

Heribert Hinzen

**Adult and higher education as lifelong learning for sustainable development -
with some biographical reflections on receiving the Doctor Honoris Causa title from the
Moldova State University**

Honorabilis and Spectabilis,
Distinguished Guests,
Dear Colleagues,

Appreciation and gratitude

The initial notification and inquiry from Moldova State University to confer the Doctor Honoris Causa title on me came with a statement on my involvement with DVV International and the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) “in the process of adult education and the development of international policy documents on adult education and the quality of education in general.”

I am pleased and very grateful for this recognition as it covers almost a lifetime involvement with both institutions, and those achievements supporting their concepts and practices. Complementary to a discussion of some developments in our field of education I shall therefore take on a biographical lens in bringing together political, professional and personal developments over the last fifty years.

Actually it was in the mid-1970s that I came closer to both institutions, and it all had to do with my doctoral research on *Adult Education and Development in Tanzania* which I did in comparative studies of education at the University of Heidelberg. UNESCO organized in 1975 the International Conference on Comparative Structures of Adult Education in Kenya, where I participated and wrote a report for the DVV journal *Adult Education and Development*.

At that time the UIL had a series of studies on educational reforms towards lifelong learning. They in turn got interested and involved us in the coordination of a study on *Education for Liberation and Development. The Tanzanian Experience*. “Education Never Ends” was the slogan which Julius Nyerere used as President of the Republic of Tanzania in his New Year Speech in 1969. Subsequently I wrote a paper on *Some considerations on adult education within a concept of lifelong learning in Tanzania* during my stay at the Research and Planning Department of the Institute of Adult Education in Dar es Salaam.

All of these were stepping stones to join DVV International as full time staff member in 1977, and become Deputy-Director and Editor of the journal *Adult Education and Development* already a year later. Ever since I stayed close with DVV International, and became Honorary Fellow of UIL as well as Member of the Editorial Board of the *International Review of Education. Journal of Lifelong Learning* more recently.

Coming to Moldova in 1993

When I came to Moldova for the first time 25 years ago the country was in the beginning of far reaching developments following the aftermath of the end of the Soviet Union. Only a few years earlier Germany had been in the midst of those dramatic changes culminating in the breakdown of the Berlin Wall, and a re-unification of what had been divided for decades into East and West, following the end of World War 2, and the unknown new avenues for Central and Eastern European countries and their people.

At that time we all felt the immediate impact in the political and economic, but also in the social and cultural spheres. Of course it was different for each of us, maybe easier for the younger than the older generations, for us in the middle age range quite challenging as we had to re-learn and re-orient towards fast changing realities. The impact on our educational systems and institutions were quite substantial also. Earlier knowledge became less relevant quickly; foreign languages like Russia or English lost or gained importance.

During that period I was already Director of DVV International, and we were suddenly caught in a situation where the multiple crises opened up opportunities in numbers and varieties which we could not have imagined. Partners in Hungary and Poland were interested in extended cooperation and helped to open DVV offices in Budapest and Warsaw in 1991, followed shortly by those in St. Petersburg and Bucharest.

My visit to consult and negotiate with partners in Romania was used to travel to Chisinau during an extremely cold winter period in order to establish contacts and explore potential options, hosted by one of the Cultural Houses, well remembered by Professor Vladimir Gutu. Now 25 years later I was overwhelmed to be invited to join such an event of fruitful cooperation between the University of Iasi and the Moldova State University, and to observe and support the DVV International office and its partners from Government and Civil Society.

Volkshochschulen and DVV International

What does DVV International actually stand for? In today's world we are used to ask Google. On top of the list for DVV appears the German Volleyball Association, having the same abbreviation like us. But our DVV stands for Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband which is the national association of Volkshochschulen (VHS), centers for adult education and community learning on local level in Germany. There are three important points in this context which I should like to draw your attention:

- The VHS have a long tradition with roots that hail back into the enlightenment for civic and into early industrialization for vocational aspects of education. However, it was the move toward democracy ending our emperor system after the disaster of World War 1 which enshrined into the constitution of the Weimarer Republic a most important clause: "Adult education, including the Volkshochschulen, should be supported at national, provincial and local level." This was in 1919, and we shall

therefore celebrate 100 Years of VHS in 2019. The President of the Federal Constitutional Court will grace the occasion with his presence and keynote.

