

Marketising Slovene adult education policies and practices using mechanisms of the Europeanisation of education

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Abstract

This article addresses the issue of marketisation in the field of adult education by reflecting on the Europeanisation of education currently taking place through the establishment of European adult education policies. The article argues that Europeanisation fosters marketisation of adult education and commodifies valuable knowledge and desirable forms of neoliberal subjectivity. An analysis of Slovene adult education policies from 2004-2015 reveals how a European economised vocabulary is being implemented in Slovene adult education policies and practices. The main argument of this article is that these practices are shaped through financial mechanisms that marketise the adult education field. This results in new relationships between governing bodies within the field, the unstable and decreasing role of public adult education institutions and the prevailing role of private providers of adult education, who offer training programmes to meet labour market needs.

Keywords: Europeanisation of education; European adult education policy; Slovene adult education policy and practice; marketisation of adult education

Introduction

Debates about marketisation and commodification of education are highly connected to the impact of globalisation processes and neoliberal ideologies on education. Because of the globalisation process, education policies have become internationalised and a product of supranational political organisations, such as the European Union (EU), and international organisations, such as Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Burbules & Torres, 2000; King, 2007; Mundy, 2007). These organisations are new actors in the policy-making process or ‘neo-empires of knowledge in education’

(Klerides, Kotthoff & Pereyra, 2014, p. 6) who endeavour to enforce precisely defined neoliberal norms, ideas and market values, which shift the field of adult education (AE) towards market strategies and mechanisms (especially performativity, accountability and effectiveness of education, human capital theory, evidence-based educational practice, outcome-based education, lifelong learning, competences, etc.) (Barros, 2012; Fragoso & Guimarães, 2010; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Wildemeersch & Olesen, 2012; Milana, 2012a). In this way, a global education policy field is being established (Ozga & Lingard, 2007; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010), and a coherent range of themes and discourses, which policymakers are using to transform education systems, is being created.

Globalisation is not a homogeneous process but one that is associated with distinct forms of regionalisation, each with its own policies and mechanisms (Dale, 1999). The focus of the current research is on comprehension of how these policies and mechanisms influence European education, which has been labelled the 'Europeanisation of education' (Alexiadou, 2014; Dale, 2009; Lawn & Grek, 2012; Pépin, 2007) and is developing through the establishment of European educational space and policy (Dale, 2009; Nóvoa, 2010) or European adult education policy (Holford & Milana, 2014; Rasmussen, 2014). This means that member states are no longer developing autonomous policies and that education is increasingly governed by new public-private partnerships and networks among different nations (Dale, 1999; Milana, 2012b). In this context, different authors have emphasised that the creation of European AE policies are predominantly driven by vocational goals and shaped by neoliberal economic policies (Holford, Milana & Mohorčič Špolar, 2014; Holford & Mohorčič Špolar, 2012).

In this paper, the effects of Europeanisation on the formation of AE policies and practices in Slovenia, which has been an EU member since 2004, are addressed. By analysing European AE policies, it will first be argued that Europeanisation fosters an instrumental understanding of AE, knowledge and subjectivity; here, AE and knowledge are seen as market commodities that can be produced and sold for market purposes without any intrinsic value. It will also be shown how indicators, tools and concepts used in European AE policies are influencing and penetrating Slovene AE policies and how a European economised vocabulary is being implemented as a regulatory ideal by Slovene decision makers. Then, by analysing Slovene annual programmes for AE, it will be shown how AE practices are being shaped using financial mechanisms that marketise this field. New forms of financing are establishing partnerships between the governing bodies of AE, e.g., the European Social Fund (ESF), and are playing major roles in the realisation of Slovene AE policy goals. Due to the economic crisis and austerity measures, the state, especially the Ministry of Education in this context, is increasingly reducing public funds for AE. Moreover, resources for general, formal and informal AE are being reduced in favour of short vocational training programmes, and because of changing financial schemes, public AE institutions are facing an inability to plan long-term, allowing private organisations to become the most common providers of AE.

Europeanisation of Education

The concept of Europeanisation first appeared in the 1980s in political studies literature and achieved greater recognition in the 1990s (Klatt, 2014). As noted by Lawn and Grek (2012), Europeanisation includes complex processes, including transnational networks and flow of ideas and practices across Europe. The direct influences of EU policy, using the open method of coordination (OMC), are reflected in the establishment of benchmarks, quality indicators and comparisons of statistical data and effect international institutions and globalisation (Lawn & Grek, 2012). In this context, Europeanisation also means successful integration, by candidate countries with EU memberships, of set European standards in various fields. During the 1990s, Slovenia was, for example, included in the EU's Phare programmes, which aimed to reform vocational education and training (VET) systems. With the modernisation of curricula, certifications and assessments, i.e., the MOCCA programme, in vocational education for youths and adults, Slovenia successfully reformed its VET system to agree with European standards. The two main objectives of the MOCCA programme were to assist the Slovenian government in developing a LLL system based on modernised and integrated VET for youth and adults and to develop a certification system for professional education to achieve a flexible and responsive adult vocational infrastructure ('Phare Ex-Post Evaluation', 2003).

