

Recensões

Contemporary issues and perspectives on gender research in adult education, edited by Maja Maksimovic, Joanna Ostrouch-Kaminska, Katarina Popovic, & Aleksandar Bulajic. Belgrade: Institute for Pedagogy and Andragogy, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade; ESREA – European Society for Research on the Education of Adults; Adult Education Society, 2016, 284 pp.

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This is an e-book, published by the Institute for Pedagogy and Andragogy, University of Belgrade, Serbia, the European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA) and Adult Education Society, Serbia, in October 2016. It is written in English by thirty-two authors, the majority of whom do not have English as their first language, which is an awe inspiring achievement. The issue of language is important for the book, as authors Alzira Manuel and Oleg Popov mention, some meaning is inevitably lost in translation, both in the research that is conducted and in production of the book as a whole. The book comprises an editorial introduction and five different sections, with seventeen chapters based on research mainly undertaken in Serbia but also in Poland, Portugal, Germany, Mozambique, Bulgaria and Australia. I will begin with some general comments on the book as a whole and then focus on each of the sections.

The reach of the book is ambitious both in terms of content and contexts. As the different sections attest: philosophy, history and gender; methodologies of gender research (referred to as ‘methodologizing gender’ which is not an English term I know); gender, academia and power; exploring masculinities; and gender in adult education practice. The book’s reach is both its strength and its weakness. The range of contexts and topics covered demonstrates the vastness of the potential research for gendered research in adult education, however, it is unable to explore any of the topics in depth which leaves the reader wanting to know and probe more.

The research that is reported varies in a number of ways. Several of the chapters are conveying preliminary findings, or are describing research ‘in-progress’. Some others are well developed, with the theorising of the research having

matured and ripened richly. The editorial introduction gets right into the topics of philosophy, history, practice and gender research, with no introduction to the genesis of the project and reasons for the form and shape of the book. It would have helped readers to understand why and how the project came about and some of the theoretical assumptions that were underpinning the editors' decisions. It would also have helped to have some of the terms that are central to the book discussed and unpacked systematically. It does not, for example, set out understandings of gender, sexuality or feminism and how they manifest in the chapters – in what ways are authors understanding gender, sexuality or feminism and their relevance for adult education, similarly or differently?

In reading the chapters, it is striking to note how many authors understand gender to mean 'woman'. This is at a time when intersectionality of identities (such as race, class, gender, disability, age and sexuality) is hotly debated in theory and practice in many parts of the world. Intersectionality became a theoretical and conceptual critique of this essentialism. In turn, intersectional identities have been criticised for neglecting the dynamic relationship of these identities that are co-constitutive of different oppressions in relation to structural inequalities (Gouws 2017). Some of the chapters allude to some of the tensions, for example, Golding's chapter on Men's Sheds Movement and Christine Buchwald's chapter on why men do not speak about sexualized violence during the war.

Some of the possible reasons for 'woman' as a synonym for gender are implicit in chapters which describe historical and political contexts of Serbia, for example, the chapter by Natasa Vujisic Zivkovi, and Katarina Popovic on 'policies on the education of girls in 19th century Serbia'. However, it would be of interest to have the editors discuss more explicitly why this is the case. The multiple, different understandings of feminism could also have been teased out. As it stands, the reader is left not necessarily knowing where the tensions and contradictions are within the debates, the research and within adult educational practices. Another concept which is much debated in the field of adult education is 'andragogy'. There are several parts of the world which no longer use the term – what does this discussion constitute? How can we enrich our global understandings by hearing more clearly the arguments for and against the use of the term?

The first section on *philosophy, history and gender* has two chapters. The first is on *Philosophy and gender in adult education discourse in Poland* by Agnieszka Sembrzuska. This chapter situates the discussion well within the historical and cultural context of Poland. It is a preliminary discussion of the intersections between philosophy, gender and adult education and still needs further development. Natasa Vujisic Zivkovic and Katarina Popovic introduce readers to 'policies on the education of girls in 19th century Serbia'. The title of the chapter focuses on girls however they do focus on girls and women's education. They point to the continuities from 19th century to 21st century patriarchal approaches and attitudes to girls and women's education. This section argues for the importance of history and philosophy in discussions of adult education in Eastern Europe.