- The latest statistics on the system of the VHS reveal that participants in the variety of courses, lectures, study visits or exhibitions last year reached more than 9 Million people, mostly in the age range between 24 and 64, some of them younger, the number of the elderly is growing due to demographic changes. More than 2 Million came for languages; others participate in political or vocational courses, health or nutrition education, cultural activities and community services. The VHS are the most important provider of language courses for the integration of migrants and refugees with more than 300.000 participants last year.
- In all there are 900 centers and 3.500 sub-centers of such VHS in Germany, covering all villages, towns and cities, including the VHS Munich as the largest which had 250.000 participants in 2017 alone. The DVV represents the interests of the VHS from local and regional on the national level, concerned with advocacy work, engaged in better policy, legislation, and finances, and providing pedagogical and professional services. DVV International is thus the respective Institute of the VHS involved in international adult education cooperation for development with more than 200 partners and offices in more than 30 countries.

It would be a great opportunity to meet some of you in the coming year in Germany. 2019 is when the Volkshochschulen will be 100 years, and DVV International, founded in 1969, will have its 50 years anniversary – time for celebration and reflection.

Adult education and lifelong learning

You may imagine that as somebody interested in adult education and believing in lifelong, lifewide, and lifedeeep learning as a paradigm and looking at living as learning, I always felt at the right place working with partners for DVV International and UNESCO.

In this context we started early to challenge the United Nations enshrined right to education being interpreted as a right to schooling – only. We argued that education and learning throughout life is the right we should be struggling for. This is not to undermine or minimize the importance of early childhood education or all forms and levels of the school system. We must have high quality kindergarten, primary and secondary schools. But this needs to be continued into vocational and professional training, and that is where adult and higher education come in as educational service providers with a lifelong orientation.

UNESCO took up this challenge to change the paradigm for education by creating Review Commissions. In 1972 the Faure Report *Learning to be: The world of education today and tomorrow* came up with a strong support for lifelong learning. In 1995 the Delors Report

titled *The treasure within* followed with the four pillars on “learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together”. It became a landmark for educational reform. And I remember very well when we wrote an intervention from a Civil Society perspective on *Adult education and lifelong learning: Issues, concerns and recommendations* on behalf of the International Council for Adult Education for the Delors Commission. A slightly different kind of report came out in 2015 alongside the World Education Forum as *Rethinking Education. Towards a global common good?*

CONFINTEA, the International Conferences on Adult Education organized by UNESCO are important platforms to strengthen policy making. The most recent was 2009 in Brazil, and in the Drafting Group for its outcome document, the *Belem Framework for Action*, we could achieve a clear lifelong learning dimension, and at the same time include and describe adult education and community centers as central places on local level to provide learning opportunities. The Suwon Midterm Review in 2017 called for such centers to enable and increase participation. DVV International tabled the *Key Messages* from his Adult Education and Development Conference in Tbilisi as a growing concern with high relevance in the age of globalization and digitalization.

The Director of the German Institute for Adult Education – Leibnitz Center for Lifelong Learning recently addressed the leadership of the working group of VHS in larger cities of Germany. In his presentation on public responsibility and equity he came up with the following figures for Germany in 2016: Out of almost 40 Million participants in different forms of education, learning and training there are more than 8 Million in primary and secondary schools, above 2 Million in vocational training, almost 3 Million in higher education, but more than 26 Million in the diverse field of civic and general, vocational and professional adult and further education. This is by far the largest group, and therefore deserves highest attention as a service of public responsibility. Some argue however that actually this should be no question as adulthood covers the longest period of life, and most people of a society are adults also.