Discussions of Europeanisation in education began around 2000, with the majority of authors identifying the Lisbon Strategy as a key turning point (Alexiadou, 2014; Dale, 2009; Lawn & Grek, 2012; Nóvoa, 2010), which sets specific objectives for education systems, e.g., recognition of qualifications and learner or worker mobility, raising the quality of education and participation in LLL (Fredriksson, 2003; Žiljak, 2008). The OMC is used to achieve these objectives 'as a means of spreading best practices and achieving greater convergence towards the main EU goals' (EC, 2000, paragraph 37). The OMC provides soft laws using guidelines, indicators, benchmarks and expert opinions to, encourage discourse about the measurability of education and help member states formulate education policies in agreement with predefined objectives (Alexiadou, 2014; Rasmussen, 2014). However, Europeanisation of education should be understood as a multidirectional process that incorporates member state policies at the EU level to exchange these policies among networks throughout Europe (Klatt, 2014).

The Lisbon Strategy was implemented in education through "The concrete future objectives of the education systems" and the "Education and Training 2010" programme and in the post Lisbon period (2010–2020) in a strategy known as the "Education and Training 2020" being part of the broader framework of the "Europe 2020" strategy (Nóvoa, 2010).

Formulating AE Policy

At the EU level, AE policies have been developed slowly. Since 1996 the EU has paid more attention to the field of AE (Milana, 2012a), and in 2000, the EU issued *A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* (Commission of the European Communities [CEC], 2000), which began the debate for LLL in Europe (Gravani & Zarifis, 2014). In the same year, the EU established the Grundtvig programme, which provided financial support for activities linked to AE (Rasmussen, 2014). The turning point for AE occurred in 2006, when the Commission issued *Adult Learning: It Is Never too Late to*

Learn, which was followed a year later by *Action Plan on Adult Learning: It Is Always a Good Time to Learn* (CEC, 2007). AE was conceptualised as a vital component of LLL and considered a significant contribution to European ‘competitiveness and employability’ and to the ‘social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development’ of adults (CEC, 2006, p. 2). With adopted documents AE is becoming a ‘political priority’ (European Parliament [EP], 2008, paragraph A) where ‘the importance of adult learning in order to achieve the goal of creating better jobs in Europe as well as improve quality of life and promote individual development, personal fulfilment and active citizenship’ (paragraph 29) is emphasised.

The ten years allocated to Europe 2020 are based on AE policy in the *Council Resolution on a Renewed European Agenda to Adult Learning* (Council of the European Union [CEU], 2011). The resolutions outlined here are aimed at ‘enabling all adults to develop and enhance their skills and competences throughout their lives’ (CEU, 2011, p. 3). On the one hand, AE should significantly reduce education and training dropout rates to below 10%, starting with ‘literacy, numeracy and second-chance measures as a precursor to up-skilling for work and life in general’ (CEU, 2011, p. 3), but on the other, AE could significantly contribute to economic development by strengthening ‘productivity, competitiveness, creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship’ (CEU, 2011, p. 3). By the end of 2020, this resolution should contribute to new approaches based on ‘learning outcomes and learner responsibility and autonomy’ and to the development of ‘effective lifelong guidance systems’. These systems validate informal learning and aid development of education and training aimed at ‘acquiring key competences or leading to qualifications’ and ensure ‘flexible arrangements’ adapted to the various training needs of adults (CEU, 2011, pp. 3-4).

Although commitment to LLL improves the status of AE in the EU (Holford & Milana, 2014; Fejes & Fragoso, 2014), it is strengthened primarily by economic goals and changing perspectives of education to lifelong learning, which are both ideas linked to “*economisation of social life*” (Fragoso & Guimarães, 2010, p. 22). Factors that have ‘colonised’ (Deakin Crick & Joldersma, 2007) European AE policy occur at least on three levels: 1) the marketised purpose of AE, 2) commodified valuable knowledge and 3) the formation of desirable forms of neoliberal subjectivity. Below, these factors are shortly described in more detail:

- 1) “Marketised purpose of AE”. AE as part of broader economic, social and employment policies plays a key role in addressing socio-economic, demographic, environmental and other challenges facing the EU. By enabling greater productivity, competitiveness and entrepreneurship, AE is significant for achieving the objectives outlined by the Europe 2020 initiative. Although the promotion of personal development, social cohesion and active citizenship are also highlighted as goals and substitutes for historical commitments of AE related to democracy, social justice and emancipation (Holford et al., 2014), these are background factors of the fundamental objective of competitiveness and employability. As a result, functional goals and measurable outcomes of AE prevail, resulting in important statistical and internationally comparable data for education (Borer & Lawn, 2013).
- 2) “Commodified valuable knowledge”. Knowledge is expressed within a knowledge-based economy and the provisions for skills that are essential to promoting the growth and competitiveness on which the productivity of Europe depends. Knowledge is understood as an investment to ensure the right skills for

the economy; the emphasis is on knowledge that can be measured, conceptualised as ‘learning outcomes’ supposed to ensure that adults have the skills and competencies required by the European labour market. Despite severe criticism to shift from knowledge to the concept of learning outcomes, supported by qualifications frameworks (Cedefop, 2015), learning outcomes are now being provided for European education policies and for all educational subsystems. As critics emphasised (Hussey & Smith, 2008; Luke, Green & Kelly, 2010; Young & Allais, 2011, 2013), the concept of learning outcomes contains false clarity, precision, objectivity and measurability of knowledge and reduces knowledge to standard units that hinder in-depth and creative learning, the epistemological diversity of knowledge and leads to a negation of the importance of powerful knowledge.

