
16.00 - 18.00	**Field visits to providers of adult and continuing education in Würzburg to be announced**

Thursday, 4 February 2027	
9.00 - 10.15	Popular adult education and critical literacy: reading the world and reading the words
10.15 - 10.30	*Coffee break*
10.30 - 11.45	Paulo Freire as public manager of education in the city of São Paulo: “Pedagogy of the city”
12.00 - 14.00	*Lunch break & travel to field visits*
14.30 - 16.00	**Field visits to adult education providers beyond Würzburg to be announced**
16.15	*Travel back to Würzburg*



Week I:
Paulo Freire, adult and permanent education

Friday, 5 February 2027	
9.00 - 10.30	The pedagogy of freedom: teaching and learning
10.30 - 10.45	*Coffee break*
10.45 - 12.15	The pedagogy of freedom: teaching and learning
12.15 - 13.45	*Lunch break*
13.45 - 15.15	**Field presentations to international adult and continuing education associations to be announced**
15.15 - 15.30	*Coffee break*
15.30 - 17.00	Reflection of field visits in a Freirean perspective







Week II: Comparative studies in adult education and lifelong learning

Prior to the Adult Education Academy, all master's and doctoral students prepare an essay that is linked to the topic of the comparative group they choose to work in. The essay will comprise the perspective on adult education in their home countries. The writing process will be guided on WueMahara by the group moderators. Practitioners will hold their good practice presentation, which they have to submit prior to the Academy. The second week focuses on comparing the contexts and countries identified. The comparative group work will result in an open space presentation on Friday showing the results of the comparison.

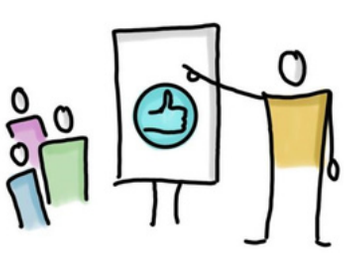
Monday, 8 February 2027	
9.00 - 10.30	Introduction into comparative adult education
10.30 - 10.45	*Coffee break*
10.45 - 12.15	Comparative group work: Introduction
12.15 - 13.45	*Lunch break*
13.45 - 15.15	Comparative group work: Participant presentations
15.15 - 15.30	*Coffee break*
15.30 - 17.00	Comparative group work: Participant presentations
18.00	Cultural Evening in Comparative groups

Tuesday, 9 February 2027	
9.00 - 10.30	Comparative group work: Participant presentations
10.30 - 10.45	*Coffee break*
10.45 - 12.15	Comparative group work
12.15 - 13.45	*Lunch break*
13.45 - 14.30	Good practice presentations I
14.30 - 15.15	Good practice presentations II
15.15 - 15.30	*Coffee break*
15.30 - 17.00	Comparative group work

Week II: Comparative studies in adult education and lifelong learning

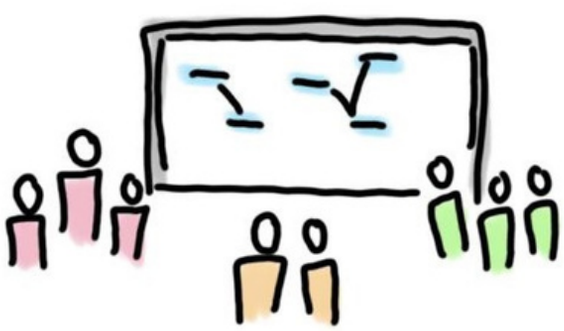
Wednesday, 10 February 2027	
9.00 - 10.30	Comparative group work
10.30 - 10.45	*Coffee break*
10.45 - 12.15	Comparative group work
12.15 - 13.45	*Lunch break*
13.45 - 14.30	Good practice presentations III
14.30 - 15.15	Good practice presentations IV
15.15 - 15.30	*Coffee break*
15.30 - 17.00	Comparative group work
17.00 - 17.30	Information on examination and grading possibilities

Thursday, 11 February 2027	
9.00 - 10.30	Comparative group work
10.30 - 10.45	*Coffee break*
10.45 - 12.15	Comparative group work
12.15 - 13.45	*Lunch break*
13.45 - 15.15	Comparative group work
15.15 - 15.45	*Coffee break*
15.45 - 17.00	Comparative group work
17.00 - 17.30	Information about the possibility of publication (doctoral students, practitioners)



Week II:
Comparative group presentations

Friday, 12 February 2027	
9.00 - 9.15	Welcoming to the group presentations
9.15 - 9.40	Comparative group presentations
10.45 - 10.10	Comparative group presentations
10.10 - 10.25	*Coffee break*
10.25 - 10.50	Comparative group presentations
10.55 - 11.20	Comparative group presentations
11.20 - 11.30	*Coffee break*
11.30 - 11.55	Comparative group presentations
12.00 - 12.25	Comparative group presentations
12.30 - 12.50	Cleaning up
12.50 - 13.25	Evaluation
13.25 - 13.40	Closing session
15.00 - 17.00	Celebratory afternoon
17.00 - 19.00	Evening get together



Week II: Comparative group overview

	Topic	Moderators
Group 1:	Promoting Intercultural Dialogue in Adult Learning and Education	Prof. Amina Isanovic Hadziomerovic, University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina Prof. Jude Walker, University of British Columbia, USA
Group 2:	Adult Learning and Education – Looking Through a System`s Lens Towards Lifelong Learning	Prof. Balazs Nemeth, University of Pécs, Hungary Prof. Heribert Hinzen, University of Pécs, Hungary
Group 3:	Active Ageing in the Longevity World: Adult Education, LifeLong Learning and Competences	Prof. Vanna Boffo, University of Florence, Italy Prof. Fabio Togni, University of Florence, Italy Dr. Debora Daddi, University of Florence, Italy
Group 4:	Programme planning and analysis in adult education: Dealing with power and ethics	Prof. Borut Mikulec, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia Prof. Bernd Käpplinger, University of Gießen, Germany
Group 5:	Digitalization in Adult Education and Learning: Policies and Implementation	Prof. Emmanuel Jean-Francois, Xavier University of Louisiana, USA
Group 6:	Adult Education and Learning systems in national contexts	Prof. Paula Guimaraes, University of Lisbon, Portugal Prof. Lucas Campos, University of Juiz de Fora, Brazil Marco Paz, University of Lisbon, Portugal
Group 7:	Hybrid and Blended Learning in Adult Education: Policies, Programs, and the Professionalisation of Practice	Dr. Lisa Breitschwerdt, Julius-Maximilian-University of Würzburg, Germany Prof. Leslie Cordie, University of Auburn, USA
Group 8:	Community Participation, Social Cohesion, and Lifelong Learning	Prof. Mar Joanpere Foraster, University of Rovira i Virgili, Spain
Group 9:	Adult Education and Gender: Comparing training courses for women	Prof. Natália Alves, University of Lisbon, Portugal
Group 10:	Ethics and Artificial Intelligence in Adult Higher Education Teaching and Learning: Regulations/Policies and Practice	Prof. Joellen Coryell, Texas State University, USA Dr. Marica Liotino, University of Padova, Italy
Group 11:	Adult learning: Post graduate policies, organizational challenges and professional development	Prof. Monica Fedeli, University of Padova, Italy Prof. Laura Bierema, University of Georgia, USA
Group 12:	Community well-being, adult learning and education, social transformation	Prof. Elisabetta Ghedin, University of Padova, Italy
Group 13:	Flexible and Creative Learning Spaces	Prof. Miriam Douglas, West Liberty University (WLU), West Virginia, USA Dr. Jörg Schwarz, Julius-Maximilians-University of Würzburg, Germany
Group 14:	Gender, AI and Adult Learning	Prof. Burcu Şimşek, Hacettepe University Ankara, Turkey

Comparative Group 1: Promoting Intercultural Dialogue in Adult Learning and Education

diversity • intercultural dialogue • adult learning and education (ALE)

Today's societies are becoming increasingly diverse, but at the same time they are facing fragmentation, polarization and social exclusion. In this context, Adult Learning and Education (ALE) has a responsibility to offer models enabling adults to develop a sense of belonging and engage in meaningful dialogue in order to learn to live together across difference. The Council of Europe's White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue defines intercultural dialogue as an open and respectful exchange between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds. Furthermore, UNESCO's flagship report We Need to Talk: Measuring Intercultural Dialogue for Peace and Inclusion underlines the relevance of intercultural dialogue for social cohesion, inclusion and sustainable peace.

