

Käpplinger, Bernd

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Internet: [www.pedocs.de](http://www.pedocs.de)

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## Addressing refugees and non-refugees in adult education programs: A longitudinal analysis on shifting public concerns

*Bernd Käpplinger*

Justus-Liebig-University in Giessen, Germany (bernd.kaepplinger@erziehung.uni-giessen.de)

### Abstract

*The paper analyses mainly non-vocational courses offered by a sample of 47 out of the approximately 900 public adult education centres (Volkshochschule - VHS) in Germany. The focus is on courses, events or other learning forms dealing with refugees in Germany from 1947 to 2015. Refugees can be taught in all-refugee or in mixed-groups, but it can also mean that flight and refuge is an educational issue for non-refugees. The method of program analysis is used. The results demonstrate changes over time. German adult education centres have partly turned into language schools for refugees and migrants. Civic or liberal education courses have lost importance. Refugees and migrants are addressed more than in the past when mainly non-refugees were informed about the reasons why people become refugees. Finally, ideas for courses are put forward. They are related to past practices and other studies.*

**Keywords:** adult education centre; history; program analysis; program planning; refugee

### The so-called 'Refugee Crisis' - A new Challenge for Adult Education?

The last years have propelled an interest in practices of adult education, which deal with refugees. There are national and international studies and overviews (e.g. Robak; 2015; Klingenberg & Rex, 2016; EAEA, 2016; Palmén, 2016; Subasi, 2018) in which practices are monitored and systemised since the situation is described as an 'experiment' with a 'trial-and-error-method' (Hockenos, 2018). Such mainly inductive approaches are valuable and often accompanied by comparing different national approaches to migration. This paper wants to add an historical comparative dimension to that. The experiences of flight are not unique, rather, they have been the historical normality in Europe. The history of war, and especially World War II with its Nazi atrocities, but also other more recent conflicts such as the civil war in former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, forced people to leave their homes. Europe has been for



centuries the continent to where people migrated into the world in so-called ‘colonies’. The last decades saw an influx of refugees, mainly from Asia and Africa, often from such former ‘colonies’. Overall, dealing with refugees and flight is not a new experience despite the uniqueness of each historical situation. What were the actions and reactions of adult education to flight in the past? What was offered by adult education providers to refugees in the past? How were the communities, which had to learn to accommodate the newcomers, addressed? What can we learn from the past? Do programs touch on public concerns since refugees are often part of controversies within communities or nation-wide? Do adult education centres provide support for the refugees in order to take part and have their own voice in discourses? Are encounters between refugees and receiving communities arranged? Can past practices inspire us? Such questions will be discussed within this paper based on practices in Germany over the last few decades. It is a contribution to enhancing the collective memory of adult education research and practice beyond present-day challenges and perspectives (Käßplinger, 2017).

### **Theoretical approach and method of program analysis**

Programs are specific to adult education. Program planning is a core activity of adult educators (Sork, 2010), although some scholars in adult education neglect this activity (Käßplinger & Sork, 2015). Programs can be sources for historical analysis, which provides additional, different or complementary insights into practices beyond the constructions and reconstructions based on interviews. Curricula are less prominent in adult education since this educational field is less regulated than school education or higher education, although the level of formalisation seems to be increasing. For example, official integration courses especially are nowadays extensively regulated in countries by public administration, which has advantages (e.g. accessibility and resources for the programs) and disadvantages (e.g. top-down administration).

Programs in adult education serve as a hinge between (potential) learners and the providers and trainers. A program as a material document can refer to a variety ranging from huge printed catalogues, leaflets, webpages, downloadable pdfs or databases in the web. It contains text but also images, pictures or icons. Programs could be misperceived solely as a temporarily relevant marketing instrument, but programs and connected program planning are more than that. They contain past experiences with courses and present proposals for the future. The texts of programs contain the perception and the claims of educational organisations within a particular ‘Zeitgeist’. Images and pictures are symbols for learning, which can be studied ethnographically. The kind of learners or teachers that are displayed indicates public representations of gender or ethnicity. A program can be perceived as a public statement about education by providers. This is pictorially obvious, when looking, for example, at cover pages of programs in Canada:



**Source:** Cover pages of Canadian programs (Käpplinger, 2015)

The pictures and text to the left can be considered as an iconic representation of an individualised human capital approach, since the woman is asked in the top line to ‘invest in yourself’. On the other picture, a modern and colourfully-dressed woman wearing a headscarf is displayed. Such a cover page with its representation of Islam is rather unlikely to be found in some parts of Europe nowadays, which are much less open to diversity or even explicitly Islamophobic. It might even lead to public outrage. Of course, there are also similar diversity-sensitive practices in Europe as well as in Canada. Canada is not a society free of discrimination. Nonetheless, that Europe, or parts of European societies and political parties, have at least partly become much less tolerant than in the past, seems to me quite indisputable. Returning to the picture, the combination of the modern, Western dress with the scarf can be considered as an interesting intercultural statement for merging different orientations and cultural identities. This detour into iconographic analysis should demonstrate that the discourse of lifelong learning can be interpreted by analysing images and pictures within the programs of adult education providers. Analysis of images and pictures in adult education programs has been done (Dörner, 2012, Käpplinger, 2015). It is likely that (comparative) research could intensify since material has become easily available via the internet.

Based on the well-established method of ‘program analysis’ (Gieseke, 2000, Nolda, 2010, Käpplinger, 2008, Schrader, 2014) programs offered by public adult education centres in Germany will be analysed. The method of program analysis can be differently applied, but the shared approach is that a program of an adult education provider is an expression of contemporary perceptions of what education or ‘Bildung’ is, or is considered to be. It is also called ‘data-driven content analysis’ in comparative studies in Europe (Manninen, 2017, p. 329). Historical comparisons can shed light on how past ideas on provision have developed. In general, a program is a hinge between supply and demand in relation to education (Gieseke, 2000). A program analysis offers the chance to know more about it. People are addressed by programs as potential learners. The organisation wants to attract them. It is also more than a marketing tool since course descriptions are sometimes also written as legitimations in relation to funders or other third party agencies.