The second section is entitled '*methodologizing gender*' and it consists of two chapters. The first is entitled *Multisensory research methodologies: an exploration of the process of becoming a woman* by Maja Maksimovic and Aleksandar Bulajic. This is an ambitious and imaginative attempt to explore alternative ways of researching concepts through use of drama to counter rational ways of being and knowing. It is a dense piece of writing which does need more careful setting out of the concepts and issues. It reads as a first draft with many fascinating and important elements which require maturation and more systematic elaboration. More background as to how the research process was set up would be helpful. I will be interested to read further elaborations of this work as it develops. The second paper is entitled *Gender approach issue in students' research papers*, by Zorica Milosevic, Snezana Medic. The authors analysed 72 student papers to see how gender was taken up in the research papers. Examples of what and how they identified 'gender' in their various categories would have enriched the chapter. They make important recommendations on the need to have more gendered approaches to adult education and research in curricula.

The third section is entitled *Gender, academia and power* and has five chapters. The first is on *Conceptions of feminism, machismo and sexism in final year graduation students of three different courses of social sciences: a Portuguese exploratory study*, by Cristina Vieira and Maria Jorge Ferro. The second is on *Gendering student parents in higher education* by Marie-Pierre Moreau. The third covers *Who is who in faculty management in Serbia* by Aleksandra Pejatovic and Violeta Orlovic Lovren. The next chapter is on *Gender related obstacles in higher education*, by Jelena Dermanov, Marijana Kosanovic, and Jelena Vukicevic. *Work satisfaction and challenges in scientific career-women's perspective*, is then analysed by Natasa Simic, Vesna Dordevic. Most of the studies are capturing the current subordinate position of women academics or students within the academy without necessarily addressing the question as to why it is so or how the inequalities and injustices can be changed. The chapter by Marie-Pierre Moreau on the gendering of students as parents recognises the need for wider discussions on masculinities and femininities, parenting and academia. The author acknowledges power relations as intersectional and the highly gendered managerial university discourses.

The fourth section is entitled *Exploring masculinities* and has three chapters which enrich understandings about formations of masculine identities and cover: *Masculinity, intergenerational relations in a family and care: Men learning care in adulthood* by Joanna Ostrouch-Kaminska, and Iwona Chmura-Rutkowska. The research is based in Poland and is about adult sons learning to take care of aging parents. The second is on *Critical reflections on role of the men's shed movement in changing perceptions about learning by older men in community settings*, by Barry Golding, and which reflects on the men's shed movement which started in Australia. The author points to some of the complex issues relating to identity politics. The third is entitled, *what men do not speak about – sexualized violence during war and its consequences*, by Christine Buchwald. She uses the theories of Bourdieu and Connell

to explain how hard it is for men to talk about sexualised violence in war. Each of the chapters, either explicitly or implicitly, highlights the importance of gendered educational programmes and approaches to enable attainment of greater gender equality.

The fifth section is on *Gender in Adult Education Practice* and consists of five chapters which focus primarily on participation in adult education of different groups of people. The first is on *Gender differences and adult participation in leisure education*, by Tamara Nikoloc Maksic and Nikola Koruga. Importantly, this chapter introduces queer theory as the authors argue for the deconstruction of the binary understandings of gender. The second is on *Adult education in science technology, engineering and maths under the gender aspect: a critical overview of programs and strategies in Germany*, by Elisabeth Sander, Martina Endepohls-Ulpe, and Claudia Quaiser-Pohl. The third is *Exploring gender differences in participants' motivations and expectations in non-formal vocational education and training programmes in Mozambique*, by Alzira Manuel, Oleg Popov. The fourth chapter asks: *Do old women study in Bulgaria? Preferred methods of training for men and women aged 65+*, by Maria Ivanova and Aneta Dimitrova. This chapter highlights importantly the differences amongst urban and rural people thus further challenging essentialised notions of the universal 'man' or 'woman'. The final chapter focuses on *The adult education and training courses in the Portuguese society: a look at the female presence*, by Antonieta Rocha, Teresa Cardoso.

In summary, the book makes an important start to emphasising in both practical and theoretical ways how critical gendered approaches to adult education are across a wide range of sectors and sites of practice. Several of the chapters demonstrate the profound gender inequalities that continue to exist. A deepening of understandings of these gendered inequalities, which are predicated on economic, political, cultural, philosophical and historical conditions, is very important to challenge unequal power relations in all their manifestations through the ways we as adult educators work towards attainment of gender justice.

References

Gouws, Amanda, *When identity politics and feminism clash*, Mail and Guardian January 13-19 January 2017. Available at: <https://mg.co.za/article/2017-01-10-when-identity-politics-and-feminism-clash> (accessed: 05-06-2017)