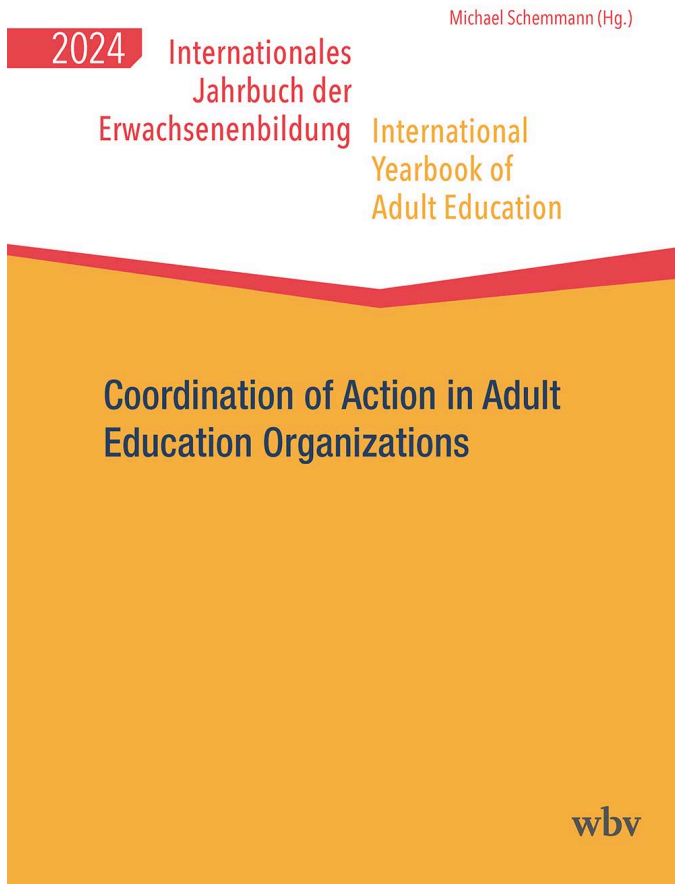


Rezension zu: Parry, G., Osborne, M. & Scott, P. (Eds.) (2023). *Access, Lifelong Learning and Education for All*. Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 352 pp.

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Schlagworte: Review; Rezension

Zitiervorschlag: Plechatsch, Julia (2024). *Review: Access, Lifelong Learning and Education for All*. In: *Internationales Jahrbuch der Erwachsenenbildung 2024. Coordination of Action in Adult Education Organizations*, S. 127-129. Bielefeld: wbv Publikation. <https://doi.org/10.3278/177017W008>



E-Journal Einzelbeitrag
von: Julia Plechatsch

Review: Access, Lifelong Learning and Education for All

aus: Internationales Jahrbuch der Erwachsenenbildung /
International Yearbook of Adult Education 2024
(9783763977017)
Erscheinungsjahr: 2024
Seiten: 127 - 129
DOI: 10.3278/177017W008

Review: Access, Lifelong Learning and Education for All

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Parry, G., Osborne, M. & Scott, P. (Eds.) (2023). *Access, Lifelong Learning and Education for All*. Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 352 pp.

The three domains *access*, *lifelong learning*, and *education for all* seem almost synonymous at times, overlapping due to missing demarcation. Consequently, the particularities of the individual domains are lost from focus. Dedicated to regaining precision, Gareth Parry, Michael Osborne, and Peter Scott take a closer look at *access*, *lifelong learning*, and *education for all* in their anthology. While still engaging with overlaps, they underline the distinction of the three domains to reflect and understand the different dynamics. The anthology is preceded by introductory words from the editors in which they provide the reader with their understanding of the respective domains, present two frameworks that illustrate their connections, and finally draw attention to the differences to be emphasized. The editors state that overarching efforts are made to blur the boundaries between the three domains. As an example of that trend, it is pointed out that, while permeability within higher education is increasing and universities are expanding their offers to include former post-secondary education programs, post-secondary education, for its part, is striving for greater institutionalization of its programs. It is against this background that Parry, Osborne, and Scott warn of a lack of differentiation between the three domains. Such obscurity leads to conceptual differences being overlooked and, as a consequence, domains being mixed up incorrectly.