Program analysis has, like other methods, methodological pitfalls and challenges, which have to be considered (Nolda, 2010, Käpplinger, 2007, Käpplinger, 2011). For example, interviews construct parts of the ‘reality’ and depend on the way researchers try to make reconstructions. Questionnaires and quantitative data are bound to pre-defined concepts, indicators and factors. The course reality can differ from the envisaged scenarios as described

by written or visual course descriptions in programs. Thus, program analysis is one approach apart from others in order to know more about the realities of adult education practices. A triangulation of interviews, surveys or program analysis is often done in order to balance the advantages and disadvantages of the different methods.

For this research, we<sup>1</sup> used the digital and free accessible program archive of the German Institute for Adult Education. It contains a sample of programs from 47 public adult education centres (Volkshochschule - VHS) from 1947 until 2015. 'Program' in this study means printed or digital course descriptions which contain titles, information on tutors, fees, locations, teaching hours, target groups and other details. The program often contains additional information on guidance and counselling in relation to courses and other information on registration and course enrolment processes. Advertisements are sometimes placed within the program in order to finance printing and distribution. Programs, in this sense, are mainly used to attract potential participants and to inform their decisions on course choices. Whole programs as well as individual course descriptions, are documented digitally within this digital archive.

Nowadays<sup>1</sup>, approximately 900 such adult education centres, and more than 3,000 regional offices exist in Germany, which makes them one of the biggest providers of mostly non-vocational training. They provide annually 16.8 million teaching hours with 9 million course participants, mostly in the late afternoon, evenings or at weekends. The majority of the VHS in Germany is almost one hundred years old. Most of them were closed down during the Nazi Germany period, but re-opened in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) as well as in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) after 1945. VHS can be found in urban and rural regions in Germany and they are financed by public and private means with an increasing influence of project-based financing. The VHS are a unique intercultural transfer and merger of the Danish folk high school idea developed by Grundtvig and Kold on the one hand, but they also refer to the British and Austrian university extension idea on the other hand. Nowadays, the Austrian VHS resembles the German VHS the best in Europe.

The analysed sample of 47 centres is not representative in general terms. It equals five per cent of all VHS and it offers a 'wide range' (Heuer et al. 2008, p. 46) of characteristics in relation to regional distribution (rural vs urban vs metropolitan, big vs small VHS, located in all different federal states of Germany). The VHS Leipzig is the only centre from Eastern Germany, which was completely documented even throughout the period of the GDR. Other Eastern VHS have been incorporated into the sample only after 1991. Thus, there is a bias between the VHS in the GDR and FRG, but at least in the program of the VHS Leipzig, courses for refugees or addressing refugees were not found. This is not surprising since refugees were somewhat a taboo in the GDR, for a number of ideological reasons.

We used a quantitative approach, which started from the search for the term 'refugee' within the database. The whole text corpus of the programs has been searched with special search engines (e.g. including prefaces, course descriptions, information on registration or advertisements). We found a high number of 1,884 hits. Hits means the usage of the word 'refugee' in parts of the programs. Because of limited research resources, it was decided that only the programs of the peak years would be analysed in which 'refugee' was found most frequently as a term. This is meant in relative terms since the volumes of the programs have increased a great deal over time. These years were chosen (see graph 1 below): *1947-1950, 1957-1960, 1969-1973, 1981-1985, 1989-1997, 2001-2005, 2008-2009, 2014-2015*.

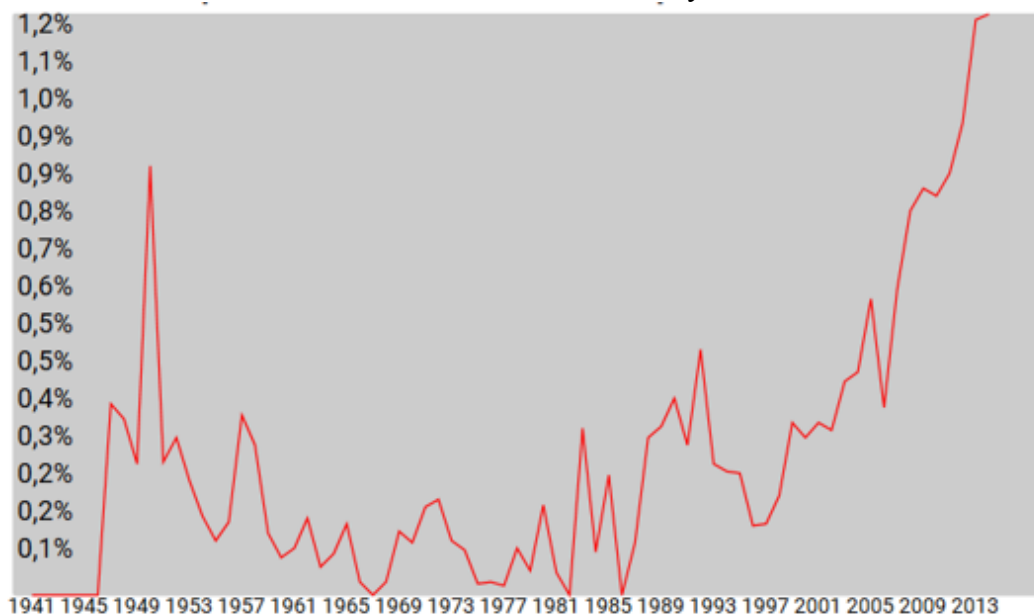
This reduced the number of search hits analysed from 1,884 to 933 hits. The sample consists of 354 programs between 1947 and 2015, with 933 search hits in relation to 'refugee'. The search hits were printed, archived and coded by a pre-defined, but also inductively adapted codebook. The findings were synchronically and diachronically analysed. The analysis involved quantitative calculations and qualitative interpretations.

