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Is professionalisation of adult educators important?

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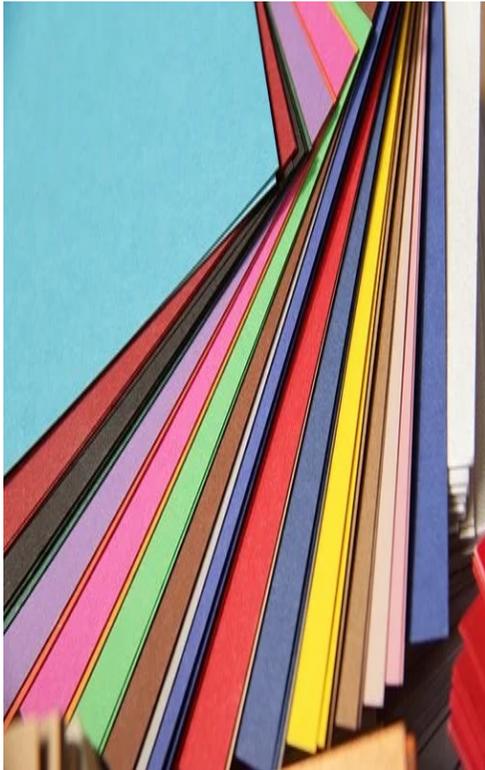


Structure of the presentation

1. Adult education is a professional or an occupational field?
2. Are adult educators professionals?
3. Becoming adult educators: how do they learn to become adult educators?
4. The Portuguese case: how is the debate on professionalisation of adult educators?



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1. Adult education is a professional or an occupational field?

Adult education is characterised by diversity and complexity (Canário, 1999; Merriam & Brockett, 2007) .

In what refers to adult education practices, it includes several streams:

- Literacy
- Formal/second-chance education/higher education
- Recognition of prior learning
- Vocational education and training
- Popular education/community education
- Liberal adult education
- Local development
- Educational and cultural activities
- Activities within social movements
- Etc.



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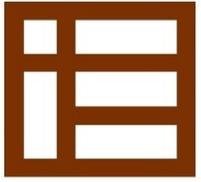


Adult education is developed within a wide range of organisations (Guimarães, 2016):

- State dependant/public organisations
- Profit-making organisations
- Civil society/non-governmental organisations

- Formal education organisations
- Non-formal education organisations
- Informal education organisations

- Educational organisations (such as schools)
- Cultural organisations (such as museums)
- Social and cultural organisations (such as leisure time organisations)
- Work organisations (such as in workplaces or within training departments)
- Etc.



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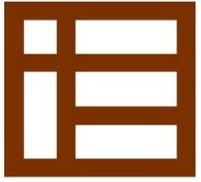
2. Are adult educators professionals?



The referred organisations may have adult educators

- Teachers
- Trainers
- Facilitators
- Counsellors
- Mediators
- Activists
- Etc.

These adult educators can full hired on full time or part-time; they can also be freelancers or volunteers.



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A professional did follow a research-based formal education path, uses a 'professional language', holds a formal licensing or registration in a professional association, follows ethical guidelines and is the subject of a system of sanctions if these guidelines are not followed, and, finally, holds a certain degree of professional autonomy and responsibility (Andersson et al., 2013)

Adult education is not a traditional/classical professional field (Jütte, Nicoll & Olesen, 2011)

It is an occupational field under a new professionalism trend (Egetenmeyer, Breitschwerdt & Lechner, 2019)



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Adult educators develop a wide range of competences (Research voor Beleid, 2010), namely formal competences based on a theoretical learning or teaching curriculum leading to a qualification and concrete competences – practical learning/learning curriculum - as an outcome of work developed (Lave & Wenger, 1991):

- needs assessment activities
- preparation of courses
- facilitation of learning
- monitoring and evaluation
- counselling and guidance activities
- programme development activities
- Etc.



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3. Becoming adult educators: how do they learn to become adult educators?

Adult educators are characterised by fragmented formal initial adult education pathways – “fragmented formal expertise” (Research-voor-Beleid/PLATO 2008; Andersson et al., 2013)

For many, “becoming an adult educator happened” after other educational (and professional) choices – a “winding road”. Learning to become an adult educator was often made hands-on work, as well as a result as a “desire for a new career” or as “a plan B” (Paulos, 2021)

For some others, it was an educational (and professional) “first choice” within higher education path (degree, master level or PhD) – following a “straight way” (Andersson et al., 2013)



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4. The Portuguese case: how is the debate on professionalisation of adult educators?



Adult education in Portugal: a diversified and complex field of practices, organisations and adult educators (Canário, 1999)

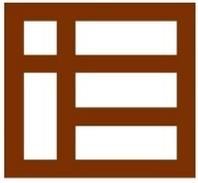
Existing adult educators do not identify themselves as such (Paulos, 2014)

From 2000, within the adult education and training policy, a restrict labour market for some adult educators was created – recognition of prior learning technicians, trainers and mediators (Guimarães & Barros, 2015)

A weak process of professionalisation started but was abandoned due to discontinuous policies and the technical dimensions of work achieved (Guimarães, 2016).

Two paths for professionalisation under (a weak academic) debate:

- Higher education path (Egetenmeyer & Schüßler, 2014)
- Experiential learning path (Paulos, 2014)



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