The relevance of this topic for comparative analysis in ALE stems from the fact that different national and socio-political contexts provide different frameworks for intercultural dialogue. Cultural identities are not fixed, they are multilayered and continuously shaped through social interaction, historical experience, migration processes, power relations and everyday encounters. This requires nuanced approaches adjusted to diverse settings, rather than one universal model of intercultural education. Within ALE, intercultural dialogue can help adults critically reflect on stereotypes and prejudices, recognize different perspectives and build trust across social and cultural boundaries. The expected learning outcomes of this comparative group are: (1) to analyse approaches to intercultural dialogue in ALE in different countries; (2) to understand how these approaches are shaped by the broader socio-cultural and political context of the given country and (3) to compare how intercultural dialogue is integrated in ALE policies, programs and practices in different countries.

Role of practitioners

Practitioners should focus on: (1) presenting a case of implementing intercultural dialogue in ALE, or (2) the main challenges they face in bringing adult learners from different backgrounds together for learning and joint activities

Comparative research question

1. How is the concept of interculturality defined in different societies?
2. How is intercultural dialogue promoted as part of adult learning and education in different countries?

Context of comparison

Comparative analysis of ALE in intercultural dialogue will be based on multilevel analysis considering:

- mega level (international documents)
- macro level (policies, laws, and national structures which govern and shape ALE),
- meso level (organisations implementing programs/activities) and
- micro level (programs, grassroots activism, initiatives, and partnerships).

The main unit for analysis will be a single national context that students choose. The analysis will start from the global context and documents related to intercultural dialogue (e.g. UNESCO, UN, Council of Europe). The next step will be to describe the national contexts in order to prepare enough material for the comparative analysis of different countries that will take place during the second week of the Academy.

Categories of comparison

- Historical and socio-political context of a country. What events shaped the main social dynamics and composition of the society?
- How is interculturality defined in a specific country? (Country results in the UNESCO's Framework for enabling intercultural dialogue)
- Position of intercultural dialogue in ALE education policy documents. Are there any specific documents (policies, recommendations, guidelines...) that deal with intercultural dialogue?
- ALE organisations involved in promoting intercultural dialogue. What kind of organisations are active in this topic (e.g., formal education, non-formal, civil society organisations, etc.)?
- Programs and initiatives. What specific education programs and initiatives are dedicated to implementing intercultural dialogue in a given country?

References

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Prof. Amina Isanović Hadžiomerović , University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Amina Isanović Hadžiomerović is an associate professor at the Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo in the field of Adult Education. She also serves as Head of the Lifelong Learning and Continuing Education Centre at the same Faculty. Since 2021, Amina performs the role of the Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Adult Education (Obrazovanje odraslih) published in Sarajevo. Amina has led the Working Group commissioned to develop the state-wide Strategy for Adult Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and she is continuously active as a consultant in ALE curricula development, andragogical training, drafting legislative proposals and the accreditation of ALE institutions and organizations. Since 2024 Amina is a member of the Social Sciences Department of the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ANUBIH).





Prof. Jude Walker, University of British Columbia, USA

Jude Walker is Associate Professor and Chair of Adult Learning & Education at the University of British Columbian in Vancouver, Canada. She has been teaching and researching in the field for over two decades and has held various leadership positions within the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education. She was originally drawn to adult education through the work of Paulo Freire, and, since then, has been involved in various research projects in the areas of policy analysis, transformative learning, and health. Jude loves teaching adults (in general) and teaching others about adult education.

Comparative Group 2: Adult Learning and Education – Looking Through a System`s Lens Towards Lifelong Learning

Institutionalization • professionalization • structures

Adult Learning and Education (ALE) is a fragmented field of policy, practice and study as can be seen clearly in respect to their governance, legislation and finances, but in many other aspects also. A more recent discourse in the context of increasing participation, reducing inequality, and improving quality looks at ALE as a system which has implications and interventions on national, regional and local levels.

There are strong arguments closer to the acceptance that ALE requires its own regulations towards policy, legislation, and finance to function well in practice, and create and sustain opportunities for the education, training and learning of adults which cover all spheres of life and work, for the individual as well as for society. Therefore, in the advocacy work on macro level it is argued that ALE would need to receive a stronger attention, and of course provision and support – within and beyond the education system.

Demographic changes show that more people are living longer. Technological advancements require up-dating our knowledge, competencies, and skills continuously. Societal and cultural changes ask us to pay higher attention to attitudes, behavior, and values in a lifelong perspective. All of these developments would be best served by a comprehensive ALE System.

To strengthen ALE on local, national and global levels requires sustainable structures and therefore the institutionalization and professionalization of providers and programs has become quite a stable feature.

Role of practitioners

It would be great if there are practitioners in the CG as they may be able to relate the presentations and the discussion on ALE systems to their own experiences in the area of their work and organization.

Comparative research question

1. What are key elements of an ALE system, and how can support on macro, meso and micro level look like?

Context of comparison

We shall predominantly work from national perspective, having the countries of the participants as starting points. What are the respective policy, legislation and financing? We shall relate the situation in the countries to global recommendations on the development of ALE. The global to local level will also be reflected in respect to formal, nonformal and informal; providers, programs and participants - within the perspective of lifelong, lifewide and lifedeep learning.

More concretely:
Contexts/cases to be compared (if relevant in the country/region):

- Laws, strategies, programmes,
- universities and other forms of HEIs
- country/region/state
- stakeholders

Interdependencies to occur:

- local/regional/national adult education
- international policies/initiatives/frameworks/Actions

Categories of comparison

- National policies/strategies/laws to promote ALE and LLL through education reforms in the Country/Region described/elaborated for comparison;
- Recent initiatives and practices of ALE in the Country/Region described/elaborated upon for comparison that could build and strengthen ALE systematically.
- The impact of international/global bodies, like UN, UNESCO, EU, etc. to develop and/or promote ALE and LLL through partnerships with relevant local/regional stakeholders in the Country/Region described/elaborated upon for comparison;
- Available research/analytical works upon social and/or economic benefits/impact and/or roles of universities in the development of ALE and LLL in the Country/Region described/elaborated upon for comparison.

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Heribert Hinzen is a senior consultant on adult education and lifelong learning for sustainable development. He worked for DVV International for almost four decades, both in headquarters and in offices in Sierra Leone, Hungary and Lao PDR. He is an Honorary Professor at the University of Pécs, and teaches comparative adult education in Würzburg. His research interests include the institu-tionalization and professionalization of ALE, global citizenship education as well as education for sustainable development.

