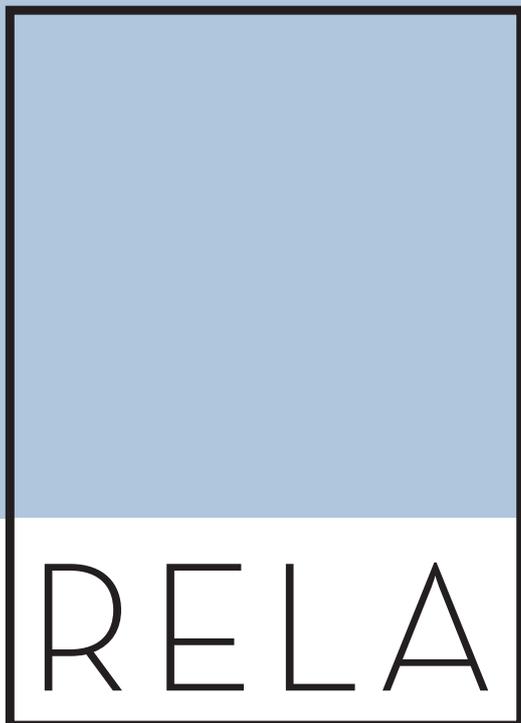


**NON-TRADITIONAL
PARTICIPANTS IN
ADULT EDUCATION
AND LEARNING**



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Editorial: Non-traditional participants in adult education and learning

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Adult education has historically emerged from an eclectic set of practices, most of which are linked to a wide range of social movements and popular education trends, as we can see, for example, in Canário (2007). This commitment to social change and to the struggles of the people that we can observe, not just in Europe but also in the different continents, makes part of its historical background. In a sense, this means that adult education concerns and the importance given to learning in this context have been focused, not on school or formal education settings, but on a variety of groups of adult learners/ participants in social movements and learning experiences. Historical paradigmatic inspirations were of course diverse. Whilst pragmatism was and is clearly an American tradition (Finger & Asún, 2003) in other parts of the world, in Europe Marxism or Humanism were stronger in their influence over adult education theory and practice building.

From the historical perspective Adult Education have mainly been shaped and formed by social practices, including the institutionalization. The societal development produces needs for organized learning as also the adult education activities conducted by social movements. This analysis claims that the nature of non-traditional participant is also socially and contextually constructed (Olesen, 2010).

When lifelong education was the focus for theory and practice in the discipline of adult education, there was the tendency to emphasize its humanistic dimensions. These were understood as relevant in a multiplicity of contexts beyond school (the workplace, family and civic life, etc.). Adult education and learning could be seen not only as an instrument to better prepare workers for productive roles in the economy, but also as a pathway towards ‘conscientization’ (Freire, 1987:1997), social change and emancipation (Gelpi, 1990). In a way, critical educators like Paulo Freire, Ettore Gelpi or Ivan Illich took lifelong education to its extreme. The sustained connections of adult education with social movements allowed forms of action, theory and research for liberation and social change. In this way adult education could reach non-traditional groups and populations.

Transitions of the focus of the discipline from education to learning, and from lifelong education to lifelong learning brought new meanings, new challenges and new forms of questioning. Some authors defended open versions of lifelong learning, centred on learning (not teaching) and contributing to citizenship and democracy. Recent decades have witnessed also the appearance of narrower versions of lifelong learning,

reducing it to a simplified views of human capital; reducing learning to vocational training, introducing concepts of social competency based on individual responsibility (Lima, 2004), and emphasizing adult education as a function of (labour) market relations. Field (2001), for example, states that lifelong learning not only reproduces existing inequalities, it potentially also creates and legitimates new ones. These transitions have diversified the discipline and have multiplied the meanings of adult education, including a focus on the education and learning of adults who traditionally do participate.

