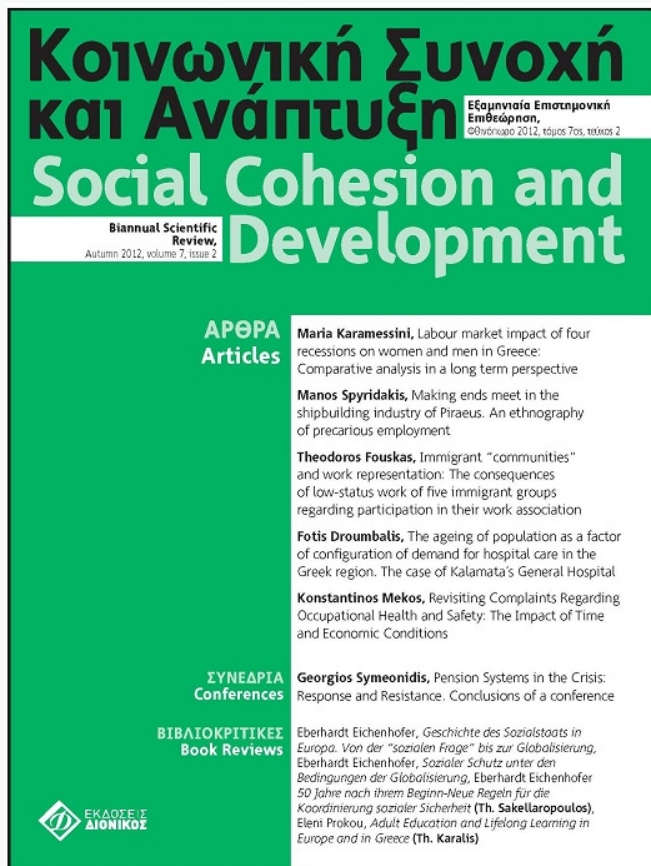


Social Cohesion and Development

Vol 7, No 2 (2012)



Eleni Prokou, *Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in Europe and in Greece*. Dionicos Publishers, Athens 2009, (in Greek)

Thanassis Karalis

doi: [10.12681/scad.8985](https://doi.org/10.12681/scad.8985)

Copyright © 2016, Thanassis Karalis



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

To cite this article:

Karalis, T. (2016). Eleni Prokou, *Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in Europe and in Greece*. Dionicos Publishers, Athens 2009, (in Greek). *Social Cohesion and Development*, 7(2), 160–162. <https://doi.org/10.12681/scad.8985>

The third book is a volume edited by E. Eichenhofer that presents and assesses the 50-year long experience resulting from the coordination of social security systems. It contains expert contributions presented at the annual conference of the European Institute for Social Security in Berlin in 2008. A summary of the conference key findings has already been published in 'Social Cohesion and Development' 2008/2 issue by D. Tsotsorou. The volume deals with significant legal aspects of the Community *acquis* on the coordination of social security systems (such as pensions, health, family benefits, employment etc.). The chapters bring to light the very positive role of the coordination system, as well as its strengths and weaknesses yet at the same time and as also highlighted in Eichenhofer's introductory chapter all contributors agree on the fact that national systems have been linked in a way that prohibits double insurance and covers existing voids.

All three books are a valuable and well-founded contribution in understanding the process of the transformation of the modern welfare state in world-wide dimension and provide a strong argument in favor of social Europe and social globalization. Obviously, given that they were written before the crisis they are a reflection of a different period. Nevertheless, the main issues identified by the author pertaining to the need to transform national social rules into international ones and the need for establishing a supranational social law are still present. Ultimately, this is the answer so as to maintain welfare, combat unemployment and social dumping and protect employees and citizens throughout the world from the consequences of unrestrained capitalism which threatens to destroy both the human and natural resources of the planet.

Theodoros Sakellariopoulos
Panteion University

Eleni Prokou,
Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in Europe and in Greece.
Dionicos Publishers, Athens 2009, (in Greek).

The development of adult education and lifelong learning is relatively recent in Greece, for reasons directly related to the development of the Greek social formation. However, in the period after the dictatorship (that is, after the mid-1970s), there has been a sharp increase in the relative activities, mainly because of their funding from the European Union. During the last two decades, there has also been a remarkable production of scientific discourse, which should be attributed to the functioning of a relatively small, albeit active, academic community. The foundation of the Hellenic Open University, and the Hellenic Adult Education Association - in relation to the existence of the first specialists in the field of adult education / lifelong learning in the academia - led to a remarkable growth of research output. The book by Eleni Prokou adds to a series of remarkable discourses in the fields of lifelong learning and adult education in Greece.

