

HELMUT DOLFF: EMERGE, CONSOLIDATION AND PROFESSIONALISM OF INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION IN ADULT EDUCATION

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Helmuth Dolff was director of the DVV from 1956 to his early death in 1983 and made, with Walter Ebbighausen and Kurt Meissner, the largest contribution to the European and international integration of German adult education after the Second World War. Typical for Helmuth Dolff and adult education in Germany in the early 50's is the non-pedagogical and technical background and career.

Dolff was educated in the metal industry and as an accountant. This only heightened his feeling for the necessity for the acknowledgement and increased status of adult education and its international nature.

Without professional emotionalism, but with emphasis on the matter in hand, he always committed himself to his beliefs and steadfastly pursued his goals. For him it was self-evident that after the terror and the great injustices caused by Germans, the responsible re-integration, also for German adult education, in the international community required a lot of tact, delicacy and modesty.

Not least thanks to these principals the DVV and German adult education were included relatively early in developments at a European level. The German adult education programme was already represented at the first meeting at European level in 1952. And from then on included in the communal European efforts.

In 1958 Helmuth Dolff began to give shape to his collaboration in the European Bureau of Adult Education. At the same time the DVV and Helmuth Dolff, with funding from the German government, began the build-up of the domain of "International Exchange in Adult Education".

Already in 1960, also with financial support from the government, DVV relations with adult educators in the

Third World were incorporated and, from 1969, systematized in a department of the DVV. Today, this department, with financing of about 15 million DM per year, is the largest service institution of the international co-operation of the DVV.

At the same time Helmuth Dolff did not ignore duties towards neighbours and new friends in Europe. In 1962, after he was elected to the steering committee of the European Bureau, there were regular conferences in Germany, sometimes bi-annually, on important topical themes emphasised in adult education. Legislation, Residential Adult Education, Political Education, Finance and Personnel, were, among others, such important topics.

Dolff, Lengrand and Titmus drew up the first trilingual Professional dictionary of Adult Education in French, English and German.

Dolff also participated in the first directory "Adult Education Organizations in Western Europe".

In the 70's in the Federal Republic of Germany, adult education was professionalised and the DVV expanded to an effective service organisation with the following institutions "Paedagogische Arbeitsstelle des DVV" (DVV Educational Section), "Adolf-Grimme Institut" for Radio and Television Media and the "Fachstelle der Internationalen Zusammenarbeit des DVV" for international co-operation. The DVV through Helmuth Dolff let participate its partners in all these developments.

This is especially true for the period that Helmuth Dolff was elected as President of the European Bureau of Adult Education (1973). During his presidency he particularly committed himself to the development of working relationships with the Council of Europe and the European Communities. As founder member and Treasurer of the International Council for Adult Education he stood guarantor for the close dovetailing of this international non-governmental organisation for Adult Education with the European Bureau. He fostered especially close relationships between UNESCO and the European Bureau and the DVV.

To Helmuth Dolff it went without saying that the increasingly rich Federal Republic of Germany should make a financial contribution to international co-operation in adult education.

At the German Volkshochschul Tag in Frankfurt in 1966 with the topic "World-wide Adult Education - Education and Training in new dimensions" he was involved in formulating the practical connection and necessity of world-wide co-operation: " whereas we may be the donors in a material sense, the occupation with this complex brings so much new knowledge and experience for our own situation, that one should view it more as co-operation in the expansion of adult education...The world of today is indivisible and what is done or omitted here has an effect on the existence of each one of us...".

Finances were not an object of prestige for him, but a necessity for reaching a common goal. He did not see German developments in adult education separately from the European and international movement.

Therefore he also stressed the importance of reaching a balanced connection between theory and practice.

Even when he, through his untiring creativity and his almost inexhaustible inventiveness, had created exemplary and forward-looking institutions for German adult education, he remained modest and quiet in his dealings with foreign friends and colleagues. This brought him still more friends and regard from colleagues in adult education. International, European and German adult education lost a great advocate of adult education when he died suddenly in 1983.

Personally Helmuth Dolff was especially proud of the fact that as President of the European Bureau of Adult Education, he could make a German contribution and work for common goals.