Adult education as a discipline today emerges from past and current influences and operates in diverse contexts around the world. Meanings are sometimes contradictory, but all carry legitimacy. This creates an eclectic field of research, theory and practice, including different philosophies, principles, or models of action. Against this backdrop, turning our attention again to non-traditional participants is an important endeavour.

Some basic questions about such students and participants should be revisited. Who participates in education and learning as adults? And, who are the ones we fail to engage? In many countries throughout the world, it is possible to identify who participants in education as adults are, despite the fact that it is impossible to typify them. Quite often participants are middle-class white learners, less than 40 years old with a good educational background, who know at least one language apart from the mother tongue, who have some experience in information and communication technologies, and so on. In some countries, they are mainly male, in others predominantly female. Looking at the question of who they are from the other side of the mirror—who are the ones not participating—sheds light on the assumptions. Are we focussing attention in research, theory and practice on those groups or populations who “need us most”? Should ‘adult education’ preferentially target those who are being left outside the modern influence of systems of knowledge and learning—the most deprived, fragile or excluded individuals and groups in society? Years ago, maybe this could be considered an important focus. What about today? In some contexts, where education takes place, we fail to understand the immediate advantage for those adults who do participate.

It is important to consider that institutions, civil society organisations, non-governmental organisations or other associations have their institutional policy, culture and interests. In the same line of reasoning, a wide range of professionals (whether adult educators or not) find their jobs in those institutions and have their own interests as workers and citizens. While we assume these interests do coincide, this in fact might not be the case. In short, a second assumption, incorporating all those who engage in education and learning as adults, prompts us to ask, simply, whose interests are being pursued through action?

Non-traditional participants are quite often characterized through their membership of scattered, non-unified and non-homogenous groups. In higher education the non-traditional students are those minorities whose participation is constrained by structural factors - mature students, working-class, cultural minorities or gender minorities (Finnegan, Merrill & Thunborg, 2014). Older citizens or immigrant populations are almost by definition either non- or non-traditional participants in learning. Literacy studies call our attention to non- participants whose rights as citizens are severely constrained and who can be encouraged to participate. In most social contexts, there are non- participants who, for one reason or another, become less visible as their voices are unheard. It seems therefore reasonable to suggest that a significant number of researchers focus on non-traditional participants. However, the nature of education and learning processes, the philosophic principles beneath the action, etc., are not

indifferent. Is it valid to assume that adult education with a focus on non-participants or non-traditional participants takes into account the improvement of participants' lives, or the emancipation of groups? Or, is this today a false assumption? Is the (scientific) discipline of adult education focussed on change?

Although it is of course impossible to answer all those questions in such a modest contribution—the present thematic issue—some researchers forwarded very interesting perspectives. Ted Fleming reclaims the emancipatory potential of adult education and learning on the basis of Honneth's theoretical and empirical analysis of the struggle for recognition. He thereby connects to Mezirow's theory of transformative learning, built on the learning experiences of non-traditional adult students returning to education, and on the critical theory of Habermas. This link between transformation theory and Honneth's work, who recently has advanced ideas about identity development and freedom, allows for an updating of the gaps in transformation theory – particularly in connection with an inadequate understanding of the social dimension of learning. A new understanding of 'disorienting dilemma' as a struggle for recognition is suggested. This paper expands our understanding of the emancipatory intent of transformative learning. EU funded empirical research supports this new iteration of the adult learning theory. Implications are drawn for the teaching of non-traditional students in adult and higher education.

Viktor Vesterberg has analysed learning practices in labour market projects co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF) targeting unemployed Roma in Sweden. The empirical material consists of 18 project descriptions from ESF projects, as well as national and European policy documents concerned with the inclusion of the Roma in contemporary Europe. The contemporary empirical material is analysed in relation to a government report from 1956 concerning the 'Roma issue' in Sweden. The analytical perspective of the study is governmentality, and the analysis focuses on different kinds of problematizations and the discursive positioning of the Roma subjects. One of the main findings is that unemployed Roma are situated in various discourses of misery and constructed as being in need of reshaping their subjectivities in order to become educable as well as employable.