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Balázs Németh is an associate professor in Adult Learning and Education at the University of Pécs. He is also a founding member of the Hungarian University Lifelong Learning Network (MELLearN) and represents the University of Pécs in the European Universities Continuing Education Network (EUCEN) and in the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA). His research focus is on comparative analysis of policies of the member states of the EU on adult and lifelong learning.



Comparative Group 3: Active Ageing in the Longevity World: Adult Education, LifeLong Learning and Competences

Active ageing • Life Skills • Adult Education

Active Ageing, if it wants to release all its potential, cannot be an emergency measure referring only to the elderly persons, but must be prepared throughout the Life Course. There is, in fact, a close correlation between the development of Life Skills in formal, informal and informal experiences and the enabling factors for active aging. To understand this transition (life-profession-skills development) it is important to pay attention to some aspects:

1. Policies of active ageing and transition care (Policy level)
2. The professional histories of workers and retired persons (Ideographical level)
3. Strategies that connect the demand for training and the care of the transition (Continuing educational level)

A comparative and transnational analysis between these levels can be of great interest in order to stimulate educational policy making processes.

Role of practitioners

Practitioners will be asked to broaden the international perspective on active ageing presenting projects and experiences about it. Practitioners should explore roles of adult educators involved in active ageing education and should focus on national or local services and good practices, underlying the context, the target group, the implementation, and the results.

Comparative research question

1. Which are the active ageing policies (including the educational ones) in your country?
2. Which educational and training programs/services to promote active ageing?
3. What are the Competences developed in the professional contexts that enable Active Ageing?

Context of comparison

- Policy (regulations/laws at regional & national level) that support transition between work and retirement.
- Continuing education programmes that develops competences for good transition and for Active Ageing
- Professional Bio of workers & retired persons to discover the competences that promote Active Ageing

Categories of comparison

- Policy for transition from work to retirement
- Continuing Educations Programmes
- Competences for Life and Citizenship



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Prof. Vanna Boffo, University of Florence, Italy

Prof. Dr. Vanna Boffo, Ph.D, is Full Professor in Adult and Continuing Education and Head of the Department of Education, Languages, Interculture, Literatures and Psychology at the University of Florence, Italy (2021-2025). She is Coordinator of Education and Psychology Doctoral Course (2019-2025). Her research focuses on the transition to work at the Higher Education level. She is Coordinator of the Transversal Board Learning, Education and Active Ageing in the Resilience and Recovery Plan Programme “Age-it. Consequences and challenges of ageing” (2023-2026).





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Comparative Group 4: Programme planning and analysis in adult education: Dealing with power and ethics

Programme planning • ethics • organisations

Although adults can learn independently and in self-directed ways, many learn in an organised manner through formal and non-formal educational opportunities available to them. Various organisations provide learning opportunities for adults through their educational programmes, and programme planning and provision represent core activities of professional practice in adult education, where power and ethics must be critically considered and often balanced.

Programme analysis refers to the analysis of educational programmes. Programmes:

- in adult education serve as a hinge between potential learners and the provision of learning offers.
- now encompass a wide variety of formats, including printed catalogues, leaflets, posters, webpages, downloadable PDF documents, online databases, or posts about learning events on social media.
- can be regarded as everyday documents or temporary marketing tools, but programmes and associated programme planning are much more than that.
- often include a brief description of the aims and content of a course, the way learning takes place, information about the teachers, target learner groups, location, time, costs, and other relevant details.

By analysing educational programmes, we can identify the development of course types/areas of study (e.g. health education, political education, languages, basic education/literacy, professional training), localities and venues where they are offered, instruments and policies related to the programmes, target groups addressed, funding of programmes, and other relevant aspects. Programmes often reflect the contemporary “Zeitgeist”.

Role of practitioners

Practitioners should focus on (1) examples of good practise of adult education organisation in programme planning, and (2) the main challenges they face in planning educational programmes for adults.

Comparative research question

1. What are the main organisations providing adult education in your country?
2. Which programmes are offered by which providers in your country?
3. How are power relations and ethical domains addressed in the analysed programmes of selected adult education organisations in your country?

Context of comparison

The main context (cases) of comparison will be educational programmes distributed as catalogues, brochures, leaflets or flyers, posters, websites, annual reports, and similar materials. In addition, the interdependencies and cooperation between the analysed adult education organisation and other organisations, as well as with local and national policies, will also be examined.

Categories of comparison

- Organisations offering adult education: Which are the main organisations providing adult education (e.g. adult education centres, labour market organisations and civil society organisations, chambers, professional or employer’s associations, trade unions)?

- Types of educational programmes: Which types of educational programmes, and by which providers (e.g. public by the state, public by private actors, commercial by market actors, non-public by enterprises for their employees) are offered in analysed adult education organisations?

- Domains of the programmes:
  - technical (e.g. do the programmes contain all the necessary information, are they attractive and stimulating, are they well-structured),
  - sociopolitical (e.g. who is addressed by the programmes and who is not, how are adults (re-)presented and target groups framed, which values and power structures are explicitly and implicitly addressed by the programmes),
  - ethical (e.g. how fair are the programmes, have the planners done their work in a responsible, -conscious and professional way when considering adult education theories).

Are these domains of educational programmes adequately and simultaneously considered in the analysed adult education organisation (we invite students to look from different perspectives on the material)?

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Prof. Borut Mikulec, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
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Comparative Group 5: Digitalization in Adult Education and Learning: Policies and Implementation

remote learning • adult education program • generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Digital transformation facilitated the emergence of new educational practices, created demands for new educational offerings/programmes/strategies, and changed educational organizations in all areas. This resulted to changing demands in adult education, including the development of competencies related to the need for critical mindset, reflection, inclusive diversity and equity, dignity, and collaboration in an ever digitally-mediated and glocally connected world. Organizations and educational institutions have used various digital technologies to facilitate adult education and learning to facilitate a better learning experience for adult learners. Such phenomenon is called digitalization of adult education and learning. Although such digitalization started decades ago, the lockdown caused by the global pandemic corona virus (COVID-19) and now Artificial Intelligence (AI) with its generative tools have produced an increasing digital acceleration at the mega, macro, meso, and micro levels. The impact of digitalization is present in nearly every aspect of individual lives, from the way people communicate and work to how they access information, entertainment, and learning. Consequently, digitalization has had a profound effect on adult education, with new opportunities but also different challenges. The digitalization of adult education and learning affects, if not all, most countries in the world. However, the policies, guidelines, approaches, and practices may vary based on socio-cultural, socio-economic, and/or socio-political contexts of nations and regions of the world. This module intends to enable participants to critically analyze the digitalization policies, and their implementation in adult education and learning in national/cultural and cross-national/cross-cultural contexts.

Role of practitioners

Practitioners should focus on diverse types of digital technologies they use to support adult education and learning; examine their practices, knowledge and experiences (philosophical and theoretical foundations, relationship with specific cultural contexts).

Comparative research question

1. What are the policies and guidelines that inform the digitalization of adult education in your country?
2. How are digitalization policies being implemented adult education in your country?
3. What is the extent of availability, access, and utilization of digital technologies for teaching and learning in adult education?
4. What are the approaches and practices (including AI; hybrid learning spaces) used by adult educators in your country to digitalize adult teaching and learning?

Context of comparison

The context of comparison aims at:

- Adult educational organizations or/and institutions and programs in different countries.
- Digitalization policies and guidelines for adult education in different national contexts
- Adult educational approaches and practices across different national contexts.