## Results

### *Flight and refugees as a long-term issue of German Adult Education*

The figure displays the relative importance in dealing with flight and refugees in German public adult education centres' programs:

*Figure 1.* Relative frequency of the usage 'refugee' ('Flüchtling') in programs of 47 German adult education centres between 1947 and 2015 in Germany



**Source:** Hits for 'refugee' in the digital program databank RetroPro in a percentage of all annual data <https://www.die-bonn.de/weiterbildung/archive/programmplanarchive/volltextrecherche.aspx>

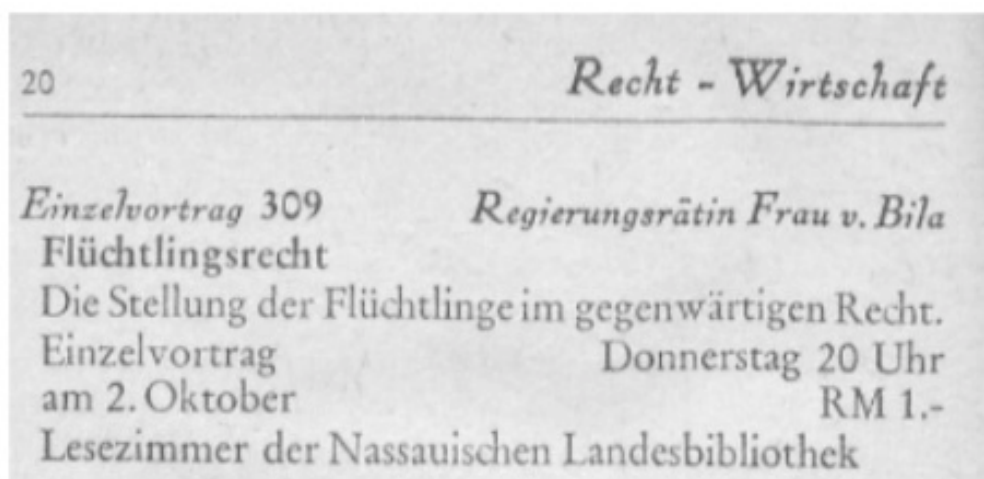
The graph displays the hits for 'refugee' in relation to all words within the programs. It is preferable to use this relative indicator instead of absolute numbers since the programs have increased their volume over time. It might be surprising that the increase of the last years was topped by an even steeper increase at the end of the 1940s, although the ultimate climax was reached at the end. Other climax years are around 1957, 1982 to 1985, 1988 to 1993 and the years after 2007. These climax years were used as selection criteria for more in-depth analysis. Overall, the results demonstrate that dealing with flight and refugees is of increasing importance in German Adult Education. Nonetheless, it is not that new. There have been encounters in Germany and Europe with high numbers of refugees in the past, although certainly because of very different reasons. Especially during and after World War II, a time overshadowed by the atrocities of Nazi Germany, many people lost their homes, had to seek shelter or were expelled. Thus, we can say that there are existing generations of refugees in Europe and many Europeans have ancestors who once were forced to migrate and to seek refuge.

### *Different Periods – Synchronic Analysis*

1947 to 1950: Law Courses (130 programs and 15 findings)

Programs of these years are brief with only a few pages. Refugees are often not explicitly addressed, but they are mentioned in connection with the German Reich and war-occupied territory. The most typical course titles (33%) are like these examples:

- Law-related Questions for Refugees and victims of bombing (Rechtsfragen der Flüchtlinge und Ausgebombten)



**Source:** Adult Education Centre Wiesbaden 1947, 3<sup>rd</sup> trimester, p. 20

Such courses dealt with questions of law or taxes in relation to refugees issues. The historical background is that administrations created laws in 1947/1948 to deal with refugees from the former German Reich. The courses seem to be meant to provide information for refugees and the general public about refugees' rights. Additionally, there were frequent comments that refugees could have free access or were to pay reduced fees. Prefaces asked for help for refugees, reported about shelters for refugees or referred to a UNESCO report on the European refugee crisis. Evening events announced 'political discussions'. 20% of all the offers are on civic education or history. Very few language courses are offered (7%), which is understandable since the courses were offered to Germans who became refugees after WWII, and not to non-German speaking people. People in other countries who became refugees because of the war and the atrocities of Nazi Germany are taboos within the programs. Jewish refugees or refugees in countries occupied during the war are also not mentioned. An open, or even critical discussion of the war and the suffering abroad inflicted mainly by Germans, does not take place at all. This only starts many years later.

1957 to 1960: Meeting Refugees from the GDR (247 programs and 20 findings)

The context of flights is changing here. Refugees from the GDR to Western Germany are becoming an issue. The overall sample of programs contains mainly programs by West-German adult education institutions until 1989, but even in the few available programs from the communist GDR, refugees are not mentioned at all. What is mentioned in programs can be interesting, but also it is what is absent from the adult education programs, despite it being a relevant issue, is also of interest. It is obvious that the leaders of the GDR had no wish that their refugees and the people leaving the GDR were mentioned. They were a taboo.

Learning circles are most popular (53%) in Western Germany. For example, in repeated meetings on Thursdays ('Donnerstagskreis'), refugees from the GDR (German Democratic Republic) meet with non-refugees in the VHS Bremen.