Pauliina Alenius has focused on migrants as non-traditional learners while studying their civic participation. The aim of the article is to examine the informal learning processes of migrants particularly in relation to their forms of social engagement in associations, informal groups and transnational networks in the Estonia-Finland space. The theoretical framework relates to the socio-cultural, situated learning tradition as well as transnational migration studies. The research data (98 interviews) were analysed following theory-guided content analysis. Diverse learning trajectories were identified and one as 'transnational brokers' conveying conceptions and practices between communities across national borders.

Henrique Fonseca and colleagues present another non-traditional group of learners. The authors want to understand the academic success of mature (non-traditional) students in Portugal. The increasing number and diversity of non-traditional participants who are now entering Higher Education Institutions (HEI) highlights the relevance of exploring mature students' academic success. The purpose of this study is to characterise mature students of two Portuguese HEI, and understand their academic success. The study focuses on results obtained through a case study, based on quantitative and qualitative data: questionnaires and focus groups, respectively. The authors discuss the influence of different variables (such as: age, gender, area of study, schooling level at the entrance to the university, family monthly income) on mature students' academic success, and also describe some obstacles they face and changes

they perceive when attending university. Results seem to demonstrate a similar tendency between data gathered in both HEI's. Some recommendations for HEI, based on the results, are presented in the final section of this article.

This part of our issue is closed by the article *Like a Rolling Stone. Non-traditional spaces of adult education* written by Emilio-Lucio-Villegas. The author describes adult education as the scientific discipline and field of social practices and explores the squeezing concept of adult education that provides a kind of identity to the field characterised by vagueness, diversity and the links to social justice. This diversity is also present when talking about the participants, spaces and teachers in adult education. The author stresses also the role of both teacher and learners as essential to define non-traditional spaces and non-traditional participants in adult education.

This issue also includes two open papers. The first, written by Kerry Harman, focused on learning in the workplace. Working within an assemblage analytic, this paper examines work–education intersections using the notion of learning reals. The learning real examined is learning as mastery and skills development. The concepts of embodiment and performativity guide the exploration. The paper draws on interview and observational data collected during a three-year research project exploring the everyday learning (of employees) in a post-secondary education institution in Australia. The project was an industry/university collaboration between a group of professional developers from the organisation and a group of workplace learning academics. The assemblages making up learning as mastery are traced through examining the enactment of this real by a group of trade teachers, one of the workgroups participating in the project.

The second open paper was written by Séamus Ó Tuama, who brings us a reflection around reflexive activation and its importance to the unemployed insertion in the labour market. This model of reflexive activation proposed by Séamus Ó Tuama draws on Schuller's three capitals (identity capital, human capital and social capital). The article concludes that education and training are key catalysts for capacity building to engage positively in the labour market. In view of getting back to work, the starting point for many workers seems to be identity capital. The journey further progresses through social capital in order to leverage human capital in the labour market. This article really helps us to understand how adult education can help both individuals and society in this context.

Finally, this thematic issue also includes six book reviews. The first one explores critically a theme which today concerns the scientific community, and simultaneously fits within RELA's agenda: Writing for peer reviewed journals. The remaining five book reviews are also very important to us. They bring us critical reviews on all the books edited by Sense representing ESREA research networks' contributions. Their importance is twofold: first, they are open access books, showing how ESREA tries to be coherent regarding the principles it defends. Second, more visibility is given to the scientific work produced within ESREA research networks. After all, those research networks are the backbone of ESREA.

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Reclaiming the emancipatory potential of adult education: Honneth's critical theory and the struggle for recognition

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Abstract

Mezirow's theory of transformative learning built on the learning experiences of non-traditional adult students returning to education and on the critical theory of Habermas, more recently progressed by Honneth. This paper links transformation theory with the work of Honneth who in recent works advances ideas about identity development and freedom that allow us update gaps in transformation theory – that it has an inadequate understanding of the social dimension of learning. A new understanding of 'disorienting dilemma' as a struggle for recognition is suggested. This paper expands our understanding of the emancipatory intent of transformative learning. EU funded empirical research supports this new iteration of the adult learning theory. Implications are drawn for teaching non-traditional students in adult and higher education.