Categories of comparison

The categories of comparison will include, but will notbe limited to:

- Programs: Comparing digitalization of adult teaching and learning in different types of adult education programs.
- Organizations/institutions: Comparing the digitalization of adult education programs in different types of institutions/organizations.
- Policies and guidelines: Comparing digitalization policies and guidelines, and implementation in different countries.

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Comparative Group 6: Adult Education and Learning systems in national contexts

adult education and learning systems • national adult education policies • logics of action

Adult education and learning systems are increasingly central to comparative education because they reveal how different societies respond to policy problems when considering national, regional and local matters to be considered in policy. The existing systems intend to present, organize and give coherence to possible education pathways (offers) that might offer solutions to adult learners. In general, adult education and learning systems are stressed in policy discourses, specifically that adult education and learning can occur life long and life wide. Unlike school-based systems geared to children and youth, adult learning encompasses a highly diverse mix of formal and non-formal pathways, within diverse offers such as the ones within the following poles: a) literacy and second-chance education, b) vocational education and training as well as workplace learning, as well as c) community, popular and education referring to local issues, and d) political and civic programme (or liberal adult education as named in several countries) within formal and non-formal education. Adult education and learning systems may vary according to supranational and international organizations, policy priorities and aims established in legal frameworks, programes and policy strategies, as well as funding in what refers to main sources. These characteristics have an impact on offers proposed to adult learners, such as adult learners themselves and participation patterns across countries, as well as adult educators (from initial education through continuing education and learning in workplace). A comparative lens makes it possible to identify both structural and contextual similarities and differences (e.g., from democratic emancipatory to modernization and state control to human resources management trends) as well as divergent and convergent trends, such as the rise of lifelong-learning discourses vs lifelong education/humanistic approaches, and policies and strategies such as programs promoted by supranational organizations or national Governments. These trends have an impact on participation patterns in lifelong learning. They also impact on adult educators preparation (initial and continuing education).

Within this frame, when considering historical trajectories of the different countries, critical junctures – moments of significant change -, institutional key actors and institutional configurations can allow the problematization of changes occurred in recent decades.

Role of practitioners

Practitioners are invited to share their knowledge on the adult education and learning systems of their own country. This sharing may favour the comparison among other participants in the CGW.

Comparative research question

1. How do contextual dimensions influence the development of adult education and learning systems in each country?
2. What are the organisational structures that support the existence and development of national adult education and learning systems?
3. What are the educational elements reflecting the adult education and learning systems?

Context of comparison

National (countries)/regional contexts will be favoured in the comparison. Recent (from the last 50 years) historical developments will be considered for analysis, such as trends of development (continuities) and critical junctures (changes occurred).

Categories of comparison

- Contextual dimensions
  - Historical trajectories and critical junctures/changes occurred
  - Policy discourses identifying problems and education solutions
  - Policy priorities and wide understanding of adult education and learning
  - National, regional and local policy aims
  - Programs and policy strategies
- Organizational structures
  - International and supranational influence
  - National/regional administration and local settings for offers development
  - Funding
- Educational elements
  - Offers' rational (poles, formal/non-formal)
  - Adult learners and trends of learners' participation
  - Adult educators (initial and continuing education and training)

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Paula Guimarães is a professor at the Instituto de Educação, Universidade de Lisboa (Portugal) since 2012. She holds a PhD in (adult) Education Policies and still researches this topic at a local, national and supra/international levels. Her research interests also include the links between adult education policies and adult educators work and jobs.





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Lucas Campos has been a Public Administrator at Fluminense Federal University (Brazil) since 2023 and served as an Assistant Professor at the Federal University of Juiz de Fora (Brazil) from 2018 to 2023. He holds a PhD in Public Policies and Human Development from Rio de Janeiro State University (Brazil), completed in partnership with the Institute of Education at the University of Lisbon (Portugal).

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Marco Paz is a Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competencies (RVCC) Technician at a Centro Qualifica since 2023. He is a PhD student in Education – Adult Education – at the Instituto de Educação, Universidade de Lisboa (Portugal) since 2025, focusing his research on Adult Education Policies.



Comparative Group 7: Hybrid and Blended Learning in Adult Education: Policies, Programs, and the Professionalisation of Practice

Hybrid and Blended Learning • Policy • Professionalisation

The rapid digitalisation of adult education and lifelong learning has necessitated a shift toward hybrid and blended learning settings that integrate digital media with face-to-face instruction (Breitschwerdt, 2025). This group explores how different international contexts shape, define and institutionalise these settings, moving beyond micro-level implementation to analyse broader program structures, policy frameworks and the requirements set for adult educators in planning and conducting such settings. Building on conceptual perspectives on hybridity following Nørgård (2021) and Goodyear et al. (2020), the group addresses the critical need for a theoretical understanding of designing digitalised, media-supported learning environments in adult education and lifelong learning at the meso- and macrolevels. We will discuss and interpret similarities and differences in international approaches to hybrid and blended learning, as well as the implications for educational planning and the role of adult educators.

Role of practitioners

Practitioners are encouraged to present Case Study Briefs from their own institutions, highlighting a specific "Good Practice" in hybrid or blended learning implementation or specific barriers that serve as a baseline for comparative analysis.

Comparative research question

1. How are hybrid and blended learning settings understood and shaped across different national adult education systems?
2. How are hybrid and blended learning settings institutionalized and regulated within adult education programs across different national contexts?
3. What requirements do hybrid and blended learning settings place on the professionalisation of adult educators in the planning and facilitation of these learning environments?

Context of comparison

The comparison will focus on national and regional policy frameworks and institutional program designs. Participants will compare hybrid, blended, and media-supported educational offers within organizations such as universities, colleges, and adult education providers like community centres or private providers. The analysis will take into account interdependencies with international digitalization strategies and regional/local regulations regarding practitioner training and infrastructure.



Categories of comparison

- **Adult Education Policy and Regulatory Frameworks:** Comparing national guidelines and funding mechanisms that specifically target the implementation of hybrid and blended learning in adult education and lifelong learning.
- **Programs in Adult Education (approaches, practices, initiatives):** Comparing the design and structural integration of hybrid and blended learning within adult education and lifelong learning programs and offers in concrete organisations or initiatives.
- **Educator Professionalisation:** Comparing the required competencies and the (formal) support systems provided to educators for designing and conducting hybrid and blended learning.

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Prof. Leslie Cordie, University of Auburn, USA

Dr. Leslie Cordie is an Associate Professor of Adult Education within the Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology at Auburn University, where she also serves as Affiliate Faculty with University Writing. A Fulbright Scholar with over 30 years of experience across academic, corporate, government, and military sectors, Dr. Cordie specializes in adult learning theory, professional development, and the application of AI in workforce education. She is deeply passionate about fostering global connections and creating high-impact, inclusive learning experiences in hybrid and online environments.



Comparative Group 8: Community Participation, Social Cohesion, and Lifelong Learning

Community participation • Social cohesion • Lifelong learning

This comparative group addresses the growing importance of understanding how lifelong learning contributes not only to individual development, but also to collective processes of community building, social cohesion, and democratic participation. In a context of increasing social fragmentation, inequality, and cultural diversity, adult education plays a key role in fostering inclusive societies and strengthening local and transnational forms of participation. From a comparative perspective, the subject is relevant because adult education systems, policies, and practices vary significantly across countries, yet they often aim to address similar societal challenges. Comparing different contexts allows participants to identify how lifelong learning initiatives are shaped by institutional frameworks, cultural traditions, and community needs, as well as how they generate different forms of social impact.

