

# Time and Temporalities in (Adult) Education and Learning

*Introduction by Sabine Schmidt-Lauff (editor)*

From time immemorial, *time* has been associated with changeability, processuality and transience. Various Dictionaries define *time* as the indefinite continued progress of existence and events in the past, present and future regarded as a whole. We use clocks to measure the *quantity of time* and we divide time into units such as seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months and years. The unchanging or the perpetual, on the other hand, is assumed in eternity to be time-abstract or even timeless. Accordingly, time is directly interwoven with one's existence and experience (the *quality of time*). Modern societal structures and cultures are characterized by a high degree of complexity with regard to time-related phenomena (Wendorff, 1980). *Time* is, therefore, a relational concept that depends on a frame of references such as situation and historical context, personal experience and behavior, social and cultural practices, norms, and, other similar factors. *Temporality*, by contrast, encompasses all phenomena and modalities related to time while also considering the variable characteristics of time in terms of history and culture as well as individual interpretation. Temporality is the generic term used to express the concept of temporalization (Schmidt-Lauff, 2018). It is therefore an analytical term and category and less affected by historical changes and implications.

With the modern era, time, first of all, is radically rethought as an expression of movements under the aspect of use and formability (Wendorff, 1980). It was Levine (1997, p. 16) who stated: "[...] how people construe the time of their lives comprises a world of diversity. There are drastic differences on every level: from culture to culture, city to city, and from neighbor to neighbor. And most of all, I have learned, the time on the clock only begins to tell the story." Due to modern ideas of the nature of time as something socio-culturally changeable (Sorokin & Merton, 1937) and individually responsible (Elias, 1984), time is, secondly, no longer something objectively given, but a highly ambivalent and complex element of shaping. As such an element of shaping, creating, and controlling, time and temporalities are a fundamental part of lifelong and lifewide learning. This issue about *Time and Temporalities in (Adult) Education and Learning* can excellently show how differentiated time-related approaches in education research and empirical exploration are evolving. The collection of seven articles, presents outstanding theoretical conceptualizations such as rhythm configurations (notion of rhythmic intelligence), chronoference (relation between past-present-future), temporal pre-emptive agendas (more than acceleration), liminality, or, spatiotemporality. Furthermore, beside these complex theoretical reconstructions of time and temporalities, methodological approaches, epistemological models, and empirical illustrations become visible by inquiring phenomena such as absence, chrono-policy, organizational tempography, the temporal



plasticity in school education, up to liminal phases as transitions, and, biographical temporalizations and representation of identity.

If in our postmodern Western societies, one could say, “the experience of time has probably never been as ordered, controlled and disciplined than it is today” it is obvious that “at the same time, the temporalities of adult life are more often experienced as discontinuous, troubled and chaotic than before” (Alhadeff-Jones, 2017, p. 117). The policy, programmatic, and concept of lifelong learning as one part within radical transformation, confronts us balancing between additional speeding-up processes and resistance against “Adult Education in a World ‘On Speed’” (Plumb, 1999). Furthermore, with the outbreak of the worldwide pandemic (COVID-19), a completely contrary picture presented itself: the shutdown, the lockdown, and a standstill of almost the complete public, social, and economic life. The global pandemic has modified our time. Previously unthinkable processes of slowing down, freezing, and suspending temporal movements perceived as normal and natural took place almost simultaneously and worldwide. This has given us experiences whose time-related effects are mere less penetrated. Nevertheless, we have awakened an inkling that our all-around accelerated being could also be completely different. Latest, the experiences of the digital shift out of the situation at that time leads to first reflections about digitalized times and temporal virtualities of digitality (Noller, 2021). Previous orders of space and time as the fundamental dimensions of human life are being transformed. The space of flows and timeless time are the material foundations of a new culture of real virtuality (Noller, 2021, p. 47).