Keywords: transformative learning; Honneth; recognition; disorienting dilemma

Introduction

Transformation theory is built on humanistic and constructivist assumptions that focus on the individual as a unit of analysis (Cranton & Taylor, 2012) and on assumptions from critical theory (especially Habermas) that focus on the social as a unit of analysis (Brookfield, 2012). Mezirow affirms a disconnection when he distinguishes subjective from objective reframing of meaning structures (2000). More unified theoretical understandings of transformative learning see learners engaging in both individual and social transformations that complement each other (Cranton & Taylor, 2012). Attempts have been made to address these issues (Fleming, 2002; 2014) and as a new generation of critical theorists emerges it is important to clarify the links between critical theory and adult education. Honneth will provide a useful set of ideas to better understand adult education.

Who is Axel Honneth?

Axel Honneth, a former student of Habermas, is Director of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research and Professor of Humanities at Columbia University. He sets out to refocus critical theory by seeing distortions in communication (Habermas, 1987) as forms of disrespect. He expands the insight that human development can only be achieved through being acknowledged by others. The communicative turn of Habermas (1987) becomes the recognition turn of Honneth (1995). Indignations, guilt and shame drive social struggles for recognition and social freedom (2014) and he continues the critique that 'modern capitalist societies produce social practices, attitudes, or personality structures that result in a pathological distortion of our capacities for reason' (Honneth, 2009, p. vii).

The task of his critical theory is to identify experiences in society that contain 'system-exploding energies and motivations' in pursuit of freedom and justice (Fraser & Honneth, 2003, p. 242). He offers 'a link between the social causes of widespread feelings of injustice and the normative objectives of emancipatory movements' (Fraser & Honneth, 2003, p.113). Honneth re-writes critical theory so that instead of distorted communication damaged recognition is the pathology to be overcome.

Honneth reworks Mead and Winnicott and links individual struggles to be recognized by significant others with self-realization only achieved through interpersonal relations. In line with Habermas:

Individuation is pictured not as self-realization of the independently acting subject carried out in isolation and freedom but in a linguistically mediated process of socialization and the simultaneous constitution of life-history that is conscious of itself...Individuality forms itself in relations of intersubjective acknowledgement and intersubjectively mediated self-understanding. (Habermas, 1992, pp. 152-153)

Only by taking the perspective of others towards oneself can one construct a sense of self, with beliefs, desires, values and needs. These perspectives of others are shaped by culture, life history and life-narratives and we grow by internalising these. Later as adults we are capable of being reflexive about inherited values; evaluate and critique them; decide on their adequacy for the new generation and alter them in the light of this reflection. This is what Mezirow (1991) describes as transformative learning.

Distortions in identity are the motivation for struggle and social conflict (I will suggest that this is a disorienting dilemma) and this moves the debate about emancipation away from the highly cognitive and rational approach of Habermas toward an alternative theory of intersubjectivity. This has the potential to resolve the transformation theory disconnect concerning whether learning is an individual or social phenomenon. Transformative learning becomes *both* personal and social (Fleming, 2014). This is reminiscent of what Freire (1972) means when he critiques the philosophers' preoccupation with subject/object and reconfigures relationships between teaching/learning and thinking/action in *praxis*.