The expected learning outcomes of this comparative group include:

- (1) the ability to critically analyse adult education practices in relation to social cohesion and community participation;
- (2) the capacity to identify similarities and differences across national and local contexts;
- (3) the development of a comparative analytical perspective grounded in empirical observation; and
- (4) an understanding of how lifelong learning can function as a tool for social transformation and democratic engagement. Students will also strengthen their ability to formulate context-sensitive research questions and to relate micro-level educational practices to broader social and policy frameworks.

Role of practitioners

Practitioners will play a central role as knowledge contributors. They will provide direct insights into real-world adult education practices, support the interpretation of empirical cases, and help bridge the gap between theory and practice. Their involvement will ensure that the comparative analysis remains grounded in lived experiences and socially relevant educational processes.

Comparative research question

1. How do adult education and lifelong learning initiatives in different national and cultural contexts contribute to strengthening community participation and social cohesion?

Context of comparison

The comparison will focus on adult education initiatives implemented in different national and/or regional contexts, including formal, non-formal, and community-based learning settings. Cases may include adult education centres, community learning programmes, civic education initiatives, and university-community partnerships across participating countries. The comparative analysis will also consider the role of local governance structures, national adult education policies, and European frameworks such as the European Agenda for Adult Learning. Particular attention will be given to how transnational policy discourses influence local practices, and how community-based initiatives respond to specific social, cultural, and economic conditions. Interdependencies between local practices and broader policy environments will be examined, especially in terms of funding structures, institutional collaborations, and the transfer of educational models across contexts.

Categories of comparison

- Forms of community participation: this category explores how learners and community members are involved in adult education initiatives as active co-creators of learning processes.
- Impact on social cohesion: this examines how adult learning initiatives contribute to trust-building, inclusion, intercultural dialogue and reduced social fragmentation within communities.
- Pedagogical approaches in lifelong learning: this focuses on the teaching and learning methodologies used, including participatory, dialogic and community-based approaches.
- Sustainability and transferability of practices: this considers whether how successful initiatives can be sustained over time and adapted or transferred to other contexts.

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Prof. Mar Joanpere Foraster, University of Rovira i Virgili, Spain
Mar Joanpere Foraster, PhD in Sociology, is a Serra Húnter Fellow at Universitat Rovira i Virgili (Spain). Her research focuses on the social impact of organizations and inclusive learning environments. She is currently the principal investigator of a research project on cultural and religious diversity in the workplace, funded by the Catalan Government.

Babatunde Fajimi, University of Wuerzburg, Germany
Babatunde Fajimi is a research associate in the Professorship for Adult and Continuing Education at the University of Würzburg, and a doctoral student at the University of Lagos, Nigeria. He has previously earned his Bachelor of Social Work from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria and Master of Education in Community Development and Social Work Education from the University of Lagos, Nigeria. His research interests encompasses professionalisation and competence development in adult and higher education, comparative adult and continuing education, community education, social work and social welfare, and qualitative methodologies in educational research. Through his work, he seeks to contribute to the advancement of educational practice, professional learning, and community development within diverse national and international contexts.



Comparative Group 9: Adult Education and Gender: Comparing training courses for women

adult education • women

Studying Adult Education provisions for women reveals how learning, work, and gender inequalities intersect across the life course.For many women, education and training can expand employability, income security, and career mobility, especially after interrupted trajectories caused by care work, migration or precarious employment. Yet feminist adult education studies warn that education and training must not be reduced to adapting women to unequal labour markets; it should also strengthen agency, critical reflection and collective capacity to question gendered divisions of work (Gouthro, 2005). This perspective is particularly important because home, community and workplace learning are often connected in women's lives, and confidence, identity and social capital influence whether formal qualifications become real opportunities (Tett & Maclachlan, 2007; Vaccaro & Lovell, 2010). To analyse educational and training aimed at women, we will combine a feminist approach with the theoretical framework developed by Lima and Guimarães (2011).

We will analyse the connection between the adult education provisions and the 3 policy models: the democratic emancipatory model; the modernisation and state control model; and the human resources model. The first model refers to policies oriented towards democratic and emancipatory principles, fostering participation and equality of opportunities within liberal adult education and popular education programmes. The second one relates to policies favouring formal education and training, school certification and professional qualification of adults. The last one aims at qualifying the workforce, adapting workers to labour market needs and increasing productivity and economic competitiveness.

Based on the analysis of adult education provisions for women, we expect students to compare adult education provisions according to:

- Feminist adult education principles
- Adult education policy models.

Role of practitioners

Based on their experience, practitioners are invited to present an adult education provision aimed exclusively at women, interpreting it in the light of the analytical policy and the feminist adult education principles.

Comparative research question

1. How does the policy, initiative, programme or course aimed at women relate to the principles of feminist theory and the analytical frameworks for adult education policy?

Context of comparison

At macro/meso level, (depending on the countries), the comparison will focus on policies, initiatives, programmes specially conceived for women.
At a micro level, the comparison will focus on an adult education provision for women.

Categories of comparison

- Political priorities of specific programmes or forms of provision (formal, non formal or informal education and training domains, requirements, funding allocated)
- Organisation (type of promotors, adult educators/trainers involved, quality assurance, evaluation procedures)
- Theoretical references of adult education considering the 3 analytical models.
- Theoretical references to feminist adult education principles.

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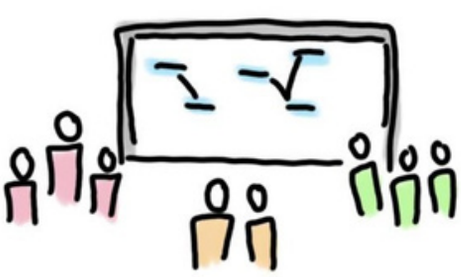
Prof. Natália Alves, University of Lisbon, Portugal
Prof. Natália Alves, PhD, is an associate professor at the Institute of Education, University of Lisbon. She holds a PhD on Sociology of Education. Her main fields of research are school to work transitions and IVET and CVET policies, forms of provision, and practices.







Comparative Group 10: Ethics and Artificial Intelligence in Adult Higher Education Teaching and Learning: Regulations/Policies and Practice

ethics and AI • academic integrity • AI literacy

This comparative research topic examines how different countries, institutions, and educational systems regulate and implement Artificial Intelligence (AI) in adult higher education. It is highly relevant because AI is rapidly transforming teaching, learning, assessment, academic integrity, data governance, accessibility, and lifelong learning opportunities. Comparative adult education research can investigate how national regulations (e.g., the EU AI Act, national data protection laws, institutional AI policies) influence educational practices, educator competencies, learner autonomy, and ethical decision-making.

Participants will compare policy frameworks, ethical guidelines, and pedagogical approaches across countries and institutions, focusing on issues such as transparency, bias and fairness, privacy, accountability, inclusion, digital equity, and responsible AI use. Comparisons may also include exploring how adult learners and educators perceive AI, adapt to AI-supported learning environments, and develop critical AI literacy.

Learners will:

- Analyze and compare AI-related educational regulations and policies across different contexts and analytical levels.
- Critically evaluate ethical challenges associated with AI use in adult higher education.
- Examine the relationship between policy frameworks and educational practice.
- Apply comparative research methods to investigate similarities and differences across educational systems.
- Assess the implications of AI for equity, inclusion and academic integrity.
- Develop evidence-based recommendations for ethical and responsible AI integration in adult education.
- Strengthen intercultural understanding and collaborative research skills through international comparison.
- Enhance critical digital and AI literacy by reflecting on the opportunities and risks of AI in teaching and learning.