- 3) “Neoliberal subjectivity”. European AE policy endeavours to establish a new form of subjectivity: flexible subjectivity that adapts rapidly to the labour market, precarious forms of employment, growing cultural diversity and LLL. LLL seeks to optimise each individual's economic, psychological and social potential to produce subjects who know and defines the normal learner, good worker and active citizen. When LLL is the responsibility of the individual, the subjectivity of a European citizen, i.e. lifelong learner, is also established (Edwards & Nicoll, 2004; Nóvoa & Dejong-Lambert, 2003).

In what follows, we will explore the AE field in Slovenia focusing in particular to marketization, commodification and commercialisation of AE and knowledge. Marketization is being understood as ‘the process of organising market forces’ in education (for example encouraging competition of public and private AE institutions) instead of hierarchical provision and coordination of education by government, commodification as the process where education is ‘treated as a commodity, and foremost in terms of exchange value instead of a kind of (intrinsic) use value’, and commercialisation as a process ‘where private, for-profit agencies and commercial transactions have an impact on or become part of the scene of education’ (Simons, Lundahl & Serpieri, 2013, pp. 419-420). We assume that Europeanisation, imposed through European political documents, fostering above mentioned processes, strongly influences and defends introduction of marketisation in AE field in Slovenia.

Impact of the Europeanisation of Education on Slovene AE Policies and Practices

Research description

The analysis reported here is based on the study of national policy documents, implemented for AE practices in Slovenia and on the collection of data from diverse sources. To analyse changes in financing schemes, data from the Resolutions on the Master Plan for Adult Education in the Republic of Slovenia (ReMPAE), annual programmes of AE (APAE) and the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (SURS) were primarily used.

AE is defined as education, training and learning for acquiring, updating, enlargement and deepening of knowledge, and includes both vocational and general education for personal development, cultural enlightenment and social needs. It can be formal, informal and incidental, based on LLL as a basic principle of education for all in

Slovenia. However, low level of regulation and formalisation of AE ensure its flexibility, important particularly for supplementing and adjusting skills and knowledge for changing needs of economy and society, but low level of regulation at the same time cause lower transparency and measurability of results of AE. Lately AE is more important for stimulating productivity and competitiveness, which also became an important goal of public AE (Krek & Metljak, 2011). Before the independence of Slovenia in 1991, providers of AE were public educational institutions, mostly 'Workers Universities' (Folk High Schools, now called Adult Education centres [AEC]), schools (which had units for AE) and Education centres in companies. In times of transition to market economy (after independence), the network of AE institutions gradually changed; the number of public AEC decreased rapidly, most of education centres in companies decayed (due to bad financial situation in companies at that time), and private AE institutions appeared as a result of changed needs and potentials of economy. Today, private AE institutions strongly prevail in the network of AE institutions in Slovenia.

AE is regulated by several acts¹, and the Adult Education Act defines public interests determined by the Adult Education Master Plan (AEMP). Since 2004, two resolutions were adopted: ReMPAE 2004–2010 (approved in June 2004) and ReMPAE 2013–2020 (approved in October 2013). To foster equality for adult access to education through the appropriate distribution of funds, resolutions defined priority areas, goals and measures for implementation (National Assembly, 2004, 2013). Priority areas include I) informal AE, such as programmes for acquiring key competences and literacy skills, education for active citizenship, social cohesion and information and communication technologies (ICT) programmes, II) AE for improving formal education attainment, such as programmes for completion of primary or secondary school or short-cycle higher vocational education and III) AE for the labour market, such as active employment and vocational training. Analyses in this paper cover priority areas in both resolutions and realisation of the APAEs.

For this reason, the APAEs from 2005–2015 were analysed to determine concrete implementation of the resolutions' goals and priorities. APAE defines educational programmes that are financed from public funds and determines the amount of ESF funding based on the scale and type of activities provided. Qualitative and quantitative indicators for monitoring implementation of resolutions for priority areas, activities and results are also set. This analysis focused on realisation of the financial goals of the APAE for both general education and vocational training in Slovenia. It should be noted that reports on the realisation of the APAE goals are unsystematic and unclear, making it difficult to analyse and compare data. Therefore, some data presented might be slightly different from data presented from official calculations.

Following this framework, we will first show how European marketised purpose of AE and knowledge treated as a commodity is being applied in Slovene AE policy, and secondly how AE programmes, institutions and AE as a public good, are being shaped by the processes of marketization, commodification and commercialisation. The European, and not the global education policy framework was chosen for analysis, as a direct references to the European AE policy documents and concepts can be found in Slovene AE policy. Moreover, Slovenia needed to adapt to various EU demands when joining the EU in 2004, although these could also be a part of a more global discursive shift in education promoted by international organisations around the globe. The main units of empirical investigation are the following ones: the purpose of AE, public and private AE providers and financing schemes of AE. For understanding the results of the analyses it is necessary to add that priority areas, defined in ReMPAEs, in itself do not

reflect market influences; they were actually defined as a kind of regulation and protection for AE from marketisation processes. However, analyses show how through policy it is possible to bypass it with financial mechanisms, consistent with European priorities.