**275 Der Donnerstagkreis**  
**(Wir bitten jugendliche Flüchtlinge und Einheimische zum Gespräch)**

Hans Stefan Seifriz

An jedem Donnerstag ist jeder jugendliche Flüchtling aus der DDR und jeder junge Bremer in unserem Gesprächskreis herzlich willkommen. Wir haben kein starres Programm. Es ist unser Bestreben, untereinander Verständigung und Vertrauen zu finden. Gemeinsam interessierende Fragen und Probleme werden im Kreis offen besprochen.

Für junge Menschen, die aus der DDR gekommen sind und sich hier plötzlich ganz anderen Lebensverhältnissen gegenübergestellt sehen, ist es sehr schwer, sich bei uns in der rechten Weise einzugliedern. Hier geht unser Gespräch auch um die Hilfe im Einzelfall.

An jedem Donnerstag, 20—22 Uhr, Eintritt frei  
 Haus der Jugend (Clubraum), Kalkstraße/Geeren (Nähe Brill)

**Source:** Adult Education Centre 1957, 3<sup>rd</sup> Trimester, p. 97

The circles are described in the text as open meetings like an agora, although the GDR refugees are partly described as people in need. The notion of understanding each other and developing mutual trust is strongly emphasized in the text. The overall result is distorted because such circles can be solely found in the data of the VHS Bremen. These circles took place between 1956 and 1961. In other cities, evening events asked for 'political discussions'. 18% of all offers are on civic education or history. One language course is offered for Hungarian refugees after 1956. A study trip is made to a refugee camp in Germany. People are encouraged to make donations for refugees. Overall, the refugees came mainly from the GDR but also others from Central and Eastern European countries were relatively prominent in the programs. Flight is here solely a European issue, while global perspectives are missing.

1969 to 1973: First Regional Peak for Language Courses (262 programs and 28 findings)

The VHS Neuss offers a high number of language courses for adults and children directly in a refugee camp. This was 61% of all courses. Unfortunately, it is not mentioned within the programs where the refugees came from. But it is likely that they were German minorities from Central or Eastern European countries. Vietnamese refugees ('Boat people') arrived in higher numbers in Neuss only after 1979, which is indicated in later programs. The overall result is again biased because of these special developments in just one city like Neuss. This should make sensible that Adult Education is often highly regionally shaped and there is a great difference between regions or between different individual program planners.

It is the first time that other refugees, non-German refugees or subjects of flight caused by Nazi Germany in WWII, become an issue within programs. For example, there are courses dealing with Polish refugees. People emigrating from Germany during the Nazi time are mentioned for the first time. Simultaneously, other course descriptions speak of 'German land in the East' (meaning Poland), which has to be interpreted as a revanchist approach. There are



courses about different refugees in Asia as a kind of general education for the Germans. It is frequently the case that the perspectives are widened beyond Europe and concern non-European refugees. Adult Education increasingly mirrors public and historical events in Chile or Vietnam. Global awareness is increasing. The causes for flight and for people becoming refugees are becoming often an issue. Courses on civic education and history are offered frequently (29%).

1981 to 1985: Refugees Globally and Especially in Africa (188 programs and 24 findings)

Issues of flight and refugees become even more global. Especially the refugees in Africa are mentioned and famines are becoming an important issue. Refugees after WWII are less often an issue than before. Overall, most offers are about refugees from other countries, mainly from African countries, but not for refugees arriving in Germany. The daily lives seem not to have been significantly affected, but the education is rather in more general terms. Only a very few language courses are offered. Courses on politics and history dominate (71%). Typical course titles are like these examples:

- Six Billion Refugees in Africa – A Global Challenge (6 Millionen Flüchtlinge in Afrika eine Herausforderung an die Welt)
- Hunger and Armament – The Example Africa (Hunger und Rüstung - am Beispiel Afrika)

Overall, these years are concerned with a general education for non-refugees about global and local reasons for flight and reasons why there are refugees.

1989 to 1997: Political Struggles and combatting xenophobia (466 programs and 172 findings)

Many trends of the previous period are continued. Only a very few language courses are offered. Courses on civic education and history still dominate (54%). Law courses are again offered (11%), but very often these courses are connected with discussions about the asylum law, which was changed in Germany during this period. The language used in the course titles becomes more dramatic. Question marks or exclamation marks are used in course titles:

- Foreigner – Stranger in our country or on the way to a “multicultural society”?  
(Ausländer – Fremde in unserem Land oder: Auf dem Weg zu einer “Multikulturellen Gesellschaft”?)
- Germany and Europe – Shelter or Fortress? (Deutschland und Europa: Fluchtburg oder Festung?)
- When refugees and immigrants become an ‘asylum wave’ (Wenn Flüchtlinge und Einwanderer zu ‘Asylantenfluten’ werden)

Xenophobia is addressed in a preventive way. The civil war in former Yugoslavia and the connected refugee movements becomes a major issue in the mid 1990s. Most courses address implicitly only the non-refugees, while courses directly for refugees account for solely 10% of all courses. Refugees themselves are rarely addressed directly or personally, but the public concerns and debates related to refugees seem to have been intensively discussed within public adult education centres. There was more educational work *about* refugees, but not *with* refugees. Intercultural encounters were relatively rare, although typical events such as intercultural dancing, music-making, cooking or celebrations can be found.

2001 to 2005: Language courses begin to dominate (217 programs and 164 findings)

The early years at the turn of the century indicate major changes in the programs. Language courses for refugees and migrants become the biggest segment with 40% of all findings. 51%

of all findings address refugees or migrants directly. Courses on civic education and history are second with 30%. Vocational training for refugees becomes a small segment with 9%. Overall, typical course titles are:

- German as a foreign language (Deutsch als Fremdsprache)
- German for asylum-seekers (Deutsch für Asylsuchende)

Xenophobia is less often addressed. Some courses address German and other refugees from the past. The 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of WWII is sometimes mentioned in 2005.