Role of practitioners

Ideally, practitioners in Group 10 will have worked with AI in their practice settings and will have insights into AI decision-making, policy, equity, inclusion, and AI literacy to add to the richness of the data gathering and comparative analysis of the overall group.

Comparative research question

1. How do national and institutional regulations and policies on Artificial Intelligence influence teaching, learning, and assessment practices in adult higher education across different countries?
2. What similarities and differences exist in the ethical challenges associated with AI use in adult higher education, particularly regarding academic integrity, privacy, transparency, bias, and equity, in the selected comparative contexts?
3. How do adult learners and educators perceive and develop AI literacy and ethical competence, and how are these perceptions shaped by differing policy and educational environments?

Context of comparison

Together, these questions address the three key dimensions of comparative adult education research:

- Policy and regulation (macro level),
- Institutional and pedagogical practice (meso level),
- Learner and educator experiences (micro level).

This structure also facilitates meaningful cross-national or cross-institutional comparison while linking policy frameworks to actual educational outcomes and ethical practice.

Categories of comparison

- Regulatory and Policy Frameworks: Compare how national, regional, and institutional policies regulate the use of AI in higher education, including requirements related to accountability, transparency, data protection, and academic integrity.
- Ethical Principles and Governance: Examine which ethical values (e.g., fairness, inclusion, privacy, human oversight, and responsibility) are emphasized in AI guidelines and how these principles are translated into educational governance.
- Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Practices: Analyze how adult higher educators and institutions integrate AI into teaching, learning, and assessment, and how ethical concerns influence pedagogical decision-making.
- AI Literacy and Professional Competence Development: Investigate how adult learners and educators are supported in developing AI literacy, critical digital competencies, and the capacity to use AI responsibly and ethically.
- Equity, Inclusion, and Access: Compare how different educational systems address issues of digital inequality, accessibility, bias, and the inclusion of diverse learner populations in AI-enhanced learning environments.

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Joellen E. Coryell, PhD is University Distinguished Professor of Adult, Professional, and Community Education and Human Resource Development and Learning in Organizations, and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Educational Partnerships in the College of Education at Texas State University. Her research interests include international, cross-cultural adult and higher education, adult study abroad, professional development of adult educators and leaders, and the ethical use of AI in adult higher education. She was the editor-in-chief for New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education for over 10 years and is a U.S. Fulbright Scholar Alumni Ambassador.

Dr. Marica Liotino, University of Padova, Italy

Marica Liotino, Ph.D., is a postdoctoral research fellow and lecturer of teaching and learning methods in the Department of Philosophy, Sociology, Pedagogy, and Applied Psychology at the University of Padova. Dr. Liotino is an e-tutor in the Management of Educational Services and Lifelong Learning master's program and a member of the organizing committee for the professional master certificate in Organizational Coaching: Leadership and Lifelong Learning. Her research interests include adult education, organizational and faculty development, diversity management, technology-enhanced learning, online learning, and digital competencies. She is a member of the editorial board of the journal Excellence and Innovation in Learning and Teaching.



Comparative Group 11: Adult learning: Post graduate policies, organizational challenges and professional development

Post graduate politics • professional development • organizational development

The group will analyze and compare adult learning policies, organizational strategies, and practices, and examine how they are developed across different disciplines within universities. This will include an exploration of institutional policies, organizational challenges, and the individual motivations behind skill development aimed at enhancing professional growth and lifelong learning.

Professionals can participate in programs or training courses offered by Universities to further develop their careers throughout their lives. The group will also analyze how universities are responding to the educational needs of professionals and businesses by creating various opportunities for professional development. These issues and opportunities for professional growth will be discussed collaboratively during the group work.

The relevance of this CGW is to understand how universities across different countries are developing and implementing adult learning policies, organizational strategies, and professional development practices to respond to the evolving educational needs of professionals and businesses. The group will examine how higher education institutions promote lifelong learning, support skill development, and create opportunities for continuous professional growth across different disciplines.

Therefore, the expected learning outcomes of this CGW are related to:

- Knowledge of higher education institutions' policies and practices related to adult learning and professional development.
- Understanding of organizational strategies and institutional approaches that support lifelong learning and skill development for professionals.
- Analysis of programs, training courses, and practices implemented by universities to foster professional growth and respond to the changing needs of the labor market and society

Role of practitioners

Practitioners are welcome to share the practices that they implement to respond to professional needs

Comparative research question

1. What is the current state of adult learning and lifelong learning policies and practices across different universities?
2. How are universities responding to the educational and professional development needs of professionals through institutional and organizational strategies?
3. What organizational and institutional challenges do universities face in promoting lifelong learning and continuous professional development?
4. What programs, training courses, and practices are implemented by higher education institutions to support skill development, professional growth, and lifelong learning across different disciplines?

Context of comparison

The comparative analysis will be carried out

- At the micro level, by investigating the programs, training opportunities, strategies, and practices implemented by universities to support adult learning, lifelong learning, and professional development across the different countries involved.
- At the meso level, by analyzing the institutional policies and organizational strategies adopted by higher education institutions to respond to the educational needs of professionals and to promote continuous skill development and professional growth.

Categories of comparison

- Professional development programs, training activities, and lifelong learning opportunities offered by universities to support the continuous growth and recognition of professionals.
- Analysis of the organizational and professional factors that promote skill development, innovation, and effective learning practices in different academic and professional contexts.
- Institutional and governance policies adopted by higher education institutions to support adult learning, lifelong learning, and continuous professional development within academia and across disciplines.

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Monica Fedeli Ph.D. Professor in Teaching and Learning Methods and Organizational Development at University of Padova. Vice Rector for the Third Mission (Outreach) and Relations with the Territory. She was Fulbright Scholar recipient at University of Georgia for the year 2020. She has been an adjunct professor at Michigan State University, at Julius Maximilians University of Wurzburg, and Visiting Scientist and Professor at California University Berkeley School of Education and Boston University.

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Laura L. Bierema, Ed.D., is Professor, of Adult Learning, Leadership, and Organization Development at the University of Georgia, in the Mary Frances Early College of Education, USA. She was a Fulbright Scholar recipient at the University of Padova, Italy, in 2018 and is currently a Fulbright Specialist. She was president of the Academy of Human Resource Development from 2020-2022. She is the founding director of University of Georgia's Graduate Certificate in Organization Coaching and a certified, master coach.





Comparative Group 12: Community well-being, adult learning and education, social transformation

Community well-being • adult learning and education • social transformation

In contemporary societies, well-being is no longer understood merely as an individual condition but increasingly as a collective and relational achievement shaped by social bonds, civic participation and shared learning experiences. Adult learning and education (ALE) holds significant – yet underexplored – potential to foster community well-being by strengthening social cohesion, empowering marginalized groups, and supporting the development of what Sen (1999) calls "human capabilities". While international frameworks such as UNESCO's Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (RALE, 2015) and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 3 and SDG 11) explicitly connect lifelong learning to well-being and sustainable communities, how this connection is translated into policies, programmes, and institutional practices varies considerably across national and regional contexts. Some countries embed well-being explicitly in their adult education frameworks; others address it only implicitly, as a by-product of social inclusion or civic education initiatives. This comparative group invites participants to investigate how adult education contributes to community well-being in their own national contexts, examining both the institutional actors involved and the policy frameworks that shape their action.