Results

Indicators and tools from the European AE policy that shape Slovene AE policy

The general framework of both resolutions recognises that globalisation processes and socio-economic changes, such as the economic crisis, unemployment and an aging population, make it necessary for Slovenia to invest in human capital. LLL is seen as the primary method for all individuals in a society to gain employability. In this context, the ReMPAE 2004–2010 emphasised that Slovenia must contribute to goals outlined in the Lisbon Strategy that highlight interdependence between levels of educational attainment, economic growth and employment. Education has no value in itself, but it serves as an instrument for active social integration of individuals, mainly in the labour market (National Assembly, 2004, p. 8582). Similarly, the ReMPAE 2013–2020 contributes to the implementation of recommendations and goals from the ET 2020 and Europe 2020 strategies, with emphasis on common European indicators and measurable outcomes that enable comparisons between EU member states in the field of AE. The resolution identifies three main groups of problems, which are congruent in Europe 2020 and the Council's resolution (CEU, 2011): the level of education and its quality, participation and justice in AE and systemic issues, such as inadequate financing of general informal and formal education, low achievement for formal and informal learning and weak interdepartmental cooperation. The role of the ReMPAE is to introduce systemic regulations to AE in Slovenia, minimise development errors, especially for the basic vocational skills and competencies of adults and foster involvement in LLL in accordance with EU goals.

A closer look at the APAEs shows that, from 2008–2011, references to the European AE policy are more explicit, particularly in relation to *Adult Learning: It Is Never too Late to Learn* (CEC, 2006) and *Action Plan on Adult Learning* (CEC, 2007). Both documents influence Slovene AE practices; for example, tasks and projects are tailored to cover all priority areas of the *Action Plan* and are preferentially supported by the ESF (APAE, 2008, 2009, 2010). Taking into account the European agenda, the APAEs in Slovenia address all five priority areas of the *Action Plan* (CEC, 2007):

- 1) To measure progress in the field of AE,
- 2) To provide continuous training of professional workers and organise training for quality assurance during development for implementation and evaluation of AE,
- 3) To contribute to quality provisions,
- 4) To set up programmes for improving education attainment or qualification levels and recognise informal learning with the certification of national vocational qualifications (NVQ), and
- 5) To monitor the AE sector (APAE, 2010).

Since 2012, direct reference in APAEs has been made to the *Council Resolution* (CEU, 2011). Following this framework, the APAEs stated that substantial additional effort is required to ensure second-chance measures and key competencies, such as reading,

numeracy and digital literacy, for different target groups. New approach to AE, based on learning outcomes and learner responsibility and autonomy, should be a priority. References to the European and national qualifications framework and the development of national systems for validation of informal learning are also made (APAE, 2012, 2013).

Although correspondence between European and Slovene AE policy cannot be understood as a causal relationship, as European (or global) agenda is always filtered through national, political and cultural traditions (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010), we argue that European AE policies function as a ‘regulatory ideal’ (Nóvoa & Dejong-Lambert, 2003, p. 51) that influences Slovene AE policies through common goals, concepts, indicators and tools. Despite strong criticism in research literature regarding competency-based programmes, a shift to learning-outcomes-based qualifications and frameworks for validation of informal learning, leading to the economisation, commodification and instrumentalisation of knowledge and education (Andersson, Fejes & Sandberg, 2013; Barros, 2012; Fragoso & Guimarães, 2010; Nicoll & Olesen, 2013), they have been incorporated into Slovene AE policy without serious reflection of the concepts and ideologies involved. How the employability regime (Nilsson & Nyström, 2013) and privatisation increasingly shapes Slovene AE practices will be discussed in the last section of this paper, in which financial schemes and problems connected to funding are analysed.

Marketisation and Commodification of Slovene AE Using Financial Mechanisms

The ReMPAEs 2004–2010 and 2013–2020 contain four basic goals for AE: to increase the educational level and key competencies of the adult population, to improve the general education of adults, to provide opportunities for learning and participation in education and to ensure employment opportunities for the active population. These goals are being implemented in three priority areas that should provide balanced AE for social (social cohesion, active citizenship, and intercultural dialogue), cultural (personal development) and human resource (labour market) development; accordingly, funds provided by the state and the ESF are shown in Table 1. For the first resolution, the highest percentage of funds was dedicated to the second priority area. For the second resolution, funding was not defined, and percentages are blurred due to the partition of financing among different ministries. However, the highest share of funds is in the third priority area.

Table 1

Planned budget and shares, according to priority areas for AE, in ReMPAE 2004–2010 and 2013–2020.

Priority Area	Budget			
	<i>ReMPAE 2004–2010</i>		<i>ReMPAE 2013–2020</i>	
	EUR	%	%	%
			Ministry of Education & Ministry of Labour	Other ministries
I. General informal education of adults	70.165665,00	26.46%	20%	37%
II. Education to improve the educational attainment of adults	103.430979,00	39.01%	20%	0%
III. Education and training for labour market needs	48.703890,00	18.38%	46%	38%
IV. Infrastructure	42.820480,00	16.15%	14%	25%
Total	265.121014,00	100%	100%	00%

Source: Personal resolutions analysis.

