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Title: How do and how can institutions of adult education respond to migration? A critical view on approaches to deal with diversity and discrimination in adult education.

Abstract

A variety of studies regarding migrants as target group of adult learning already exists. On the other hand research on the challenges for organisational change enhancing diversity and avoiding discrimination is less explored. My paper aims to present a critical analysis of three approaches (managing diversity – fighting institutional racism – „intercultural opening“), which differ concerning their main goals, their traditions, their fields of practice and the discourses of legitimation (like social justice, recognition of differences, economic success etc.) behind those concepts. Amongst others I will look critically at the hype around „diversity“ and it’s consequences in terms of de-politicisation.

The paper will be based on theoretical and empirical results from an Austrian applied research project (05/2012-05/2014). The study explores the representation and access of migrants in/to professions (and appropriate qualification programs) in the field of adult and continuing education by analysing structure and practices of selected institutions as well as the perspective of migrants. Our research is based on grounded theory, framing our analysis within the theoretical discourses of representation, critical and intercultural pedagogy, antidiscrimination, anti-racism and critical whiteness. One of the main goals is to identify criteria for institutions of adult education who want to undergo a process of organisational development to cope with the complex challenges according to migration.

The methods are qualitative interviews, online surveys, focus-groups with experts from migrant communities and adult education. Furthermore experts with migrant biographies are also involved as researchers within a special setting of participatory research („Forschungswerkstätte“). The research team cooperates with adult education institutions, so that there will be a tight transfer of the findings and the development of new approaches for the practical work. At the time of the conference the transfer part of the project will be realised and is ready to be discussed on the basis of concrete experiences.