Honneth and recognition

Honneth understands the intersubjectivity between parent and child as a form of socialisation that assists the development of individual identity through the reciprocal recognition of 'each other ... as living emotionally needy beings' (Honneth, 1995, p. 18). Self-realization can only be achieved through interpersonal relationships (Honneth,

1995) that are a precondition for participation in public life, political will formation and democracy. Honneth re-imagines the project of critical theory arguing that:

The reproduction of social life is governed by the imperative of mutual recognition, because one can develop a practical relation-to-self only when one has learned to view oneself, from the normative perspective of one's partners in interaction, as their social addressee. (Honneth, 1995, p. 92)

Transformative learning and communicative action involve more than following linguistic rules of discourse (Habermas, 1987) and involve mutuality and intersubjectivity (Honneth, 1995). The antidote to being too individualistic lies in the critical theory foundations of transformation theory as articulated by Habermas and Honneth. The struggle for recognition, based on experiences of disrespect and the need for self-esteem, explains *social* development:

It is by the way of the morally motivated struggles of social groups their collective attempt to establish, institutionally and culturally, expanded forms of recognition—that the normatively directional change of societies proceeds. (Honneth, 1995, p. 92)

Social change is driven by inadequate forms of recognition and internal (psychic) conflict leads to social change. In this way we see how the social and personal are connected.

Honneth on recognition

Honneth argues that in modern society there are three levels of recognition 'and an intersubjective struggle mediates between each of these levels, a struggle that subjects conduct in order to have their identity claims confirmed' (Honneth, 1997, p. 21).

The first of the three forms of relating is self-confidence established and developed in relationships of friendship and love. If one experiences love an ability to love is developed. Without a special relationship with another it is not possible to become aware of one's own uniqueness and achieve an identity. Adult relationships can also be infused with such acknowledgements and are developmental. This has implications for adult education. These are the preconditions for the formation of identity and also for involvement in a democratic society. If this essential ingredient of development is not available or a negative message about self-worth is received, the outcome is a missing piece in the personality that may find 'expression through negative emotional reactions of shame or anger, offence or contempt' (Honneth, 1995, p. 257).

The second form of relating to self is self-respect, when a person in a community of rights is recognised as a legally mature person. Legal rights institutionalise the acknowledgements that each owes to another as an autonomous person. Respect is shown to others by relating toward them as having rights—without rights there is no respect (Honneth, 1995).

The third form of recognition happens through work and this experience of acknowledgement leads to self-esteem. Relationships of solidarity at work and other collaborative activities enhance self-esteem. Individuals become 'recognised as a person whose capabilities are of constitutive value to a concrete community' (Honneth, 1997, p. 20). People with high self-esteem will reciprocate a mutual acknowledgement of other's contribution to the community (Honneth, 1995).

It is not surprising that there are three corresponding forms of disrespect (Honneth, 1995). If people are denied rights their self-respect may suffer and there is a 'mal-distribution of recognition' that damages self-respect (Huttunen, 2007, p. 428). Rape and torture are examples of misrecognition that undermine self-confidence (Honneth, 1995). Such violations are injustices and cause additional damage because individuals are also injured with regard to the positive understanding they acquired of themselves intersubjectively. 'Disrespect refers to the specific vulnerabilities of humans resulting from the internal interdependence of individualisation and recognition' (Honneth, 1995, p. 131).

The second form of recognition points to misrecognitions from violations of rights framed in laws. It is more than a feeling of being excluded from a benefit (e.g. education or health care because of one's gender) but is also a violation of the treatment to which one has good reason to expect as a right, e.g. the right to be protected against discriminations on the basis of race, gender, disability, etcetera.

The third form of disrespect points to cultural norms that ignore or denigrate ways of life. Abuse, insults and ignoring people as well as forms of 'put down' are not only injustices but undermine identity (Honneth, 1995). Cultures, in spite of anti-discrimination measures and laws, can have deeply embedded prejudices.

We begin to see how in critical theory the social and personal are connected. Social change is driven by inadequate forms of recognition and the struggle for recognition becomes a form of social praxis. The theory of recognition establishes a link between the social causes of experiences of injustice and the motivation for emancipatory movements (Fraser & Honneth, 2003). The political is personal. This is an attempt to reconfigure the age old sociological debate involving structure and agency.