Evaluation of the APAEs during 2005–2008, after adoption of the ReMPAE 2004–2010, show that plans from the first resolution were only partly achieved (Table 2). The share of funding for general informal AE (Priority Area I) was lower than planned, and goals were not reached (a 20% realisation, instead of 27%). The share of funds spent in Priority Area II was close to the budgeted amount, but funds for Priority Area III were exceeded (with 16.1% planned and 28.7% realised) (Beltram, Drogenik & Možina, 2010; National Assembly, 2013). During 2007 and 2008, the rate for achieving NVQs was close to the predicted 10%. Promotion of goals and support of employment and labour market competency were important factors, which was a trend that became even more obvious in subsequent years. Slovenia took the recommendation (EP, 2008) to draw attention to the importance of labour market requirements seriously, especially the recommendation that ‘content of education must be tailored to vocational and practical requirements’ (paragraph 29). The structure of planned funding and approved funding for ReMPAE 2005–2008 is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Structure of funds according to priority areas in ReMPAE 2004–2010, and funds approved by the APAEs 2005–2008.

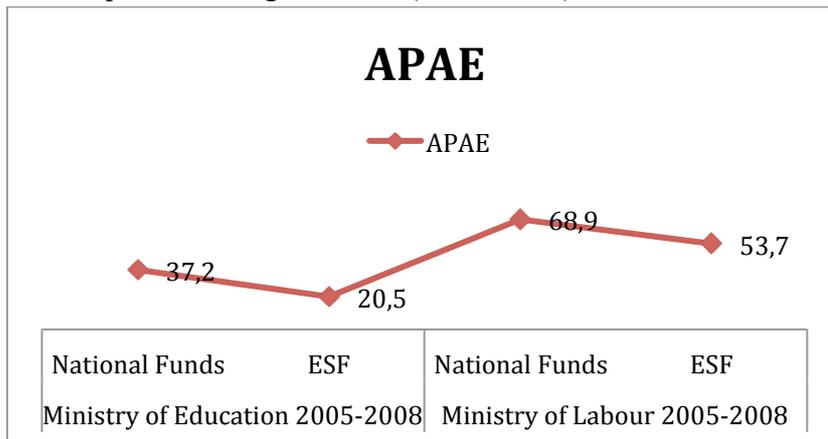
	Planned ReMPAE2005–2008		Approved APAEs 2005–2008	
	Eur	%	Eur	%
I.	45.066.349	27.9	36.025.326	20.1
II.	63.811.968	39.5	69.133.865	38.5
III.	26.521.449	16.4	51.562.764	28.7
Infrastructure	25.986.897	16.1	22.916.154	12.8
Sum	161.386.663	100	179.638.109	100

Source: APAE 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008 in Beltram et al., 2010.

The realisation of goals set in the ReMPAE 2004–2010 was extensively supported by the ESF, which comprised nearly 50% of all funds for AE in Slovenia (Graph 1).

Graph 1

Annual planned budget for AE (2005–2008) based on sources in million Eur.



Source: Beltram et al., 2010, p. 18.

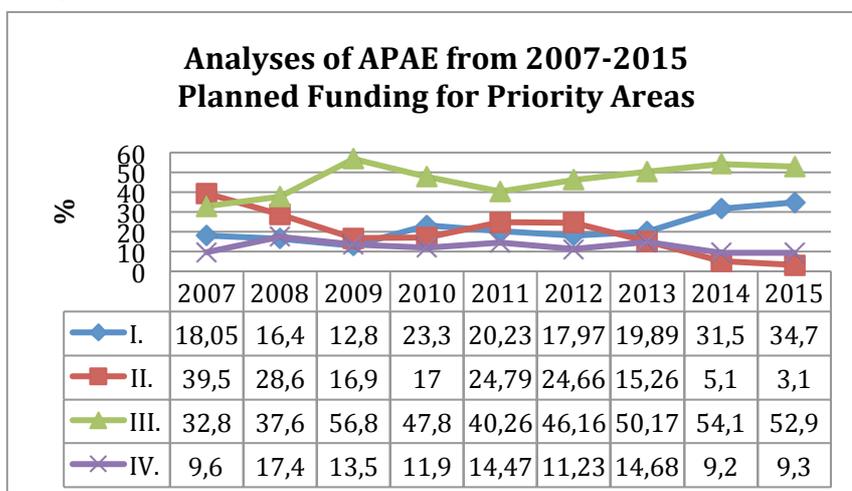
Data show that funds from the Ministry of Education were less than funds from the Ministry of Labour and that other inconsistencies occurred in the structure of financing. Funds from the Ministry of Education were meant to cover activities and programmes in Priority Area I, particularly in education for social and cultural goals, participation of vulnerable groups and social inclusion of adults. Education for the public good must have stable financial support from the state and should not be market driven or dependant on short-term financing schemes. Organisations offering non-profit educational programmes not connected to the labour market are mainly public institutions for AE. Contrary to expectations, educational programmes for vulnerable groups in Priority Area I were predominantly financed by the ESF and not by the national budget (Pangerc Pahernik, 2009), mainly through developmental projects to improve higher education achievements and employability, literacy, training of adult educators, quality, information and guidance for adults. General AE (community education, education in NGOs, libraries, etc.) was in this sense marginalized (Ivančič, 2011). Using the ESF was a very complicated process, which contributed to low

