

Lifelong Learning Book Series 32

Jan Kalenda

# Formation of Adult Learning Systems in Central Europe

 Springer

# Lifelong Learning Book Series

## Volume 32

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The Lifelong Learning Book Series complements the Third International Handbook of Lifelong Learning <https://link.springer.com/referencework/10.1007/978-3-031-19592-1> with an elaboration of specific topics, themes and case studies in greater depth than is possible in the Handbook.

Jan Kalenda

# Formation of Adult Learning Systems in Central Europe

 Springer

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*In memory of my beloved teacher and role  
model, František Znebežánek (†2021).  
Some people should teach forever!*

## Series Editors' Note

The Lifelong Learning Book Series was launched in 2004 and, by 2024, had published 31 volumes on topics of international significance. The series continues to contribute to cross-cultural dialogue by exploring and sharing research and new perspectives on topics related to Lifelong Learning and its intersections with social, economic, and cultural developments.

Over the past 30 years, the processes of formation and development of cross-national patterns of Adult Learning Systems (ALSs) in Central Europe (CE) have been characterised by their multidimensional complexities, influenced by both historical and contemporary trends in the region. The book captures these complexities and offers a fresh perspective on the relationship between lifelong learning and long-term institutional transformations.

This book is the first in the series to explore in-depth how institutional settings in Central European countries have formed, evolved, and contributed to overall participation in Adult Education and Training (AET), specifically shedding light on the complex interplay between ALSs formation and resulting differences in AET participation. This monograph purposefully adopts a comparative lens to explore emerging policies and practices in post-socialist countries and to explain cross-national variations in the region, with a specific focus on four countries: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia. The book addresses a gap in research on the topic in this region and offers a comprehensive mapping of the development of ALSs in Central Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

To explore the complex interplay between individuals, governments, employers, and public policies that shape ALSs, the book develops an innovative analytical approach defined as 'constructing ALSs from below', where typologies of adult learning systems evolve as a result of the interaction of empirical data and sensitive concepts related to the main features of ALS. This approach enables the capturing of key quantitative features of these systems to understand their cross-national differences. To further advance the approach and uncover qualitative aspects within these systems and their transformations over time, the author employs an analytical framework rooted in the theories of historical institutionalism (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010, 2015; Verdier, 2018).

The country-specific exploration of the formation pathways of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia is truly enriching, providing insight into both the institutional dynamics and the unique construction of ALSs, covering the period from 1989 to 2019. The author offers an illustrative consideration of the sequence of the formation process, while highlighting potential path dependencies, institutional complementarities, and critical junctures in their evolution. The novel Global Adult Learning Space (GALS) framework devised for investigating these systems further strengthens the comparative analysis, allowing for the examination of not only the characteristics of CE ALSs but also their relation to other selected European ALSs. What makes this analysis particularly engaging is that the innovative theoretical approach adopted in this book is always grounded in available data and focuses on explaining the variability among related empirical structures and processes. This analytical perspective enables the evaluation of a range of pertinent aspects in each country's context. It also contributes to a comparative approach to encourage policy learning among different countries of the former Soviet Bloc and beyond. This approach allows for understanding how different social settings and actions of key stakeholders have contributed to the formation of both similar and different forms of ALSs, enabling a better understanding of participation levels and patterns in AET.

This volume makes an original and timely contribution to the series. In summary, the monograph offers valuable policy recommendations and outlines future directions for the development of adult learning systems in the region. A key strength is the comparative approach to the formation of Adult Learning Systems across time and space, particularly in the context of under-researched countries in relation to this topic. The book will be of interest across national and international audiences, including both academics and policymakers.

University College London  
London, UK  
March 2024

Natasha Kersh  
Karen Evans



# Preface

This book caters to all who share my fascination with lifelong learning, big structures, and long-term institutional transformations. The following pages tell the story of these three overlapping topics, somewhere on the borders of adult education research, comparative education, politics, and historical institutionalism. I aim to recount the evolution of adult learning systems within four Central European countries (Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Poland) from the post-communist era to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This narrative will illustrate that, despite starting from a similar institutional framework and facing comparable societal challenges, each of these countries has embarked on a distinct formation trajectory, culminating in uniquely different adult learning systems. In addition to this critical analysis, I introduce concepts such as the Global Adult Learning Space (GALS) to further enrich comparative adult education research. My aspiration is that this book will serve as a valuable resource for fellow researchers aligned with this field of study.

This text is a coincidence of three unforeseen developments that have significantly influenced my life, shaping me both as a researcher and as an individual. Firstly, since 2015, I have developed a keen interest in the macro-social dynamics underpinning the transformation of adult education systems. Secondly, in 2021, I experienced the profound loss of my dearest mentor and role model, František Znebežánek, to whom I had pledged to dedicate a book. His constant, albeit often subtle, encouragement was pivotal in advancing my scientific journey further than I could have imagined without his guidance (I have missed you so much). Thirdly, the generous support from the Fulbright Commission enabled me to spend a year at the University of California, Los Angeles, where I had the opportunity to work on this manuscript under the best guidance I could imagine.

In addition to expressing my gratitude to the Fulbright Commission for its support (Grant: *Political Economy of Adult Learning Systems in Central Europe: From their Emergence to Liberalisation, 2022-03-21*), I must extend my heartfelt thanks to Professor Richard Desjardins. During my research stay at UCLA, he became not only a great mentor but also a critical reader of my book, offering insightful comments and constructive critiques on all versions of this manuscript. His influence

permeates numerous aspects of this book. My appreciation also goes out to the students and postdoctoral researchers from the School of Education and Information Studies at UCLA, who engaged in thoughtful discussions about my project. Furthermore, I am indebted to Professor Ellen Boeren for her enduring support, sage advice, and constant encouragement. Additionally, I am thankful to Tomáš Karger for his valuable feedback on one of the manuscript's later versions, whose insights are always highly esteemed. Finally, my thanks extend to my 'research commando'—Ilona Kočvarová, Jitka Vaculíková, and Hana Zouharová—for enhancing my daily work life beyond my expectations. I could not wish for better colleagues.

Zlín, Czech Republic

Jan Kalenda

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# Abbreviations

ABE	Adult Basic Education
AES	Adult Education Survey
AET	Adult Education and Training
AGE	Adult General Education
AHE	Adult Higher Education
ALE	Adult Liberal Education
ALS	Adult Learning System
ALSs	Adult Learning Systems
ALMP	Active Labour Market Policy
CE	Central European/Central Europe
CEDEFOP	European Centre for Development of Vocational Training
CME	Coordinated Market Economy
DMC	Dependent Market Capitalism
EC	European Commission
EE	Eastern Europe, Eastern European
EU	European Union
FAE	Formal Adult Education
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GALS	Global Adult Learning Space
HRD	Human Resources Development
HRM	Human Resources Management
IFL	Informal Learning
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
ISCO	International Standard Classification of Occupation
LME	Liberal Market Economy
MEYS	Ministry of Youth, Education and Sport
NFE	Non-formal Education
NFE-Voc	Non-formal Vocational Education
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development



PIAAC	Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VET	Vocational and Educational Training
VoC	Variety of Capitalism
WSR	Welfare State Regimes

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**Part I**  
**Introduction**