The freedom turn of Honneth

Honneth goes beyond Habermas by seeking a broader vision of democracy involving not only the political sphere but emancipated democratic families and socialised markets and work places (Honneth, 2014). The realisations of freedom in one of these areas depends on the realisation in others so that democratic citizens, emancipated families and ethical markets 'mutually influence each other, because the properties of one cannot be realised without the other two' (Honneth, 2014, p. 331). From the first sentence of *Freedom's Right* Honneth (2014) states that freedom is the key value of modern life: 'Of all the ethical values prevailing and competing for dominance in modern society, only one has been capable of leaving a truly lasting impression on our institutional order: freedom...' (p. 15).

Freedom involves being in a place where social life can be better and it involves the ability to realise one's own desires, intentions and values in the social environment of roles and obligations. Individual and social freedom are connected, not in some vague or superficial way but essentially. Markets, interpersonal relationships and the spaces of public politics are best understood as places of potential social freedom. Work places, friendships, family, and work, are all justified only if they promote, support and bring about a free society for all. Critical theory for Honneth is built on social freedom. Education and the right to education must be part of the emancipatory project.

In *Freedom's Right* Honneth (2014) reorients critical theory to focus on freedom rather than on recognition. In order to realise social freedom individuals must be able to view each other's freedom as a condition for their own and the members of society are free to the extent they initiate and enhance mutual recognition. Family, friendships and

interpersonal relationships all contribute to social freedom—our inner nature is set free by mutual acknowledgements. Honneth is also critical of legal, political and other spheres (including work) that do not support values that are achievable through interpersonal relations. So many adults' experiences of education (schooling) do not support freedom. Social freedom is also connected to the sphere of markets with its consumer rights; regulations about what can be sold and how, about pricing, wages, and about fairness in business transactions. Honneth outlines a series of changes in society that have contributed to disconnecting the markets from social freedom. Neoliberalism is a form of social mis-development and education informed by neo-liberal imperatives is anti-freedom. The most important sphere of social freedom is what he calls the 'We' of democratic will formation. His theory of democracy involves democratic interactions that enable citizens to make their lives and conditions better through a process of discursive will formation. Again, with reference to Habermas, the democratic state acts as an agent of the democratic public sphere. This suggests that learning (and teaching) for the development of the 'we' of democratic discourse is a vital task of adult education and a necessary one for transformative learning. Current and insurgent social movements in Barcelona, Athens, Wall Street infused with indignations are examples of the expanded 'we' that are, in Honneth's view, spheres of social freedom. Freedom is inherently social as it cannot be realised if one is not involved in the 'we' of democratic will formation where the same weight is afforded to contributions of all citizens. In this scheme interpersonal relations, the markets, work and democratic relations (and in my view adult education) provide the social conditions needed to improve social and living conditions (Ibid.).

Empirical confirmations

In an EU funded research project on Access and Retention of Non-traditional Learners in Higher Education (RANLHE, 2010) across seven countries the themes of respect, confidence and self-esteem emerge from the interviews (Fleming & Finnegan, 2014b).

In the Ireland longitudinal study (over 3 years) 125 qualitative interviews were conducted in three higher education institutions – an elite university, a university that provides access to non-traditional adult students and an Institute of Technology. The researchers were interested in narrative research with an interest in recording the lived experiences of non-traditional adult students (many of whom made their access route through the adult education system). The narrative approach was already an accepted methodology clearly articulated by colleagues on the research team. Peter Alheit (Göttingen) and Linden West (Canterbury) took critical theory and psychoanalytic approaches (West, Alheit, Andersen & Merrill, 2007) to collecting and analysing narrative data.

The research attempted to make findings that would impact on the lives of students and others in adult and higher education (Bauman, 2014). Critical theory attempts to show how personal experiences are inextricably linked with public issues. The task of the sociological imagination, according to Bauman, is 'to show how personal life and individual biography is intimately connected with historical events and structural processes' and the 'sociological imagination makes the personal political' (Bauman, pp. 3f).