It has been almost eighty years since the first reference to the term *lifelong education* appeared in the classic work by B. Yaxlee, *Lifelong Education*, in 1929, and during these years, the term has undergone various differentiations. In fact, the first systematic attempt to conceptualise and give meaning to the term is found in the 1972 Unesco Report, under the title "Learning to Be: The World of Education Today and Tomorrow" (also known as Faure Report). In this report, lifelong education

is mostly seen as a necessary principle for the overall organisation of the educational systems to be based on. It is a principle associated with a holistic conception of the learning phenomenon: it surrounds the entire spectrum of life and integrates the various aspects of Coombs' typology (formal, non formal and informal education) into a single grid of complementary activities. The concept of the *educational continuum* is at the heart of this conception and according to the Unesco Report, this concept stresses the need for a fundamental restructuring of educational systems.

From the times of the Faure Report until today, the term *lifelong education* has undergone many important changes, the most important of which has probably been its gradual replacement by the term *lifelong learning*, which (although more complete conceptually to describe lifewide and lifelong learning) poses the risk that there is a shift of educational policies, from *education* as an obligation of the welfare state, to *learning* as the individual responsibility of the citizen. At the same time, from the beginning of the 1980s onwards, the term - originally consolidated in the 1970s in order to denote the value *per se* of learning and education - has been used in policy documents of international and national organisations as synonymous to the continuous upgrading of the skills of the work force to effectively meet the needs of the labour market. In other words, it was used in most western societies so that the adult education policies are turned solely to the needs of the economic field. A large number of researchers have turned their interests in the mechanisms, the financial means, and the rhetoric accompanying the mutation of the term *lifelong learning*. In the preface of her book, the author expresses with clarity her intention to deal with this issue ("the purpose of this study is to investigate the dominance of continuing vocational education and training, as one form of adult education, at international, European and national level").

When analysing lifelong learning policies, several researchers make a common mistake: they consider that these policies are uniform, in the sense that they produce the same results irrespective of the nature of the social formations against which they are implemented. Indeed, the policies of international and supranational organisations show a remarkable uniformity in their goals and means. However, it is a methodological mistake to assume from the beginning that these policies produce the same results in the countries in which policies are implemented. Regarding this issue, Prokou makes her position clear in the preface of the book, by arguing that national education and training systems have kept their particularities despite the converging positions in the discourse of international and supranational organisations.

It is however necessary to clarify that researchers, in trying to investigate and ultimately capture the individual modalities, need to proceed to a thorough study of policies developed at international and national level, but also to analyse facts in individual societies. This kind of investigation requires the use of methods and techniques of comparative evaluation, which should be based on solid methodological choices. The author manages to do so in the second chapter of the first part of the book, where she studies three different cases, representative of the policy models in the area of lifelong learning in Europe: the demand-led model of 'voluntary partnership' (the UK), the social partnership' model (Sweden) and the more 'statist' model (Greece). The analysis of the data taken from the three different contexts of adult education shows that adult education and training systems developed in different ways in the three countries that were examined, despite the fact that at the same time, the policy of the European Union was uniform, absolutely clear, with specific targets, but also with similar financial terms.

The second part of the book is dedicated exclusively to the case of Greece and to the exploration of the field of adult education in this country, for the period 2000-2006. Given the scarcity of data, but also the fragmentation that usually accompanies them (when finally identified), the Greek researchers in this area face serious problems, as their research work is undermined by

these objective difficulties. Therefore, the amount of data - from all subsystems of the two pillars of adult education (namely continuing vocational training and general adult education) - which Prokou managed to collect and analyse is surprising. We believe that these data have an additional value, as a source for secondary analyses and for other researchers in the future, while the tables with the data and the policy documents (listed in the Appendices of the book) have their own value for the analysis of the period under investigation. Prokou's main conclusion, coming from the analysis of her factual material, is that in Greece, during the period under investigation, priority was given to the programmes aiming at fighting unemployment and social exclusion (understood as a consequence of unemployment). At the same time, an unequal relation between the two basic pillars of adult education was established, since the larger part of the programmes fell within the field of continuing vocational training, with a strong under-representation of the programmes of general adult education, in all lifelong learning actions. Prokou uses strong arguments to show that this situation was due to the relatively centralised character of the Greek system of adult education and to the fact that the larger part of European funding was channelled to the training programmes aiming at fighting unemployment and social exclusion. This is an argument, which is not arbitrary but, instead, is based entirely on the conclusions regarding the Greek case, as these were drawn from the first part of the book.

In conclusion, Prokou's book is expected to be very useful in various areas. First, it can be used as a textbook at undergraduate and postgraduate levels of study, for young scholars and researchers to understand the way a comparative analysis in the field of adult education and training is conducted. It is also useful for researchers in adult education, as they can have available data, analyses and conclusions, with reference to the development of the field in a quite interesting time period. It is a comprehensive work, which contributes to the development and the promotion of the academic discourse on lifelong learning and adult education in Greece.

Thanassis Karalis,
University of Patras