

Presentation note

## Adult education: policy and practice

RUI CANÁRIO

About twenty years ago Gilles Ferry identified training as one of the great myths of the twentieth century, along with the computer and the space conquest. Invading the several dimensions of the social world, training has been instituted as a response to the troubles and anguishes of individuals and groups puzzled by a world in rapid change and in a situation perceived as of social and economic “crisis”. Optimism about training is no longer justified in a context where structural unemployment and precarious labour indicate a return to mass vulnerability, characteristic, among others, of what the sociologist Beck named as “risk society”. We are living at a time when training policies and practices assume an instrumental nature in relation to a market civilization. Besides, they are inscribed in socially orthopedic policies where social welfare replaces social justice. In this context, the social relevance of research comes from its capacity to unveil the discourses, representations and practices that make of training an illusion-giving device.

We know from empirical research that more training does not necessarily generate more jobs; that longer school itineraries do not prevent people from “social exclusion”, that an increase in productivity and competitiveness does not correspond to a socially just and solidary world. We also know that the exponential growth in training supply and consumption does not represent, as it should, democratization of access to knowledge.

This second issue of Sísifo journal is organized around a “thematic dossier” aiming at contribut-

ing, though modestly, to a critical analysis of some structuring features of present training policies and practices. The organization of this issue is inscribed in the action plan of FAP Project team. This Project has been financed by FCT (Science and Technology Foundation) and aims at studying adult education policies and practices in Portugal, from 1974 onwards. This study necessarily implies comparative dimensions and connections with research networks, which explains the inclusion in this dossier of an article signed by Sonia Rummert, which discusses the outcomes of research studies on recent federal-wide policies targeted to young and adult workers in Brazil. Ana Luísa Pires deals with the theme of credit-for-life-experience and its translation into adult education policies, in a comparative and international perspective. On a different perspective and having an ongoing empirical research as a basis, Cármen Cavaco analyses the way the institutionalization of credit-for-life-experience procedures impact on present Portuguese reality. The articles signed by António José Almeida and by Natália Alves represent important contributions to a theoretical clarification of the nature and use of the “employability” concept, as a key element of the ideology grounding most current discourses on training.

Finally, as an intermediate outcome of an empirical research on the training issue in a context of social “margin” ways of living (the so-called “homeless”), the article signed by Susana Pereira da Silva basically represents an opening up to a question-

ing attitude towards training, completely divergent from the official perspective of institutionalized powers. The author focuses the methodological issues raised by a research work directed to the production and analysis of biographical narratives of people living on the streets or who have lived on the street.

As a supplement to the “thematic dossier”, a recension by Rui Canário is also published dealing with Vanilda Paiva’s book about Paulo Freire and developmentalist nationalism. For its methodological and conceptual accuracy and because it constitutes an original contribute to the study of Paulo Freire’s

work and thought, this book deserves to be redeemed from oblivion and from the marginal condition to which it has been by well-thinking orthodoxies, easily inclined to answers rather than to questions.

This number of *Sísifo* journal closes with an unedited conference by Pierre Caspar, uttered in 2005, in the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Lisbon, which constitutes a global refection on training issues, particularly on the forms of “being a trainer today”.

Translated by Filomena Matos