2008 to 2009: Language courses dominate (217 programs and 163 findings)

Language courses for refugees and migrants can now be found in almost all programs. This is a sharp contrast to the past, where migrants were often not addressed directly, but were rather just an 'issue' to be discussed in single VHS. Language courses make up 55% of all findings. So-called integration courses or orientation courses become dominant. These courses refer explicitly to legal regulations of the new German immigration law after 2005 and constitute an own format of civic education designated explicitly for migrants and refugees. It ends with a multiple-choice-test in order to check if the migrant or refugee has acquired basic knowledge about polity and democracy in Germany and the way it functions. Here are examples:

- Integration course (Integrationskurs)
- Orientation course (Orientierungskurs)
- Naturalisation test (Einbürgerungstest)

Xenophobia is again much less often addressed, which is in sharp contrast to the 1990s, where this was often present within the programs and debated. Courses on civic education and history have a share of 19%. The titles are often in a neutral language such as:

- Muslims in Germany: Migration – Integration – Organisation. (Muslime in Deutschland: Migration - Integration – Organisation).
- Departure into the unknown – Emigration yesterday and today (Aufbruch ins Ungewisse – Auswanderung damals und heute)

This is in sharp contrast to the 1990s, where the titles pointed more to debates or concerns or were even provocative and trying to stimulate debate instead of signalling neutrality.

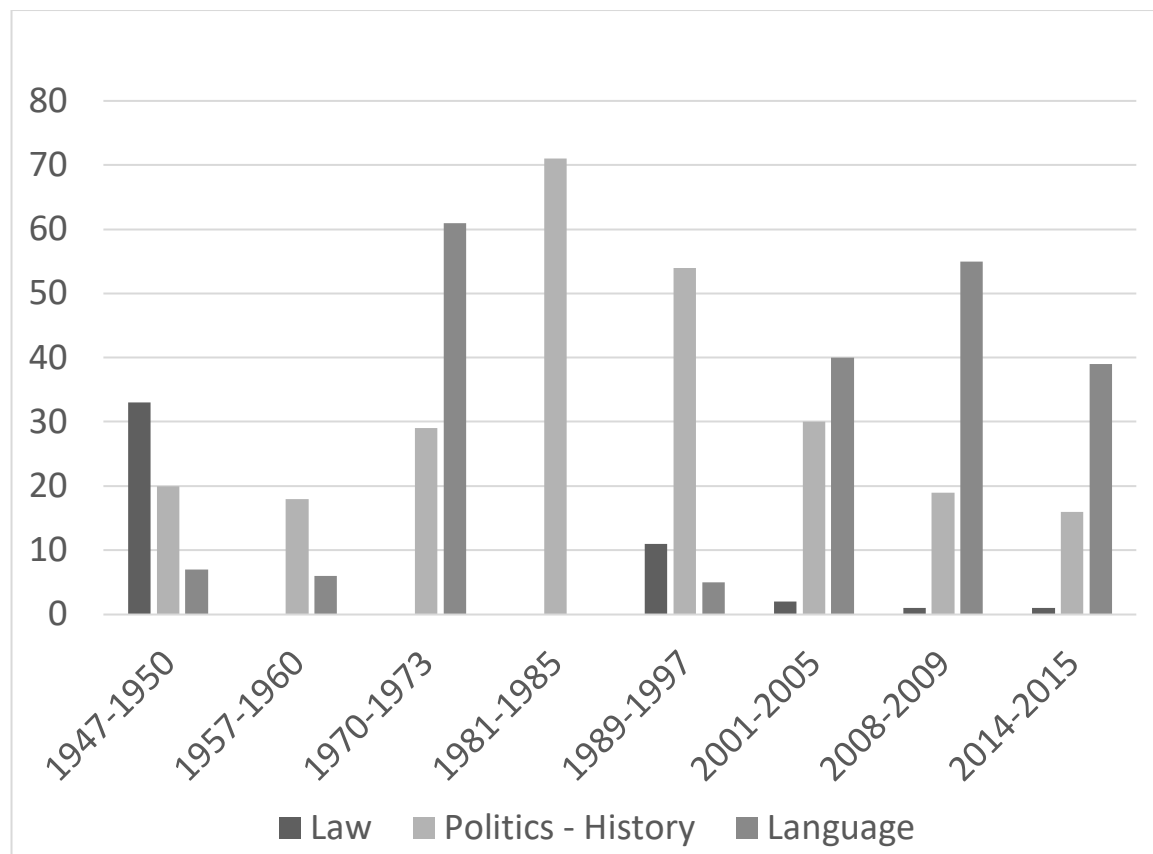
2014 to 2015: Language courses dominate (145 programs and 301 findings)

Language courses for refugees and migrants can be found in all programs. They make up 39% of all findings. 48% of all findings address refugees or migrants directly. So-called integration courses or orientation courses are dominant. Xenophobia is not often addressed. Courses on civic education and history are again the second most frequent and have a share of 16%. Vocational courses become a little bit more frequent with 7%. Courses for pedagogical or other welfare system professionals increase their share slightly from 3% to 4%. Arab language courses explicitly for professionals are offered. Thus, providing opportunities not only for refugees to learn a new language in order to communicate, but also for professionals to learn at least some basic Arabic for communication skills. Voluntary help and donations are frequently mentioned in forewords or in relation to course costs.