spending of the offered funds. In contrast, the ReMPAE 2004–2010 explicitly stated that education of employees should be financed by employers and not by the national budget, which was primarily meant to finance education for endangered occupations. However, because this area was substantially financed by the ESF, when national co-financing was needed, considerable national funding was used for education and training of employees. Consequently, the needs of employers were supported by public funds, which indicate privatisation of the policy and the initial attempt to blur the boundaries between public policy making and the private sector. Public institutions for AE were, on the contrary, confronted with uncertain long-term planning, based on project financing from the ESF. In the initial years of the implementation of the ReMPAE in Slovenia and because of influences from EU (global) directives, new modalities of privatisation and marketisation of education have occurred.

Graphs 2 and 3 show that since 2009, funds for AE have decreased. Compared to 2011, in 2012, funds were 26% lower, in 2013, funds were 37% lower, in 2014, funds were slightly higher but still 15.5% lower than in 2011 and in 2015, they dropped again. Decreases in funding were connected to the global financial crisis, which strongly affected Slovenia from 2009 onwards. As in many other countries, Slovenia accepted recommendations from European and global institutions for austerity measures and reduction of public expenditure in the educational field. Non-compulsory AE was also affected by marketisation and privatisation, as well as reductions in public expenditure. During this process, Europeanisation, in the form of policy recommendations, indicators and the requirement for the comparability of results, was adjusted according to the demands of supranational organisations, such as the EU and OECD, who explicitly defined austerity measures for education. In Slovenia, cuts to public funds and the interventions of these measures allowed privatisation, competition between public and private organisations and the invention of ‘entrepreneurialism as new public ethos’ (Grimaldi, 2013, p. 427). However, changes were warranted because of the necessity for an agreed-on direction in the priority areas. In addition to cuts in the national budget for AE, there were also changes to the distribution of funds between ministries (Graph 3, Table 3) and priority areas (Graph 2). Regarding priority areas, distribution of funds was in favour of Priority Area III (Education and training for labour market needs). This proves that the measures mentioned above influenced the content and orientation of AE and training.

Graph 2

Analyses of the APAE from 2007–2015, according to the planned funds for priority areas.



Source: APAE 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015

Finances for Priority Area I varied from 12.8-34.7%; however, due to a lower share of the funds from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour, during 2014 and 2015 (Graph 3), even higher aggregate funds did not guarantee the realisation of set priority goals. The highest share of funds was obtained in 2015 from the Ministry of Health, although the share of funds for education and training for labour market needs consistently increased, reaching 52.9% of all funds for AE in Slovenia (in 2015). In 2015, the most neglected area (according to set priorities) was Priority Area II (Education to improve the educational attainment of adults), for which the planned share of funds was at its lowest point since 2007 (3.2%). This decrease resulted from the transferring of money to market-driven activities, such as business-to-business training centres (entrepreneurship centres in secondary schools, connected to certain line of business, involving secondary school youth and adults), which were established to stimulate vocational training and apprenticeships. This is another sign of ‘endogenous privatisation’, which is based on commercialisation of public education and the introduction of private market and management techniques in schools, with the intention to create a more business-oriented public sector (Ball & Youdell, 2008). As Ball and Youdell (2008) stated, public-private partnerships (PPP's) create various types of money transfers between the private and public sectors. However, business-to-business training centres are co-financed by EU funds and are an example of how the EU influences the economisation of AE using financial mechanisms at the national level.