Expected learning outcomes:

- Analyse how community well-being is conceptualised in relation to ALE across different national contexts;
- Identify and compare policies, programmes, and practices that explicitly on implicitly address well-being through adult learning;
- Develop comparative analytical skills through transnational dialogue and essay writing;
- Reflect critically on the role of ALE as a driver of social transformation and community flourishing.

Role of practitioners

Practitioners are invited to contribute as good practice presenters, sharing concrete examples of community-based adult education initiatives in their national or local contexts that have demonstrably contributed to community well-being.

Practitioners should focus on:

- Describing the context, target group, and implementation of their programme or initiative
- Highlighting the mechanisms through which their work addresses community well-being (e.g., social inclusion, civic participation, intergenerational solidarity)
- Reflecting on the main challenges and enabling factors encountered in practice

Practitioners with relevant experience may also be invited to act as co-moderators in specific group sessions, enriching the comparative analysis with field-based perspectives.

Comparative research question

1. How do adult education policies and practices contribute to community well-being in different national contexts, and that institutional, cultural, and structural factors shape this relationship?

Context of comparison

The main unit of analysis will be the national or regional context chosen by each participant. Comparison will operate across three levels:

- Macro level: national/regional policies and legal frameworks that address well-being through ALE (e.g., national adult education laws, social inclusion strategies, SDG implementation plans)
- Meso level: organisations and institutions implementing community-oriented ALE programmes (e.g., community learning centres, folk high schools, social cooperatives, NGOs, public libraries)
- Micro level: specific programmes or initiatives that explicitly target community well-being outcomes (e.g., dialogic learning communities, neighbourhood education projects, intergenerational programmes)

Relevant interdependencies:

- International and supranational frameworks (UNESCO RALE 2015, EU Lifelong Learning Strategy, CONFINTEA VII outcomes) and their influence on national well-being agendas
- The interplay between local grassroots initiatives and top-down policy frameworks
- The role of third-sector and civil society organisations as key actors in community-based ALE
- Urban/rural divides in access to and outcomes of well-being-oriented adult education

Categories of comparison

- Policy framing of well-being: How is community well-being framed – explicitly or implicitly – in national /regional adult education policy documents, laws, and strategies?
- Institutional actors: which actors (state, civil society, private sector, community organisations) deliver well-being-oriented ALE, and how do they collaborate or compete?
- Programme design and target groups: what types of ALE programmes address community well-being, and which adult populations do they primarily target (e.g. elderly, migrants, unemployed, low-income communities?)
- Social and community outcomes: what social outcomes related to well-being are documented or perceived as results of ALE participation (e.g. social cohesion, civic engagement, sense of belonging, collective agency)?
- Measurement and recognition: How is the contribution af ALE to community well-being measured, recognised, or evaluated in different national context?

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Comparative Group 13: Flexible and Creative Learning Spaces

Flexible learning spaces • digital / hybrid learning spaces • self-directed learning

Flexible and creative learning spaces continue to shape international discussions on educational developments across continents. This points to a broader trend toward rethinking traditional learning spaces to more adaptable, learner-centered, and responsive learning environments.

In this comparative group, participants explore how different countries and their various learning institutions rethink and reshape learning spaces in various ways. Flexibility is no longer understood only in terms of physical design (e.g. movable furniture or multifunctional spaces), but also as a pedagogical and digital approach that shapes learning, how it is designed, and experienced.

Creative learning spaces from our point of view also highlight the importance of imagination, experimentation, and meaningful engagement, which in turn are closely linked to learner motivation and ownership of the learning process.They also reflect a shift between formal, non-formal, and informal learning, as the boundaries between these concepts become increasingly fluid, which raises the question about how learning is organized, supported, and valued across different systems. In this context, the question arises of whether or how artificial intelligence (AI) is transitioning into being part of this shift. Either as a tool that can expand learning spaces beyond physical classrooms and, or as a factor influencing how learning environments are designed and experienced.

From an international and comparative research perspective, this topic is particularly relevant because learning spaces are deeply embedded in cultural, institutional, and policy contexts, and eventually, they themselves become more and more international learning spaces.

Working with international examples as comparisons, participants explore how different countries approach the development of flexible and creative learning spaces, they identify policies and societal conditions that shape this development and they learn about theories and practices that can be applied to the research, but also the professional creation of such learning spaces.

Role of practitioners

The practitioners bring in good practice examples from their countries or even from their own organizations. Maybe they themselves were engaged in developing flexible and creative learning spaces. They will thus deliver more examples that can be analyzed, they will take part in the comparative analysis but at the same time, they will also focus on the question how such learning spaces can be professionally created and what is needed in terms of knowledge, skills, and material resources.

Comparative research question

1. Which ideas stand behind the design and creation of flexible and creative learning spaces in adult education and how is this embedded in organizational cultures and national policies?

Context of comparison

The single cases to be compared will be concrete (institutionalized) learning spaces (or projects that develop certain learning spaces). The context then will usually be an organisational context in which this learning space was designed and is used, be it in an adult education institution, a public library or a company. The analytical focus will be placed on organizational structures, resources, and learning cultures. The broader contexts are regional and national policies and regulations as well as derived funding programs on flexible and creative learning spaces.

Categories of comparison

- **Learning topics and/or objectives:** What is the main idea gained from this? What are core topics? What was intended and what is done today?
- **Methods and didactics:** How does the space foster learning processes? What forms of learning does this space enable? How does it limit these forms at the same time? What role do virtual spaces play within the learning space? What role does AI play in space/s?
- **Target group and learners:** What groups are mainly using this learning space? Were these groups the intended users? Did they take part in creating the learning space? What makes it a flexible and creative space for them?
- **Embeddedness in organizational structures and cultures and in national and regional policies:** How are flexible and creative learning spaces embedded in organizational structures and cultures, if so? How are they embedded in national and regional policies, if so?

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Prof. Miriam Douglas , West Liberty University (WLU), West Virginia, USA

Dr. Miriam Roth Douglas is a tenured Full Professor of Education in the College of Education and Human Performance at West Liberty University (WLU), West Virginia, USA. She holds an Interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Education and an M.A. in Foreign Languages from West Virginia University, where she was also a Fulbright Scholar, and an educational teaching degree from Otto-Friedrich University in Bamberg, Germany. Her interdisciplinary work is grounded in lifelong learning and active engagement with nonprofit and cultural organizations, emphasizing connections among universities, communities, and global contexts. She teaches across undergraduate, master's, and doctoral programs at WLU and supports global engagement as Academic Coordinator for West Virginia Abroad (HEPC) and Co-Chair of the Internationalization Committee. Her research focuses on community education; non-formal, experiential, and out-of-school learning; innovative learning environments; lifelong learning; and the internationalization and globalization of higher education and curricula.

Dr. Jörg Schwarz, Julius-Maximilians-University of Würzburg, Germany

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Comparative Group 14: Gender, AI and Adult Learning

Gender • AI • adult education

AI has become an important aspect of adult learning in everyday life. The number of qualitative studies in higher education and AI use is on the rise. Qualitative research is important to understand the dynamics of gender and AI in adult learning. This comparative group will focus on two major aspects of gender and AI. One of them is how women use AI in their learning, what their main motivations are, what kind of difficulties they face AI literacy-wise, and how they relate to AI use in their learning. The other point is how women learners think they could intervene with the gender-biased content that they might come across through their learning. For the wider discussions of inclusion in learning and AI, this comparative group will provide insights about gender dynamics in relation to AI.In this comparative group, we will focus on understanding how gender plays an important role in access to AI learning capacities and how AI literacy could be discussed in relation to gender dynamics. In this respect, this comparative group will conduct qualitative research on how women use AI in their learning. This qualitative research aims to unfold differences and similarities among countries as well as understandings about gender and AI discussions in national and international contexts. We expect students of this comparative group to conduct in-depth interviews with women students at the university in their home countries to collect qualitative data.