### *Different Periods – Diachronical Analysis*

The synchronic analysis has already demonstrated some trends over time. Overall, the courses offered for refugees are fluid and change a great deal between periods:

*Graph 2. Three biggest course segments in the periods (in % of all findings per period)*



**Source:** Own analysis

Law courses were important in the early years, while later they were of a residual importance. But it is necessary to note that after 2005, the aspect of law (‘rights and duties’) has become an integral part of language integration courses and national integration policies with 60 out of a total of 660 course hours being devoted to law. Courses of general education on flight and refugees had increasing importance until the 1980s. Their share then decreased steadily until 2015. Language courses had a peak in the 1970s, which was caused by regional factors of single VHS. It might be biased because of the sample of programs within the archive. But the share of language courses has been very high since the new millennium. It is provocative, but it could be interpreted that the VHS have become huge language schools within two decades, while provision of general and civic education has moved more into the background.

Connected to this development is also a change in the target groups in relation to flight or refugees. The main trend is that courses in the past often addressed the native German citizens and were informing them about flight and refugees. General knowledge was provided about the reasons for these developments. To have informed German citizens seems to have been a major goal of the programs. Nowadays, refugees and migrants make up the majority of the explicitly mentioned target group. Intercultural courses for both groups together are rather rare. The historical special case of VHS Bremen with the ‘Thursday Circles’ from 1956 to 1961 is unique. It was an offer which ran for many years and was explicitly open, where both target groups were invited to meet in a seemingly self-directed way. Similar single events could be found

later, but they were neither as established nor as open for both groups. For example, sometimes study trips to refugee shelters were offered in later times. The intercultural approach seems partly to have been replaced by target group measures.

Dealing with the refugees and flight caused by Nazi Germany during WWII did not take place until the end of the 1960s. Despite the goal of re-education, it took almost two decades until German responsibility for the war and its crimes were addressed extensively within the programs.

Xenophobia was a major issue to deal with in the programs of the 1990s, but this has relatively lost a great deal of importance in the last few decades. Recent years have seen an increase in civil voluntary engagement. Overall, dealing with refugees has become a regular feature in almost every program nowadays. At the same time, the plurality and variety of offers has decreased.

### *Relating the descriptive results analytically to research within adult education*

Wildemeersch (2017) refers to Biesta (2012), stressing that there can be:

- education *for* the public,
- education *of* the public and
- education *for the publicness* for the refugees, the so-called newcomers.

Education *for* the public 'is characterized by a deficit approach. The public, or the target groups of educational intervention, are considered to lack information, insight, capacities to function adequately as responsible citizens that fully participate in society.' (Wildemeersch, 2017, 118) The education *of* the public 'is not organised in formal or non-formal educational contexts such as schooling or adult education classes, but in close connection with democratic practices. It is often aimed at raising critical consciousness about various issues of public concern and at overcoming alienation from the world. In such practices the educators do not function as instructors, but rather as facilitators of learning processes, whereby the outcomes of these processes are not predetermined but open-ended.' (ibid) Finally, education for publicness is understood 'as a set of activities that enable people to become public actors. (...) In this approach, the educator is someone who *interrupts* the taken-for-granted assumptions of the audience or the public.' (ibid)

This typology partly resonates with the results presented here, although they also go beyond that. The 'education *for* the public' characterises in many respects the mainstream integration policies and practices of the last two decades in Germany. The migration laws were changed substantially in 2005. Language courses and so-called orientation courses with citizenship education (on polity and basic democratic principles like gender equality) are widely provided for migrants and also a large number of refugees. This can be perceived as progress since the earlier programs contained a rather low number of courses for migrants and refugees, and were rather for the wider public. The German policy-makers have accepted and acknowledged that Germany is a land of immigration. Nonetheless, it is also a deficit approach since the assumption is that migrants and refugees are lacking language and democratic skills. This is partly true, but the assumption is that they have first to learn, in order to be able to participate in Germany.

The empirical observation that 'education *for* the public' took place for many years in relation to the majority society and the Germans in relation to migration needs to be added here. There was, especially from the 1970s to the 1990s, a high number of courses in which it was tried to educate the wider public on the reasons why people had to move from their home countries, such as famines or conflicts. It can be called an intended enlightenment of the wider

public in view of informing it better about the reasons of flight. For example, here an offer from a small city, which received 50 so-called ‘boat people’ from Vietnam in 1980:

**1009 Vietnam in Deutschland**  
Ein Dia-Vortrag mit anschließender Diskussion über die kulturelle und psycho-soziale Lebenswelt der Vietnamesen, die bis Ende der nächsten beiden Jahre zu ca. 20 000 in der Bundesrepublik leben werden. Darüber hinaus werden auch Informationen über die neueste politische Entwicklung in Vietnam gegeben. Ziel der Veranstaltung ist es, Verständnis für die Flüchtlinge zu wecken und dabei Chancen aufzuzeigen, wie eine gute Atmosphäre des Zusammenlebens zwischen den Vietnam-Flüchtlingen und der deutschen Bevölkerung erreicht werden kann, denn die Stadt Bocholt hat 50 Vietnam-Flüchtlinge aufgenommen.  
Leitung: Vu tu Hoa und Gesprächspartner des Caritasverbandes und der Stadtverwaltung  
Donnerstag, 13. März, 20.00 Uhr  
Rathaus, Berliner Platz 1  
Entgelt: Erw. DM 2,- Schüler und Auszubildende DM 1,-

**Source:** Adult Education Centre Bocholt-Rhese-Isselburg, 1<sup>st</sup> Semester 1980, p. 20

Here, it is in many respects an education *for* the public and *of* the public. (Biesta, 2012, Wildemeersch, 2017), meaning that the citizens of the area receiving the refugees are to be educated about the reasons for their flight. The forum tries to promote a good atmosphere between refugees and non-refugees. The event was most probably headed by a Vietnamese migrant, since the name Vu tu Hoa is of Vietnamese origin. This can be seen as education *for publicness* since migrants or former refugees are becoming here actors and narrators of their own stories instead of being only defined in a receiving position. It is an important changing of roles. It interrupts and questions the often prejudiced assumption that migrants and refugees are solely in need, and are lacking skills. One more example, the VHS Bremen had this offer of open study circles jointly for refugees and non-refugees. It intended to stimulate exchanges on an equal basis. In the 1990s especially, there was a lively political debate on the asylum law and its development. This took also place within the VHS. The VHS cared for the concerns of the wider public.