All of these preliminary considerations make it clear how important the tracing and understanding of the effects of time on education and learning is and how unavoidable temporal-relational contextualization are. Quite fundamentally, time and temporalities enable the formation of meaning and order, historically, structurally as well as biographically. Education and learning in the life course become a factor of appropriation, rearrangement, and reordering (Schmidt-Lauff, 2018, p. 321). To better understand (adult) education and learning in our modern temporal-multidimensional society, this issue of *Sisyphus* provides theoretical, conceptual, and empirical inquiries, which assume time and valorize temporality as central category:

The first two articles elaborate and discuss differentiated time-related conceptualizations for a temporal relational reframing of adult education and learning: The first article intitled “*Developing Rhythmic Intelligence: Towards a Critical Understanding of Educational Temporalities*” by Michel Alhadeff-Jones discusses what goes into the adoption of a rhythmological conception of education. He theorizes the notion of rhythmic intelligence as a mean to further improve our understanding of educational temporalities, the ways they are experienced and six pathways (learning to discriminate, interpret, examine, argue, judge, and challenge rhythmic phenomena) to envision the development of rhythmic intelligence. The second article “*Reframing Temporality: A Design for a Relational View of Chronoference*” by Ortried Schäffter and Malte Ebner von Eschenbach elaborates a relation-theoretical reconstruction of temporality (e.g. multiple differentiations between past-present-future; phenomenon of absence) by different theoretical philosophies of history and a framework of historical epistemology.

The following five articles combine theoretically conceptualizing approaches to time and temporality for adult education and learning with methodological strategies of appropriate exploration and penetration on macro-, meso- and microlevel of education: Chrono-policy on the macro-level in the “concept of temporal agendas in education”; social practice respective “organizational tempography”, but also, “temporal plasticity” in post-pandemic learning scenarios (school education) on the meso-level; liminality in transitions and biographical temporalization(s) on the micro-level:



The first macro-level is elaborated by Jan Schiller in his article about *“The Concept of Temporal Agendas in Education”*. He focuses systematically on aspects of time to uncover underlying concepts of time in adult education in policy and practice. Building critically upon the reception of temporalities in postmodern society as highly accelerative, pre-emptive agenda in the researched field of continuing higher education, he comes to a brief outlook into possible future paradigms for research on temporal agendas in (adult) education.

The fourth article in this issue by Jörg Schwarz, intitled *“Pacing Out Educational Temporalities: A Praxeological Approach to the Research on Time in Adult Education Fields”*, raises the methodological question on the meso-level of how educational temporalities can be empirically examined, specifically in adult education courses. It discusses a praxeological perspective, and especially the analysis of social fields, as a conceptual and analytical basis for the investigation of time in adult education, by then referring to the discourse on “organizational tempography” as a heuristic of time-related subjects. He argues in his paper that an ethnographic set of research methods is particularly promising for such an endeavor. Finally, a methodological framework for research on temporalities in adult education is presented. The fifth article about *“What do We Talk About When We Talk About Post-Pandemic Time in School Education? Reflections on Temporal Plasticity of Post-Pandemic School Education”* by Samira Alirezabeigi, reflects on post-pandemic school condition and speculates the temporal characteristics of post-pandemic school education based on an empirical school study. By conceptualising pandemic as an accident and adopting the timescape perspective as a methodological device, this paper reflects on an ethnographic study of a school, which adopts a bring your own device (BYOD) policy. She identifies three turns for post-pandemic school condition (towards algorhythmic patterns; infra-schoolization; taskification of classroom practices), which might be highly relevant for the inquiry of adult education settings (formal and non-formal) as well. Based on these turns, the post-pandemic condition is described as a “plastique stability after the accident of pandemic”.

The last two articles in this issue focuses on the micro-level: In her article *“Biographical Temporalisation(s) in Adult Education”* Sabine Schmidt-Lauff put time of central importance for understanding biography. In the biographical narrative, the past and the future are designed and interwoven within an even specific present. In the process of narrating, the subject as self and its identity is reconstructed as ‘what has become’ and as ‘what is becoming’. To elaborate these complex relations, she focuses on conceptual, epistemological and methodological aspects such as historical, relational (past-present-future) and indexical references. The concept of “biographical temporalisation(s)” would like to pave the way for a differentiated time-related approach to biographies and biographical research in adult education. The seventh article intitled *“Insights from Liminality: Navigating the Space of Transition and Learning”* by Maja Maksimović explores the concept of liminality, a transitional phase marked by uncertainty and disorientation, within the context of adult education. The inspiring research “correspondence method” by a three-month exchange with a participant reflects on personal experiences of the “liminal phase”. She could highlight the importance of encounter and dialogue in navigating liminality as transformative learning modes, and insights into the utility of the dialogical approach in understanding and enduring the liminal phase.

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