

**IN MEMORIAM**  
**Joachim H. Knoll (1933 - 2024)**

**A Tribute to an adult education stalwart  
with a selection of his publications**

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Prof. em. Dr. Dr. h. c. Joachim H. Knoll died in Hamburg on 22 March 2024 at the age of 91.

In 1964, Joachim H. Knoll was appointed to the Chair of Adult Education and Non-formal Youth Education at the Ruhr University in Bochum, which he held until his emeritus status in 1998. During those more than three decades, he transformed the professorship into an outstanding voice for both international and comparative adult education. He served as Dean of the Faculty of his Ruhr University in Bochum twice.

The older generation in our field of adult learning and education (ALE) will have crossed the way of Professor Knoll in one way or the other. Those who were lucky will have worked with him on any of his vast interests; others will at least have met him on travel or in international conferences, most will have come across his numerous writings which go far back to a time when the printed book or journal was the order of the day.

He was a close friend and colleague of other outstanding champions of his time, like Professors Lalage Bown, Alex Charters and Paul Belanger – all authors of *CONVERGENCE* in the 1970s (Hinzen 2022). They were among those who gathered and exchanged informally on the occasion of CONFINTEA V, enjoying a splendid view from the roof top of the place where Knoll lived overseeing the Hamburg harbor. Knoll knew

also and worked with the other giants in ALE who have died recently like Chris Duke, John Field, Dénes Koltai or Horst Siebert.

### **UNESCO and CONFINTEA**

His closest relationship to any international organisation was UNESCO. He was an in-person member of the German National Commission and he participated actively in UNESCO events. He missed CONFINTEA III in Tokyo although he met and worked with important personalities of the time like Prof. Roby Kidd, Helmuth Dolff or Paul Bertelson. But he enjoyed reporting about his experiences during CONFINTEA IV in Paris which came up with the lasting declaration on *The Right to Learn* (UNESCO 1985), established in the midst of the high-time of the cold war. Knoll joined the editorial team for a special issue of *CONVERGENCE* (Agostino et al. 2007) which was published advancing CONFINTEA VI, with contributors from many regions around the globe like Carolyn Medel-Anounevo, János Tóth, Alan Tuckett, Cecilia Soriano, Babacar Diop Buuba and Malini Ghose. He himself contributed a highly cited and re-published article on "The History of the UNESCO International Conferences on Adult Education – From Helsingör (1949) to Hamburg (1997): International education policy through people and programmes" (Knoll 2014). As CONFINTEA VI was in Belém, Timothy Ireland ensured that a Portuguese version of this *CONVERGENCE* VI Special Edition was produced and shared widely.

### **DVV International**

The relationship of Prof. Knoll with DVV International was of mutual benefit, and started in the early phase of his university work which was close to the founding years of the Institute in 1969. He often invited to contribute to his *International Yearbook of Adult Education*, and contributions included an overview on the journal *Adult Education and Development* (Hinzen et al. 1982).

Prof. Knoll enriched the Board of Trustees of DVV International for over two decades, subsequently also the Advisory Board for Continuing Education of the German Adult Education Association. During this time, he wrote a position paper "Bedeutungsverlust von Bildung in der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit" (The Loss of Importance of Education in

Development Cooperation), which was designed to support far-reaching lobbying and acquisition activities. Consultancy assignments took him to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Poland, Hungary and Vietnam – always with a focus on politics and legislation relating to adult education. He collaborated on the study by the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) on *Adult Education: Trends and Issues in Europe* (EAEA 2006) which later became of key relevance for the EU *Action plan on adult learning - It is always a good time to learn* (EU 2008).

In the German adult education landscape, the Volkshochschulen (adult education centres) were of great importance to him. He contributed to the anniversary volume *100 Jahre Volkshochschulen. Geschichten ihres Alltags* (100 Years of Adult Education Centres. Stories of their daily life) (Schrader, Rossmann 2019) and was invited to the celebratory event in the St. Paul's Church in Frankfurt.

## **Publications**

His published works were extensive and spanned the period from the 1960s to the end of his life. This encompassed the founding of the *Internationale Jahrbuch der Erwachsenenbildung / International Yearbook of Adult Education* which he started as editor in 1972, and continued for more than three decades. As an example, volume 10 in 1982 covered a wide range of themes, including universities and academic continuing education, older adults in US colleges, professionalization in non-formal education, the potentials of ALE in reducing inequalities and poverty as well as country reports on Tanzania (Hinzen 1982), France, Ghana, India and Tanzania (Knoll 1982). The *International Yearbook* is now edited by Michael Schemmann (2023).

Also, for more than three decades he enjoyed being a co-publisher of the journal *Bildung und Erziehung / Formation and Education*, and under his co-editorship with Hinzen special issues on *Academic Study and Professional Training. New BA/MA Courses and Qualifications in Adult Education* (2005), *Migration and Integration as a Topic of Adult and Continuing Education* (2007), *Adult Education and Continuing Education Policy: Science in between Society and Politics* (2009), and *Lifelong Learning and Governance* (2014) were published. In addition, he used the journal

also for his contributions when discussing the international perspectives in German adult education (Knoll 1976).

Throughout his lifetime he continued with his international and comparative perspectives on ALE through articles and books when presenting concepts, institutions and methods (Knoll 1996), writing on the “Development and Fundamental Principles of International and Comparative Adult Education Research” (Knoll 2000) or “Diversity by Design. Evolution, Trends and Problems of International Comparative Adult Education” (Knoll 2009).

In his later life he edited collected volumes titled *Erwachsenenbildung – Quo vadis? / Adult Education – Quo Vadis?* (Knoll 2002) and *Erwachsenenbildung – still confused but on a higher level / Adult Education – still confused but on a higher level* (Knoll 2005), where he reflected on the various fields of activity to which he had contributed his knowledge and experience, especially through contributions like “Adult Education and Legislation. Laws Relating to Adult Education and Paid Educational Leave in the Provinces (Länder) of the Federal Republic of Germany”. He even constructed a “Draft Adult Education Act” (Knoll 2000) which he discussed with partners during his consultancy work.

## **Recognitions**

Prof. Knoll has been honored in numerous ways: He received an honorary doctorate from the Free University of Berlin, was awarded the Order of Merit 1. Class of the Federal Republic of Germany and was an honorary member of the German UNESCO Commission. In 2006, he was inducted into the International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame.

## **Some personal remarks**

My first contact with Professor Knoll hails back into the late 1970s after I had joined DVV International. I enjoyed working with him on numerous occasions. He was certainly more of a mentor in the early years, close to other colleagues in DVV International like Jakob Horn or later Hanno Schindele.

Prof. Knoll was an admirer of the late Prof. Lalage Bown whom I met first in Freetown while I taught at the University of Sierra Leone and she served as our external examiner (Slowey et al. 2023). I recall a telephone conversation with Knoll shortly after the untimely death of Bown where he mentioned that he had been sending a *Dresden Stollen* at Christmas to her over the last decades.

Each time I came to the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning in Hamburg, like for meetings of the Editorial Board of the *International Review of Education*, we made sure to meet over lunch for some nice fish food to exchange on most recent professional and personal developments.

### **In Memoriam – thank you**

Both the German and international adult education world can thank him greatly. We acknowledge his achievements in life with appreciation and respect and will remember him with gratitude as a colleague, mentor and friend.

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