In contrast, the last few years have seen controversial public debates in Germany and other European countries on how to deal with refugees. Movements like PEGIDA in Dresden have become infamous. One could expect that this context intensively inspires the programs of VHS in dealing with this issue. Some courses indeed deal with that matter, e.g. ‘Between ISIS and PEGIDA – About Security in Germany and the danger of a societal division’ (‘Zwischen ISIS und PEGIDA - Über die Sicherheitsfrage in Deutschland und die Gefahr einer gesellschaftlichen Spaltung’). However, considering the intensity of the public debate, such offers are relatively rare in the programs of the VHS. There seems to be a relative distance to these developments, since this issue is rarely being touched upon. But it also has to be borne in mind that this could be partly a misperception caused by the nature of the data. Events of public concern can nowadays not only be found within the printed programs. They are also announced by the adult education centres via the internet or social media. Such short-term announcements are not recorded by the archive RetroPro. Printed programs do not inform about all activities of the adult education centres. Nonetheless, estimates can be made and it was confirmed through some additional background interviews that the vast majority of courses and activities are still

presented in printed form. It is only a small number of relatively spontaneous offers reacting to 'hot issues' of great public concern that go unrecorded in print.

Summing up, the typology from Biesta (2012) and applied by Wildemeersch (2017) to the migration issue is suitable for analysing these historical developments of the VHS programs. Education *for the public* dominates over time. However, it is important to add the dimension that the education takes place here not only in relation to migrants, but also to the wider public and the societal majority. The intended education of the wider public was in the past much stronger in VHS than nowadays. This might be something to remember and perhaps it could be reintroduced, since xenophobia and the wrong information about the reasons for flight are widespread. The fairly informal education *of the public* takes place (e.g. in study circles, roundtables, etc.), but it could be also strengthened. Again, it looks as though the mainstream integration policies draw attention and move resources away from such alternative approaches. The claim that adult education in VHS has partly become too much formalised, is probably not far reaching. The language and orientation courses are perhaps a 'sweet poison' since they are financially attractive for the VHS as institutions, but the danger is that they rule out other more non-formal and informal approaches to learning. The program planning might become too one-sided if program planners act too much in-line with the 'Zeitgeist' promoted by politicians and the needs addressed by the public financiers within administrations. It often requires personal courage, pedagogical ethos and professional knowledge to recognise that program planners are interrupting the taken-for-granted assumptions of the audience or the administration who have quickly and simply perceived that integration is the sole task of the so-called newcomers. Such an approach to migration will probably fail, since migration requires that societies and communities taking in migrants, also engage substantially in a learning process. Are program planners in the VHS aware of that and do they have the resources to plan and to practice activities that irritate mainstream approaches? An analytical question from program planning theory is: Do the providers and program planners mainly 'act-within-context' or 'act-on-context'? Scholars describe the relations between planning and context as being dynamic:

Planners' actions, while directed toward constructing educational programs, are also always reconstructing the power relations and interests of everyone involved (or not involved) in the planning process. [...] We argue that power relations and interests always both structure planner action (negotiation) and are reconstructed by these same practices. In sum, planners both act in and act on their social context when planning the program. (Cervero & Wilson, 1994, p. 257).

It might be an interesting research question to analyse the relationship or balance between 'acting-within-context' and 'acting-on-context' within program planning in the context of migration. Do program planners react mainly to needs addressed from the outside or do they act to try to change contexts? Of course, the contexts and the origin of refugees have changed a great deal over the period observed, almost 70 years. Thus, different planners had a great deal of changing and differing contexts to react to. Program planners in adult education are clearly 'seismographs' (Gieseke, 2000) of societal developments. This should make programs interesting beyond educational research, since programs contain traces of contemporary history. (Migration) Laws are influential. Wars and famines are crucial. Global developments become regionally relevant and visible. While the 1980s saw a general discussion on refugees in rather abstract terms related to countries far away, the 2000s are dealing with refugees as physically present humans living in Germany. But does this mean that program planners solely react in response to the 'Zeitgeist' and do not act on contexts? There is some evidence emerging from this study that program planning is more than just reacting. For example, the high degree of differences between adult centres (VHS) within the different periods is striking and might indicate the importance of the staff. But it could be also only an indication of the regional heterogeneity of adult education even in one national migration context. Paradoxically, this might have been easier in the past since the lack of an official migration law informally left a great deal of

open space. It seems to be a paradox that the migration laws and policies simultaneously contain both advantages and disadvantages for practices in adult education.

Finally, I'm wondering if the implicit ranking of this typology by Biesta and Wildemeersch is really adequate? The education *for the public* is described as a deficit approach, while the education *of the publicness* can be easily perceived as the most valuable contribution. From my point of view, this is a too easy ranking perceived by readers and likely followers. It rather seems to me that we need a variety and plurality in the educational work. And this for the work with refugees as well as with non-refugees. Learning the language of the immigration country is often an important tool and prerequisite to take part in other activities *of the public* and *for publicness* since communication skills are needed. Nonetheless, migrants and refugees are in different stages of their immigration. An early inclusion and changing of roles is advantageous. Refugees and migrants themselves can become teachers and tutors. They are bringing language skills with them and they have had a previous life, in which they have acquired skills and competencies, which are often hidden behind the construct of a helpless person. It is important to bring people not into dependency, instead of letting them being the responsible and self-reliant actors of their own life.

