

Butterwick, S., & Elfert, M. (2015). Women social activists of Atlantic Canada: Stories of re-enchantment, authenticity, and hope. *Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education*, 27(1), 65-82.

Elfert, M. (2013). Six decades of educational multilateralism in a globalising world: The history of the UNESCO Institute in Hamburg. *International Review of Education*, 59(2), 263-287.

Elfert, M., & Rubenson, K. (2013). Adult education policies in Canada: Skills without humanity. In Nesbit, T., Taber, N., Brigham, S. & Gibb, T. (Eds.). *Building on Critical Traditions: Adult Education and Learning in Canada* (pp. 238-248). Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing.

Rubenson, K., & Elfert, M. (2013). *A typology of adult learning: Review of the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation of Canada's model*. Canadian Labour Market and Skills Researcher Network. Working Paper 129.

#### SELECTED PRESENTATIONS

Elfert, M. (2015). *Humanism and the concept of education as a human right: Tracing a UNESCO tradition*. 2015 Annual Meeting of the History of Education Society. St. Louis, Missouri, November 5-8, 2015.

Elfert, M. (2015). *Looking at lifelong learning through the lens of anachronism*. 34th National Conference of the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education (CASAE), Montreal, Canada, 9-11 June, 2015.

Elfert, M. (2015). *Reflections on the past and future of UNESCO*. 59<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Comparative & International Education Society, Washington, DC, March 8-13, 2015.

Elfert, M. (2014). *The UNESCO education reports and EFA: Two worlds apart*. 58<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference at the Comparative & International Education Society, Toronto, March 10-15, 2014.

Elfert, M. (2013). *The UNESCO Institute for Education and the legacy of immaterialism*. 32<sup>nd</sup> National Conference of the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education (CASAE), Victoria, British Columbia, 3-5 June, 2013.



a place of mind

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

## Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

#### PROGRAMME

The Final Oral Examination  
For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
(Educational Studies)

#### MAREN ELFERT

M. A., Freie Universität Berlin, 1992

Friday, February 5, 2016, 4:00 pm  
Room 200, Graduate Student Centre  
*Latecomers will not be admitted*

**“The Utopia of Lifelong Learning: An Intellectual History of UNESCO’s Humanistic Approach to Education, 1945–2015”**

#### EXAMINING COMMITTEE

Chair:

Dr. Carl Leggo (Language and Literacy Education)

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. André Elias Mazawi, Research Supervisor (Educational Studies)

Dr. Kjell Rubenson, Research Supervisor (Educational Studies)

Dr. Jessica Wang (History)

University Examiners:

Dr. Peter Seixas (Curriculum Studies)

Dr. Hongxia Shan (Educational Studies)

External Examiner:

Dr. John Field

School of Education

University of Stirling

Stirling, Scotland

## ABSTRACT

The scholarly literature has emphasized the strong humanistic tradition that characterizes the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). This study, which draws on archival research and interviews, traces the origins, features and shifts of UNESCO's educational humanism from the creation of the organization in 1945 to the present day, with a particular focus on the concept of lifelong learning. I argue that the tensions between the humanistic worldview and the pressures placed on the organization by multifaceted changes in the political economy and the landscape of global governance in education have forced UNESCO to depart from its comprehensive lifelong learning approach, while still maintaining a claim of continuity.

Employing Gadamer's (1975) concept of tradition and Bevir's (1999; 2003) concepts of tradition and dilemma and neo-institutional theories that emphasize the role of ideology and social meanings in explaining changes in organizations, the study examines the shifts that UNESCO's educational concepts and programs have undergone as changing actors continually renegotiated and reclaimed its humanistic tradition as a reaction to the dilemmas they faced. I argue that UNESCO's humanistic tradition has been challenged by competing ideas, in particular the concept of human capital, which presented a dilemma for the organization, contributing to internal and external tensions. Each of the symbolic documents that are at the centre of this study – UNESCO's constitution, *Learning to be* (aka the *Faure report*, 1972) and *Learning: The treasure within* (aka the *Delors report*, 1996) – are windows into the ideological struggles carried out at their time. They tell us a great deal not only about the beliefs and ideologies of the actors involved, but also about the “competing” ideologies with which they interacted. They further shed light on the shifting position of UNESCO in the system of international organizations and multilateral development.

At a time when the humanistic perspective of education has been crowded out by the increasing marketization of education and UNESCO faces a severe existential crisis, this study contributes to the understanding not only of the intellectual history of lifelong learning, but more broadly of the changes in educational multilateralism over the past 70 years.

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Place of Birth: Hamburg, Germany  
Academic Studies: M. A., Freie Universität Berlin, 1992  
Current Position: Sessional Lecturer, UBC

## GRADUATE STUDIES

Field of Study: Adult and International Education

### Courses:

EDST 601A	Doctoral Seminar (Theory)	Dr. Jo-Anne Dillabough
EDST 601B	Doctoral Seminar (Methodology)	Dr. André E. Mazawi
EDST 602A	Doctoral Seminar	Dr. Lesley Andres
EDST 503	Historical and Philosophical Traditions of Adult Education	Dr. Shauna Butterwick
EDCP 541	Problems in Historical Understanding	Dr. Peter Seixas
EDST 582	The Study of Educational Organizations	Dr. André E. Mazawi
EDCP 585A	Advanced Doctoral Seminar in Qualitative Research	Dr. Lisa Loutzenheiser
EDST 565F	Pedagogy of the Oppressed Revis(it)ed: Freire, Illich, and Liberation Theology	Dr. Sam Rocha

### Instructors

## AWARDS

Faculty of Education Graduate Award  
SSHRC Doctoral Award, 2012-2014  
Four Year Fellowships (FYF) for PhD Students  
Coolie Verner Prize

## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Elfert, M. (2015, July). *Learning to live together: Revisiting the humanism of the Delors Report*. Paris, UNESCO Education Research and Foresight (ERF Working Papers Series, No. 12).

Butterwick S., & Elfert, M. (2015) Exploring the learning and wisdom of elder social activists in Atlantic Canada. In D. Clover, S. Butterwick, & L. Collins (Eds.). *Women, adult education, and leadership in Canada* (pp. 59-73). Toronto: Thompson Educational Publisher.

Rubenson, K., & Elfert, M. (2015). Adult education research: Exploring an increasingly fragmented map. *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults*, 6(2), 125-138.

Elfert, M. (2015). UNESCO, the *Faure report*, the *Delors report*, and the political utopia of lifelong learning. *European Journal of Education*, 50(1), 88-100.