Higher education and sustainable development

The perspective of lifelong learning was taken into the debates towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). We were not yet strong enough in the 2000 Dakar World Education Forum which proclaimed Education for All (EFA) and goals to be reached by the year 2015. We neither got the term adult education, nor higher education, nor lifelong learning in. But almost similar to broadening the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) to call for the SDG, we were looking for a broader orientation of EFA. The DVV International journal *Adult Education and Development* helped with an issue on *Post 2015* and I was happy to contribute an introductory note on *Lifelong Learning for All – A potential global goal for the post 2015 education and development agendas!*

In 2015 I enjoyed being on the German Delegation for the Incheon World Education Forum. The overarching goal we worked for was “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”. This was finally agreed upon as *Education Agenda 2030*, and subsequently fully integrated as Goal 4 into the 17 SDG. Important for our context here is Target 4.3 which called for: “By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university”. As the other globally agreed SDG are related to all areas of development, such as poverty, health, gender, inequality, water, energy, work, climate, cities, peace and partnerships, and aiming at people, planet and prosperity – is there any area in the domains of teaching, research and development where there is not an important role to play for Universities?

Personally I have always kept engaged with Universities as important institutions for teaching, research and development in education. I tried to keep walking on two legs – as full-time manager and part-time professor.

My first long-term assignment for DVV was in the 1980s in Sierra Leone as Director of the Freetown office to cooperate with Government, Civil Society, and University partners. The People’s Educational Association initiated a project on *Stories and Songs*, and we collected, translated, and published more than fifty brochures in ten languages, and a major book as *Fishing in Rivers of Sierra Leone. Oral Literature*. One of the Mende proverbs reminded us: “Learning starts in the womb, and ends in the tomb”. During those years I was invited as Visiting Professor to the University of Sierra Leone, taught in the Diploma and Certificate courses on adult education, did research on traditional, colonial, missionary, and western education as well as learning in the traditional and informal sectors of work and life.

From 1996 on I went to Hungary to coordinate our cooperation with the Ministry of Education, several civil society organisations as well as higher education. As Honorary Professor of the University of Pecs, the teaching of students and research into adult education became an important component of the work, including cooperation with other organisations and universities in Central Europe on comparative and historical studies and conferences. The University of Pecs was founded in 1367 and thus just celebrated 650 years. The Rector invited us to Co-chair a round-table on the SDG and the Learning Cities approach. The major partner was the Magna Charta Observatory, founded in 1988 and having now 800 Universities as members following their *Strategic Plan Living Values for Autonomy, Academic Freedom and Integrity*.

Some final biographical reflections

Being awarded an Honorary Doctoral Degree for professional endeavours and achievements in an advanced stage of life almost automatically led to some reflections of the past. In my case our middle son when turning to 35 years of age asked me with a sort of admiration and

scepticism why I never changed from working for DVV International, but stayed on for four decades, and even keep close in what we may call active retirement. It is with this question in mind that for quite some time I have tried to understand why I got engaged in this international work, close to solidarity actions and at the same rooted in professional expertise, based on hope, faith and trust that the world could be a better one, like it is phrased as “another world is possible”. Or to put it more lightly: What influenced me at the beginning, and what kept me on at turning points?

There is this remembering of the past and its moments where certain realities, situations, and insights change life, and often it is a little easier to understand and accept what happened when looking back. In my case I can trace the early 1960s when engaging in out-of-school youth work, gardening and fishing in nature, playing sports in teams, ready to take responsibility and play a leadership role, also as speaker of the classmates was something I liked. We wrote our first handout criticising the US Government for the Indochina War on Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, and killing innocent people. We distributed it in front of the church, and had plenty of discussions about peace. Soon we were deeply frustrated by the feeling that we cannot influence what was happening; actually the war was getting worse. At the same we listened to songs like *The eve of destruction*, but *Imagine* by John Lennon also.

After finishing school I started to study at the University of Bonn within human and social sciences. It was the time of the students’ rebellion, and demonstrations not only against the Indochina war. Following the exams I took up part-time teaching at a vocational secondary school, continued with University studies in Bonn and Cologne, before I applied for a doctoral scholarship and the studies on education in Tanzania. One chapter was on missionary and colonial education in Tanganyika, at that time Deutsch-Ostafrika (German East-Afrika) which ended with a disaster of the Maji Maji War. I assume that all these insights strengthened my interests in global education and learning that apply an approach “Remember for the future”, even today in a number of courses at University.