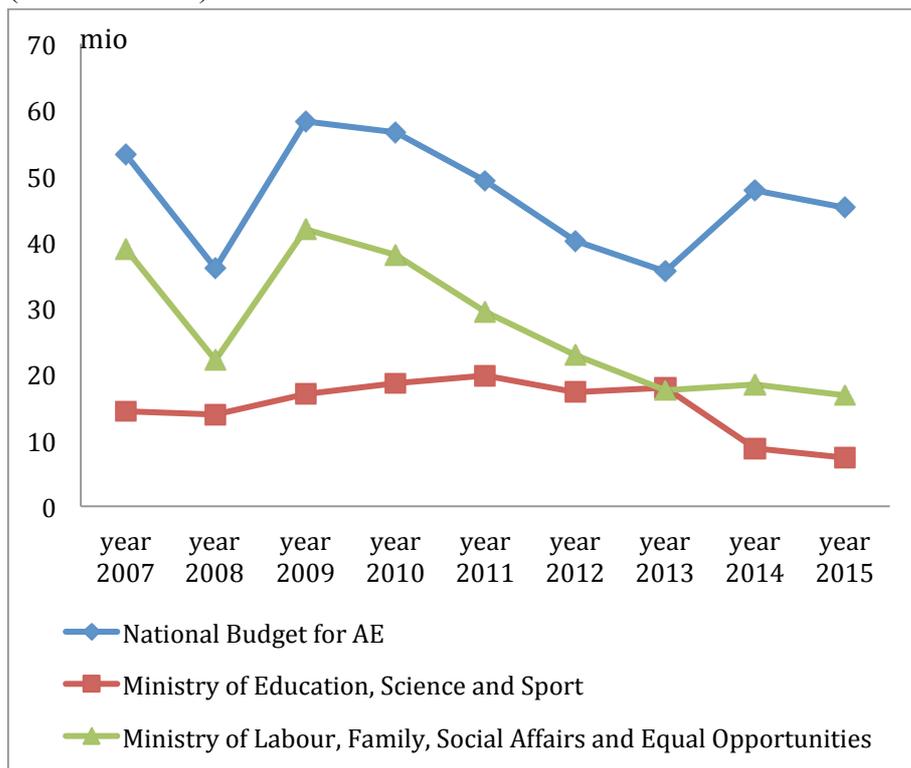
The distinction between the role and financing of private and public AE organisations is blurred in Slovenia. In practice, public AE organisations, such as Adult Education Centres (AEC) and schools with units for AE, are founded by individual municipalities. The role of public organisations is to fulfil public interests in the field of AE, but due to decreasing funds for general informal AE, these types of organisations are endangered. Data from the annual analyses of educational performers and programmes for AE, for the years 2014 and 2015, provided by the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (SIAE, 2015a), show that private organisations are the most prolific providers of AE (62 organisations, offering 1508 programmes). In comparison, the number of municipal AEC has decreased (from 42 in 1999/2000 to 32 in 2007/08 and 30 AEC in 2014/15, offering 1602 programmes). Data from SURS (2015) are slightly

different, showing that in 2013 and 2014, there were only 28 AEC compared to 133 'specialised' (private) AE institutions.

The data presented in Graph 3 show that per annum (particularly after the austerity period after the financial crisis), the share of funds from the Ministry of Education decreased to the lowest amount, with decreases in Ministry of Labour funding also found.

Graph 3

Funds from the national budget for the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour (in million Eur).



Source: APAE, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015.

Since 2014, interdepartmental cooperation between ministries was introduced in congruence with European recommendations (CEU, 2011), and new ministries contributed 42.9% of all funding for AE in Slovenia. In itself this might be desirable, but analyses of the programmes financed by other ministries, e.g., health, agriculture, environment, culture and public administration, show that it is not clear whether funds were meant for AE, as defined in the ReMPAE or for other activities directly related to these ministries. The financing scheme is now blurred and one can suspect that the measure was introduced and used as a mean for lowering budget of Ministry of Education. However, funds of other ministries are not meant for dealing with social inequalities in the field of AE, which was supposed to be main responsibility of the Ministry of Education. As a result, activities of many successful AE projects (some of them were model for development of AE elsewhere in Europe) with more than 20 years' tradition (for example Project Learning for Young Adults, Adult Education Guidance Centres, Learning exchange, etc.), which were important offer of informal education and learning for marginalized adults and were financed (also) by public funds, are seriously endangered. Public funds are allocated to (public) institutions with delay,

longer than half a year, and it is uncertain, if funds will be given at all. Some public organizations, conducting most of these projects, are consequently strongly hit by these measures and uncertainty.

It seems that the interdepartmental approach creates inconsistencies in the actual funding for the development and support of AE. Related to a lower national budget in 2015, the share of funds from the Ministry of Education is now minor. The share of funds given by different ministries, according to the APAE 2015, is presented in Table 3.

Table 3.

Budget users, as indicated by the APAE 2015 plan, according to funds and shares.

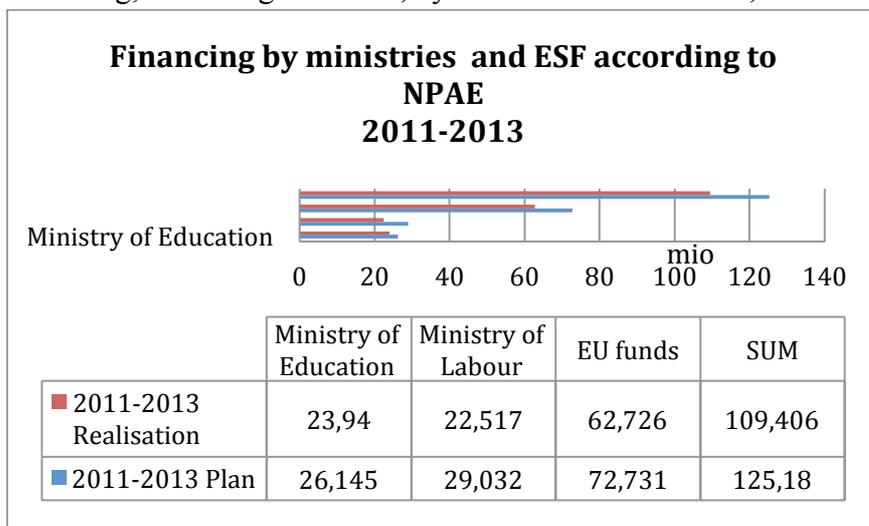
Budgetary Users	Funds in EUR	Share (%)
Ministries for Education, Science and Sports	7.360.643,28	16.3
Ministries of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities	16.783.221,81	37.2
Ministries for Agriculture, Forestry and Food	8.330.680,00	18.4
Ministries of the Environment and Spatial Planning	104.708,00	0.2
Ministry of Health	10.532.206,00	23.3
Ministry of Culture	2.011.640,18	4.5
Ministry of Public Administration	56.756,92	0.1
Sum	45.179.856,19	100.0

Source: APAE, 2015.

