

Institute for Pedagogy and Andragogy  
Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade

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Adult Education Society - Belgrade

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**ESREA 9th Triennial European Research Conference**

**ADULT EDUCATION RESEARCH AND PRACTICE:  
BETWEEN THE WELFARE STATE AND NEOLIBERALISM**

19 – 22 September 2019

**Book of Abstracts**

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ogy for any work-related learning activity, both indoors and outdoors; and

- employees in organizations that do not provide learning possibilities and that are indifferent regarding knowledge exchange between employees, expressed tendency to use informational communication technology for work-related learning at home through social networking, participation on web conferences, webinars, discussion forums, etc.

The qualitative data revealed deeper meaning of these connections -- that quality of relationship between the work-related usage of informational communication technology and the learning of employees depends on management and understanding the role of learning in organizations. Two major tendencies are evident – in some organizations informational communication technology is seen as a tool for work performance, while other organizations view informational communication technology as a tool for work-related learning, too.

These findings could have consequences on the improvement of learning practice in organizations. They pointed out necessity for differentiated approach to work-related usage of informational communication technology and requirement of the andragogy-based learning activities design. Although we used very complex, mixed methods research design, generalizability of obtained results could be improved by further longitudinal, comparative studies.

## RELATIONAL AESTHETICS: EMOTION, PERCEPTION, AND COMMUNICATION IN ADULT EDUCATION RESEARCH

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Any rational system is constituted on premises which are accepted a priori starting from an emotion (Maturana and Davila 2006)

This paper is a first presentation of an ongoing project on “relational aesthetics”, as a theoretical and methodological framework to incorporate the role of emotions, perception, and communication in the development of a critical pedagogy for adult education. As women and academics, we

are deeply dissatisfied about the narrowing of the debate on research, which seems to forget everything about a critical epistemology of learning in adults' lives. We started a shared reflexive journey of inquiry, not least on our own experience, by which we try to reflect critically and re-compose with concrete actions the binaries and dilemmas which characterize adult lives and learning in the challenging present situation. We see the rigid separation of personal and professional, body and mind, research and practice as a source of oppression and exclusion for too many adult learners, as feminist and anti-colonialist approaches have maintained. Besides, populism and neoliberalism prevent citizens from reflecting on their perspectives and frames of meaning (Mezirow 1991); this lack of reflexivity creates blindness in educational contexts.

When stories are silenced, or narrowed down to their verbal appearance and objectified, the relational, dynamic and complex quality of knowing, learning, and searching is lost. All adults – and especially women, migrants, indigents, indigenous people, or other categories of marginalized persons – should be given the means to recognize and construct themselves as “unexpected subjects” (Lonzi, 1974), which entails fixing new criteria and methods to express their more authentic voice, refusing patriarchal, colonizing, and given for granted truths.

Starting from these general remarks, and in order to bring ideas that can challenge the dominant perspective, and build critical thinking, we feel the need to cultivate and experiment new disrupting approaches to knowing. Our thesis is that aesthetics can play a fundamental role in adult learning, as well as research, due to the power of presentational languages. However, we need a way (method = meta + odos: a reflected path) to connect subjective experience and aesthetic presentation with the development of a good enough theory and practice. So, we started a duoethnographic inquiry on the topic of “relational aesthetics”. Duoethnography (Sawyer & Norris 2013) is a research method based on the researchers' experience, using a multimodal approach (autoethnographic and autobiographic writing, field observation, artefacts, artworks, performances, etc.) together with theoretical and critical reflexivity, and an ‘activist’ posture, to bring about a rich and deep understanding of the relationship between individual experience and systemic-cultural-societal-historical constraints. It connects the micro-level of experience with the meso-level of interactions in context, and the macro-level of society and culture.

A previous study on the role of feminism in our lives (Author, 2018, 2019) brought us to investigate the role of the body, perception, and relationship in the experience of learning. Hence, we started a duoethnographic conversation on the topic of “relational aesthetics”, among us and with three artists from different disciplines (hence using different lan-

guages): music, dance and visual arts. We aim to discuss the effects of the mainstream culture of education, based on competition, binary thinking, linearity, and individualism, against the biological principle of collaboration based on emotion, feelings, and relationships, not rationality alone (Bateson 1972; Maturana and Dávila 2006). Arts-based approaches (Leavy 2015) move the interacting and sensitive bodies of participants into mutual curiosity and openness, due to the necessary coordination of actions, emotions, languages, frameworks that is entailed by any artistic activity (but also, we claim, by educating, learning, and researching). The experience of relationship – mediated by art, writing and dialogue – opens possibilities of critical reflexivity about one's own and the other's feelings, perceptions, ideas, frameworks, and value systems. Where do they come from? How are they shaped by culture? How can they feed new, more participatory and inclusive, ways of education? We will use these insights to enhance and interrogate the embeddedness of subjective experience in a living context, culture, environment, and society (Author, 2014).

Languages and languaging have a fundamental role in our study:

We say that the words were smooth, caressing, hard, sharp, and so on: all words that refer to body touching. Indeed we can kill or elate with words as body experiences. We kill or elate with words because, as co-ordinations of actions, they take place through body interactions that trigger in us body changes in the domain of physiology (Maturana, 1988, p. 48).

Learning comes from 'touching' each other, literally or metaphorically. All languages do this: gesture, music, images, words, even the non-human speech of animals, objects, and nature... And yet, our work as researchers and educators is often alienated from the interacting body and its communicative capacity. This is why we decided to involve professional artists in our quest.

What can be learned, or constructed as "knowledge" in rhizomatic conversation (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) between researchers and artists about the regimes of truth in our different languages? What/who is 'kept out' from adult education theories, practices, publications, quandaries, and learning settings? Are we able to start and sustain new, maybe challenging, conversations, and dialogical detours into other modes of knowing and being, to bring to life the circularity and complexity of syntactic and semantics?

During the conference, we will present the first outcomes of our duoethnography, containing collaborative biographical conversations with each artist, our own autoethnographic fragments, artwork, and performative items. This research takes the form of a cooperative inquiry (Heron, 1996), aimed at transformation: we expect new aesthetic coordinations to emerge and play with issues of personal/political/cultural languages, diso-

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