As Director of DVV International I tried to combine leadership roles in the Institute, provide professional orientation, and engage in organisational development to cope with the changing realities and enlarging opportunities for country and regional activities. 2001 saw the terrorist attack on the twin-towers which in turn called for development cooperation with countries in Central Asia as well as Southern Caucasus. Our Regional Offices in Tashkent and Tbilisi became important anchors for work with partners in these regions. It was in 2009 that new assignments took me to Lao PDR as Regional Director for South and Southeast Asia, and open a new office for cooperation with partners in the country and in the region. Here I found myself back in one of the three countries that suffered heavily from the Indochina war. Laos is the most heavily bombed country on earth per capita, and till today there are around 80 million unexploded bombs and mines that the UN acknowledged as MDG 9 because of its major impact as hindrance of development.

At the end of my full-time work for DVV International a book *Adult education in an interconnected world. Cooperation in lifelong learning for sustainable development. Festschrift in honour of Heribert Hinzen* was published; I enjoyed reading this collection coming from colleagues with whom I had the pleasure to work together for decades, and of which some are here today. Ever since I am back in Germany I continue teaching at several Universities like Augsburg, Cologne, Hannover, and Würzburg with two special foci, first the policy and practice of international organisations in adult education and lifelong learning for sustainable development; and the other on remembering the past for the future like the 100 years project: End of German colonialism in Africa, Turkish-Armenian reconciliation after the genocide, end World War I – and quite different: 100 years of VHS.

A word of thanks

The biographical reflections may have helped to understand better why my personal commitment and concern was trying to combine passion with profession. Everybody has to find one's place and space in life and work. My early involvements in youth initiatives and thus educational practices, the context of students' rebellion, the anti-war and peace movements, all may have shaped a lifetime orientation towards international cooperation.

Fortunately I had good examples of what people are doing in later life. One special example for me is Professor Chris Duke, and it is wonderful to have him here today. We met for the first time in 1978 in a conference in Indonesia; he was representing ASPBAE, the Asia South Pacific Association of Basic and Adult Education, and I was there on behalf of DVV International. Ever since we have been working together, with high productivity, even now that we are officially retired. Last year we worked together with UIL on a *Synthesis Report on the State of Community Learning Centers in Six Asian Countries*; and together with DVV International on the *Development of a National Strategy for Lifelong Learning in Macedonia*.

A special thank you must be devoted to Professor Laurentiu Soitu. Almost 15 years ago I was invited to join the University of Iasi as Honorary Professor. It was a time when we had created a consortium of representatives from Universities, Governments, and Associations to develop the new modules for the Bachelor and Master degrees in adult education following the Bologna reform, called TEACH (Teaching Adult Educators in Continuing and Higher Education), and funded by the European Union via Grundtvig and Erasmus. I enjoyed coming to Iasi so often and being involved in teaching and testing students.

This was also the time when Professor Soitu invented this series of international conferences on adult education. I was lucky to be associated from the start, and this time I am happy to see that his cross-border and integrative approach has brought the conference to Chisinau also, and have Moldova State University as host. What a masterpiece of orchestration to bring together the Universities from two countries and DVV International – and use it for

conferring the Doctor Honoris Causa in recognition of international cooperation in adult education for development.

Again, here is my gratitude and thank you to the Rector and Senate and all who made this wonderful event possible. For the University it was especially Vice-Rector Professor Otilia Dandara who kept me well informed and helped in preparation. For DVV International it was Ms Bettina Brand as Regional Director of Eastern Neighbours, and Ms Adela Scutaru-Gutu as Country Director for Moldova who provided most helpful advice and arrangements.

As part of my vote of thanks there is my offer to give something back to the staff and students of the University at their earliest convenience. I am ready to come again and do a course for students taking the Bachelor or Master degree in education for a seminar on “100 years of Volkshochschulen – 50 years of DVV International” in 2019 thus looking at local and international developments of lifelong learning in our age of globalization and digitalization. For those who are even more interested in “Remembering the past for the future” we could do more follow-up in understanding our history and presence in which lifelong learning for sustainable development may be the key for a better future.

Resources

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