The 12 papers of the collection are organized into three chapters and discuss the topics mainly from a theoretical perspective. The first part is titled *Access Beyond Elites* and addresses the broad theme of policy, theory, and research. In its primary contribution, Peter Scott discusses the ambiguity of access from three angles. Firstly, he addresses the overall issue that despite the noteworthy development of mass higher education access for socially disadvantaged groups remains unequal and restricted. Secondly, the specific political instruments used to counteract this inequality are examined. Lastly, Scott discusses access at a conceptual level debating competing ideas of fairness and the illusion of meritocracy addressing the question of what makes a 'good society'. In the second article, Gavin Moodie and Leesa Wheelahan critically debate the limitations of human capital theory as the theory dominating higher education policy. Following on from this, human rights and the capabilities approach are presented as two alternative foundations for post-secondary education. Maria Slowey and Hans G. Schuetze conclude the first part of the collection with a comparative study of lifelong learning opportunities in higher education for refugees and older adults in Ireland and Germany. Against the background of two important socio-demographic trends, migra-

tion and the ageing of the population, the effects on widening access to higher education are examined. Slowey and Schuetze show that although there is progress in accessibility for those ‘non-traditional’ learners, “formidable and well-founded barriers to securing fundamental cultural and meaningful change in the global higher education system” (p. 124) remain.

Contributions to the second part, *Alternative Pathways*, are bound together by the theme of examining boundaries and pathways in and through post-secondary education. In the first article, the German ‘dual system’ of post-school qualification is discussed by Andrä Wolter. For many decades, there was a strict segmentation between the two educational paths of non-academic vocational training and higher education. However, the boundaries between these segments are becoming increasingly blurred due to the increasing participation in mass higher education and the formation of alternative types of qualification. Rebecca S. Natow discusses the development of US community colleges with regard to governmental and financial aspects, their multiple missions, and current challenges. She highlights the special role of US community colleges as institutions that respond to various educational needs such as preparation for college, training for the job market, and providing valuable community services. Natow emphasizes the great adaptability of US community colleges to changing educational requirements as the key to fulfilling diverse missions.

The third part of the collection, *Learning in Community Settings*, addresses movements, communities, and centres. Srabani Maitra, Saikat Maitra, and Sadaf Sethwala consider India’s striving for the creation of ‘smart cities’ and its implications for lifelong learning, particularly for poor and marginalised citizens. In their study, 58 semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted in different regions of India. They observed a disjunction between the technology-driven concept of ‘smart cities’ and inclusive forms of development since “the crucial link between ‘smart’ development and lifelong learning seems to be left unaddressed” (p. 268). Finally, the authors urge better development of lifelong learning opportunities as these play an important role in social inclusion in ‘smart cities’ where jobs are rarely available for the low-skilled. The paper by Khau Huu Phuoc and Chris Duke deals with Community Learning Centres (UNESCO initiative) as a concept and significant institutional reality specifically looking at the Asia-Pacific region. With the purpose of empowering local communities, Community Learning Centres are highlighted as multi-purpose instruments for joint development of individuals and their communities. Thereby emphasized is the of-by-for principle – “[o]f the people, by the people, and for the people” (p. 285) – as the core element of rooting from within.

As a whole, the anthology covers various relevant aspects that arise from the consideration of the three domains *access*, *lifelong learning*, and *education for all*. Particularly convincing is its sectioning according to broad themes which does not force the three domains into a rigid framework but allows their flowing connections to run through the anthology like a reoccurring thread. Thereby, the question of interplay or counterplay between the domains is reflected, highlighting potential for future research and consideration. Overall, the authors have compiled a well-structured and comprehen-

sive collection that opens up a new perspective on the field of tension between *access*, *lifelong learning*, and *education for all*.

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