In 2015, the largest share of funding for AE came from the Ministry of Labour (37.2%), the second largest share came from the Ministry of Health (23.3%), the third largest share came from the Ministry of Agriculture (18.4%) and the fourth largest share came from the Ministry of Education (16.3%). Since 2013, the funds from the Ministry of Education have continuously decreased (2013: 17.929 mio, 2014: 8.814 mio and 2015: 7.360 mio Eur). This will have a significant influence on further imbalances between priority areas in AE. However, realisations of the APAEs 2011, 2012 and 2013 (Graph 4) show that the EU funds remained important to the Slovene budget for AE and that there were gaps between planned funding and the realisation of the APAEs.

Graph 4

Financing, according to APAE, by ministries and the ESF, from 2011–2013.



Source: SIAE, 2015b.

ESF funds have decreased over the years; thus, national funds should increase over time and substitute missing ESFs, especially for the nationally important goals for education. High shares of the ESF should by no means encourage the Ministry of Education to reduce funding, although this occurred in Slovenia. However, after 2014 ESF funding scheme ‘2007-2013’ came to an end in Slovenia, and most of the projects, relying besides ESF primarily on funds of the Ministry of Education (mostly general informal education), are now endangered. Analyses show that funds for training for labour market could still be found (graph 2, table 3); therefore emphasising flexible subjectivity for labour market needs (learning to update skills, find employment, to obtain desired forms of self, e.g., flexible workers, self-actualised individuals), which is in congruence with European AE policy, became a priority in Slovenia.

Conclusions

In this paper we presented an analysis of how tools and concepts in the European AE policy influence Slovene practices, how marketisation and economisation are reflected in Slovene AE policies and practices and provided evidence of the effects of Europeanisation on education in Slovenia.

Analyses of financing schemes defined by Slovene APAEs have shown that, since 2009 and the beginning of the financial crisis, public funds for AE have continuously decreased. In accordance with EU recommendations, austerity measures affected the educational system and were used as an excuse to introduce certain changes to the financing mechanisms and privatisation processes of Slovene AE (Simons et al., 2013). Europeanisation has influenced objectives for several measures and was imposed during systemic and financial changes in Slovenia, which resulted in the following. First, public funds from the Ministry of Education gradually diminished and now present a minor share of the funds allocated for AE compared to other funding options from the ESF and Ministries of Labour, Health, and Agriculture. Second, the ESF formed a substantial part of the budget for AE, which influenced erosion of financial stability for public AE institutions. Third, general informal AE programmes to strengthen social

equality, social justice and inclusion of target groups are treated as second-rate AE fields. Fourth, the highest priority was devoted to education and training for labour market needs, with 52.9% of all funds in 2015 allocated towards this type of AE in Slovenia, particularly short vocational training programmes. Fifth, public institutions for AE were forced to compete with private institutions, which are now the main providers of AE in Slovenia, although these institutions do not have to meet quality standards or goals or define education as a public good.

The system of AE in Slovenia is in principle well organised and regulated by the state (Ministry of Education) with special legislation on AE, AE resolutions and APAEs, however it is not immune to the labour market forces and marketization of AE that invade the field along with financial crisis and austerity measures. Thereby, when the state failed to provide sufficient funding of AE and shifted its responsibility to other actors and mechanisms (ESF, other ministries not primary responsible for AE, private organisations), it allowed market mechanisms to enter the field through the ‘backdoor’. Consequently, the number of public AE organisations that should fulfil the public interest in the field of AE is decreasing; they have to compete with each other for sufficient number of adults, compete with private for-profit organisations representing majority of AE institutions, and compete for ESF projects – adjusting to the European AE agenda – in order to ‘survive’ in Slovene AE market. In this market, AE responding to the labour market is becoming just another commodity for sale.

Aligning with European standards played an important role in modernising and reforming educational systems after Slovenia gained its independence in the early 1990s. Of interest is how policymakers, during the past ten years, have taken an uncritical approach to adopting European concepts and tools, thereby influencing Slovene AE practices in a direction that primarily enforces vocational training of adults for labour market needs. Recent changes in Slovene AE discard national traditions, such as an innovative nature and socially oriented education, which developed in the decades leading up to 2000. By slowly accepting various imposed European ‘standards’, such as LLL, reforms to the VET system, deregulation, privatisation and commercialisation of public education, AE in Slovenia is losing its former orientation towards social justice, personal and social development and empowerment of adults through education. It seems that through Europeanisation, AE in Slovenia is becoming a tool for profitability in a market-oriented society.

Note

¹ Slovenia is one of the rare countries with special law for AE, adopted in 1996. The Adult Education Act regulates informal AE, while other areas are regulated by the Organisation and Financing of Education Act (of the Republic of Slovenia) and other school and employment acts.

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