Role of practitioners

The practitioner for the good practice presentation could be from an NGO or not-for-profit organisation that contributes to AI literacy of women and any disadvantaged group. AI-related media literacy could be of interest. This practitioner could be from an NGO that works on digital rights and international/ national AI regulations advocacy.The practitioner for the good practice presentation could be from an NGO or not-for-profit organisation that contributes to AI literacy of women and any disadvantaged group. AI-related media literacy could be of interest. This practitioner could be from an NGO that works on digital rights and international/ national AI regulations advocacy.

Comparative research question

1. How woman learners use AI in their learning processes ?

Context of comparison

In this comparative group, through conducting in-depth interviews with women learners at the university studying in diverse fields (if applicable), qualitative data will be collected, and textual analysis will be conducted during the winter school, to identify similarities and differences of women learners' use of AI in their learning, at various levels, national and international, as well as field-specific if applicable.



Categories of comparison

- Category 1: Women learners' motivations for AI use in their learning
- Category 2: The barriers women learners face while using AI in their learning
- Category 3: The suggestions of women learners about support mechanisms for AI literacy in adult learning ecologies
- Category 4: Women learners' insights on gender-biased content they face in their learning

References

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Ph.D Burcu Şimşek, Hacettepe University Ankara, Turkey

Burcu Şimşek is an associate professor at Hacettepe University, Faculty of Communication, Department of Communication Sciences, Ankara, Turkey. She completed her PhD with a thesis on digital storytelling and feminist activism at the Faculty of Creative Industries, Queensland University of Technology, Australia, in 2012. She holds an MSc in Women's Studies from Ankara University and a BA in English Language and Literature from Hacettepe University. She started her career as a journalist in 1998. Since then, she has been involved with storytelling. She is the founder and coordinator of the Digital Storytelling Unit at Hacettepe University. She has facilitated over 140 digital storytelling workshops in Turkey and abroad for various groups on diverse themes since 2009. Her fields of academic interest are digital storytelling, women's studies, new media, higher education, and migration. She teaches in the Bachelor's, Master's, and PhD programs in Communication Sciences, as well as the Cultural Studies and Media MA Program, which she contributed to as a program developer.

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Certification and follow-up

Participation certificate and grading possibilities

After successfully participating in the Adult Education Academy and completing an essay, students receive a certificate of attendance (10 ECTS). All formally registered students can opt to participate in an examination for receiving a formal transcript including a grade
(15 ECTS).
Participation is considered successful after **attending the complete programme** and either **submitted an essay and passed the plagiarism check (master's and doctoral students) or if you gave a good practice presentation during the Academy (practitioners).**

Please be aware that **participation is only possible if you complete the preparations during the preparation phase and attend the full programme**, which starts on 01 February 2027, 8.00 CET and ends on 12 February 2027 at 17.00 CET. In exceptional cases, which will be considered individually, it is possible to receive individual certificates for one of the two weeks or a good practice presentation.

Option 1 (10 ECTS)	Option 2 (15 ECTS + grade)
Participation in the online preparatory phase + 100% attendance at the Academy in february	Participation in the online preparatory phase + 100% attendance at the Academy in february
Submission of an essay/ good practice presentation	Submission of an essay/ good practice presentation
	Submission of the essay/ good practice essay for grading and a plagiarism check

Publication option

Doctoral students and practitioners have the option to get guidance for publishing a joint comparative paper together with their comparative group moderators after the Adult Education Academy. Further information for those interested in this option will be provided during the Adult Education Academy.



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#AEAcademyWue

LinkedIn Network

The LinkedIn Network for adult education and lifelong learning is one of several features of the annual Adult Education Academy. Our aim is to connect students, researchers, experts and professors interested in adult education and lifelong learning. We offer the “professional network” LinkedIn group. As a (future) participant with a LinkedIn account, we invite you to join the professional network.

The “Professional network for adult education and lifelong learning”

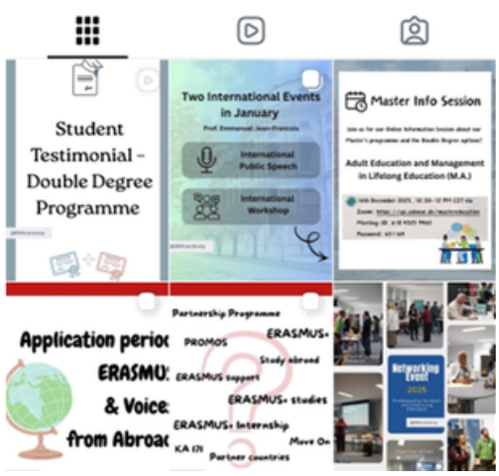
The professional network is a group for professionals, whose jobs, studies or interests link them to adult education and lifelong learning. For this reason, we have set up our public LinkedIn group for participants from all former Adult Education Academies and also for professionals working in the field. Not only will you be able to connect with fellow students and professionals, you will also get information about international conferences, fellowships/scholarships, research projects, recently published papers, calls for papers, professional newsletters, online presentations and, of course, member’s thoughts about various topics in adult education and lifelong learning. This group already has over 2400 members from all over the world.

Join our professional LinkedIn network
go.uniwue.de/linkedin-network

The Professorship for Adult and Continuing Education on Social Media

Follow us on Instagram (@ebwuerzburg)! We post information about the Chair of Adult/Continuing Education on our Instagram account. You can also reach us here for general questions via direct message.





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Exchange Programme Winter Semester 2026/27

Course title	Lecturer

Exchange programme https://go.uniwue.de/exchangeprogramme

Scholarships and funding

Scholarships
Unfortunately, we do not currently have any information on financial support or scholarships.

Students from the European Union
An ERASMUS Blended Intensive Programme has been applied for. Students from European universities should contact their International Office regarding the possibility of ERASMUS funding.



JMU platforms

Catalogue University Library Würzburg
In the catalogue you will find books and other media that are printed or available electronically from us. At the same time, you can also search many databases and other sources for independent literature, such as articles from magazines. This literature is not always available with us.
Searching the catalogue - University Library (uni-wuerzburg.de)

Outlook / Microsoft Exchange
You can retrieve the e-mail address that you receive from the university at any time without a special mail client from the browser (@stud-mail.uniwuerzburg.de).
JMU Mail (uni-wuerzburg.de)

WueCampus
WueCampus is the university-wide online learning platform that provides the learning content, the organisation of learning units and learning processes, and serves as a communication platform.
WueCampus (uni-wuerzburg.de)

WueMahara
Mahara is an e-portfolio software with community functions. The system supports the documentation and reflection of the learning process and the learning outcomes.
Home page - Mahara (uni-wuerzburg.de)

WueStudy
WueStudy is the campus management system of the JMU and supports the entire student life cycle for all participants. On the platform you can find application management, student management, course management, event and room management and audit management.
Home page - WueStudy (uni-wuerzburg.de)

Zoom
Zoom Meetings is a video conferencing tool with recording and screen sharing features.
Video conferences, web conferences, Webinars, Screensharing - Zoom

Team of the Adult Education Academy



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We wish you all the best!

Adult Education Academy 2027

International and comparative studies in adult education and lifelong learning

AEA ACADEMY-GUIDE

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