

“ADULT LEARNING & COMMUNITIES IN A WORLD ON THE MOVE: BETWEEN NATIONAL TENSIONS AND TRANSNATIONAL CHALLENGES”

UNIVERSITY OF LOWER SILESIA, FACULTY OF EDUCATION,
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Community efforts to compensate for state's failure: Voluntary-based adult education for refugees

If education is meant to continue lifelong, adult education should be one of the main components of this lifelong learning process. Adults can have social, economic or personal benefits from learning and adult education can play a key role especially for the refugees in terms of supporting them to get included in the host country. According to the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA, 2015), the adult education for refugee learners should be done by professionals who have the training; yet, when state falls behind supporting the refugees with such types of education, the civil society can be a support.

This study will discuss the movements of voluntary groups and local initiatives who take action and organize educational facilities for adult refugees to further their integration and inclusion to social life and also to bring the local society and the refugees together to create a culture of living together in Hatay, a city at the border of Turkey to Syria and a destination for a big number of Syrian refugees. In the city, the majority of the refugee population live outside camps, which makes them deprived from the adult education facilities offered by the authorized institutions in camps. As an alternative to the facilities offered in camps, the refugees have the possibility of benefitting from lifelong learning courses offered in the city for free. Yet, Turkish adult education is offered by adult education centers or by Turkish employment agency where the aim is mainly to support school, to prepare for exams, to provide literacy and vocational training or leisure time activities.

However, according to EAEA (2015), arranging intercultural meetings should also be a responsibility of adult education especially in the refugee context. EAEA emphasizes the importance of tolerance and respect to stand against xenophobia and refers to adult education as a key to cultivate active citizenship and intercultural competences. Such possibilities can build a more fruitful connection between refugees and host population. Unfortunately, Turkish non-formal adult education system offers almost no educational activities in terms of intercultural or multicultural adult education, democratic participation or active citizenship (Ünlühisarcıklı, 2008), which gives the responsibility to voluntary-based initiatives.

With this study, the aim was to describe the situation and the practices done to engage refugee adults and the local community on a voluntary basis. The data were collected through observations, intensive interviews with locals and refugees and expert interviews done with three NGO's and a theatre association who organize educational activities for adult refugees. The characteristics of providers, participants, educational practices, community support and state support are to be demonstrated by relying on the data derived from one-to one interaction and observation. The data analysis is being done with a specific focus on if or how this voluntary practices build dialog between locals and refugees, the challenges faced, if or how state supports and refugees' expectations from such facilities and their evaluation about the offers.

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