### Summary and Outlook: Past Futures or Lost and Found Imaginations

The historical analysis helped to raise questions and alternatives which might encourage imaginations of program planners who are often caught up by present-day logics and pressures. It was valuable to look back to past practices. It gives us refreshing insights. They remind us that different practices were possible in the past which might again be possible in the present and the future. Some progress has been achieved, such as a clear and traceable opening up of the public adult education centres to diversity. Refugees are directly addressed as subjects of their learning and not only as objects to be talked about as was often done in the past. This does not rule out that still a lot has to be done to provide an opening for diversity (Öztürk, 2012, Heinemann, 2014). Where did regressions happen in the programs and which past good ideas have been lost? Engaging with the past helps us to understand the present and to shape the future differently.

Finally, what is interesting to point out for international readers? **Firstly**, the method of program analysis is very valuable in order to study adult education practice. There are internationally similar studies and analysis, but they are rare (Manninen, 2017). Program archives are missing in most countries since they seem only to exist in Austria and Germany (Käßplinger, et al. 2017). But it is a treasure to have such archives in order to make the past programs of adult education available for historical analysis. Do adult education researchers do enough to document past practices in adult education and especially in program planning? I doubt it. There is, from my point of view, a big gap in research, where we as scholars do not care enough for our fields and the work done in practice like it is partly documented by programs. **Secondly**, this paper supports reflective and transformative activities of how to deal with refugees and non-refugees in different national contexts. How can we mutually learn to help migrants to learn, but also help non-refugees to learn how to live with migrants without xenophobia? We need a comparison of mainstream and alternative integration programs in different countries. **Thirdly**, program planning is generally an activity where adult education planners *act on* and *act in* contexts. What do we know about the dynamics between both practices in other fields? How can program planners *act on* contexts as an autonomous power in order to achieve creative and emancipatory goals? Wildemeersch (2017) used a typology by Biesta (2012). He distinguishes between pedagogy *for* the public, pedagogy *of* the public and pedagogy *for* publicness. This framework resonates with the research here since the past activities indicate that dealing with refugees and flight requires different approaches, although in practice, such clear distinctions are rather an illusion. Nonetheless, as an 'ideal type' in the

Weberian sense, it is useful as a heuristic. The analysis showed that three dimensions could be vertically added to this horizontal typology. These three dimensions are the addressees or target groups of such practices. Target groups can be refugees. Target groups can be non-refugees and target groups can be refugees and non-refugees simultaneously. The result can be a table like that the one below, which might be an useful start for differentiating the variety and diversity of approaches:

	Refugees	Non-Refugees	Non-Refugees and refugees jointly
pedagogy <i>for</i> the public			
pedagogy <i>of</i> the public			
pedagogy <i>for</i> publicness			

**Source:** Own table

It would be interesting to map with such a tool the variety of practices. All dimensions are useful and require perhaps different learning activities. It would be a mistake to assume that solely refugees have to learn in times of migration. Wildemeersch (2017, p. 115) says: ‘The confrontation with strangeness or cultural others may threaten our ontological security, or our subjective feelings of integrity, at three different levels: the personal/psychological, the vital and the national.’ Adult education has to help non-refugees to cope with new situations and with the refugees. But do the public adult education centres in Germany or elsewhere in Europe currently contribute enough in order to explain to people why others are seeking shelter and leaving their homes? Do they offer agoras, in which different opinions or even fears could be freely expressed and discussed in a civilised manner? It might be a danger to open such spaces, where even xenophobic opinions can be expressed. There is the argument and decision not to offer platforms for populists. Nonetheless, there do exist educational practices which show that a highly skilled moderator and discussion formats with clear rules can lead to a democratic discourse and exchange of people from different ‘bubbles’ (Maas & Richter, 2015). There could be a need for formats of personal encounters beyond the social media, which tend to bring rather similar minded people together. There exists a need for the renaissance of direct encounters in public agoras. Adult education can encourage encounters between refugees and non-refugees since xenophobia is at its highest, where a lack of encounters is the norm and the number of migrants is very low. While lacking direct encounters, imaginations stimulated by (social) media might lead to prejudices or exaggerations in relation to strangeness. Wildemeersch (2017, p. 122) sees a need for learning spaces of dialogue and perhaps an even bigger need for the articulation of dissensus. Dissensus in relation to different positions within the communities receiving migrants, but perhaps also in relation to the different positions within receiving or migrant communities, since these are also non-monolithic and the less privileged need support in becoming prepared for publicness. Women especially have often to be encouraged or freed from barriers imposed by men and by fundamentalists in order to take up public roles. Majority societies have also oppressive structures. Education also has also to support and strengthen the



individual within and beyond a community. There is no need for naivety and wrongly understood tolerance.

In conclusion, we need a richness of different educational practices in dealing with issues around refugees. And we need a richness of different target group measures and also measures going beyond traditional target groups and milieus, whilst encouraging a wide variety of people to be their own actor within the public. Adult education practices contribute to mainstream national integration policies nowadays, but it is important to go beyond national policies with alternative practices. Looking backwards can also be of some help in order to open the minds (again) and to encourage more diverse practices.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dvv-vhs.de/en/the-association/adult-education-centres/>

<sup>2</sup> I was supported by the student assistant Anastasia Falkenstern. I am grateful for her help in collecting, saving and systemising extensive data. The database is accessible free of costs: <https://www.die-bonn.de/weiterbildung/archive/programmplanarchiv/volltextrecherche.aspx>

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