The researchers relied on grounded theory to analyse data (Charmaz, 2006). In the first phase of research we employed two main 'sensitising concepts'—'habitus', (Bourdieu, 1984) and 'transitional space' (West et al., 2007). Our conception of

transitional space was based on a number of complementary psychosocial theories (most notably Bowlby and Winnicott). One of the most consistent findings was the importance given by students to the university as a space in which aspects of their identity were explored, renegotiated and sometimes transformed. Bourdieu's (1984) concept of habitus deployed alongside his theorisation of social, symbolic, cultural and economic capitals and the way they operate in specific fields also offered tools for understanding the enduring impact of social inequality on students' lives. This helped to illuminate how learners stories, especially the narratives about learner identity and educational expectations, were clearly shaped and informed by a lived experience of social power.

The data led to the emergence of intersubjective recognition as a key concept central in students' accounts of their motivation for applying to college and their determination 'to stay the course.' The interviewee's decision to go to college was informed by a desire for recognition that was rooted in a perceived lack or undeveloped capability often rooted in the experience of disrespect at school or work. Not only did they hold education and teachers in high esteem, they wanted to be held in high esteem themselves and looked to education to do this. One student said: 'When you are working class, you look for esteem...we held teacher, priest ... in esteem... these are positions of recognition. I was probably looking for that'.

One woman (Fleming & Finnegan, 2014b) talked about her working class background and 'turbulent family life... I ... fell through the cracks ... in school'. Despite her successful career where she was 'respected' she decided 'I wanted to go back [to education] for my own self-esteem to try to see can I do this'. In university she flourished and as a consequence has a stronger sense of self-esteem, agency and autonomy. 'It is about acceptance and your worth being recognized. It was a chance to learn and to be on an equal footing with other people' (Fleming & Finnegan, 2014a, p. 151). Although each story is unique, this narrative is typical. It is underpinned by the logic of recognition and she uses confidence and respect as key terms. A middle-aged student told of a work supervisor who encouraged her to return to education by recognizing 'that she had something.' The support was experienced as recognition of her intelligence:

They were seeing something...I think my reaction to the books they gave me...I thought they were the mad ones. They could see me starting college, they told me this since. That's what they said anyway. You come across people who, no matter how stupid or unaware you are of your ability, they can see something and they point it out.

She repeated, 'they can see something' a number of times. Such stories tell of recognition that is developmental. They hint strongly that if education is to provide transformative experiences these moments need to be turned into pedagogical experiences of recognition—they are a pre-condition for transformative learning. Transformative learning and recognition rely on each other. This struggle for recognition acts as a disorienting dilemma. The disorienting dilemmas of the participants that triggered transformative learning were infused with struggles for recognition. The struggles for recognition were about moving away from unfulfilling jobs and lives that offered limited outlets for abilities, and with fixed ambitions. This adds to the understanding of disorienting dilemmas that form part of the transformative learning dynamic (Mezirow, 2000).

Another student returned to the subject of schooling quite often in the interviews. She did not feel supported or encouraged in school by teachers. She internalised the idea that she *was stupid*. Although, she suspected that this was not completely true it became

an important part of her internal conversation about herself as a learner and a person. She had a sense that this was not fair. Her story illustrates how institutions, the interventions of individual teachers and structural inequalities play out in learning biographies. She says the school favoured middle class students and remembers a teacher saying to her mother:

‘It doesn’t matter if she doesn’t pass the class she is just going to end up in a job anyway. She’ll never get to college’... He was a teacher and he was intelligent and powerful. He was telling my mum; ‘she is never going to progress to something else’. [She began to think] maybe that is who I am. I am not meant to be in college. So from that moment on I didn’t apply myself.

Her parents had left school young to go to work and he did not have the opportunity to develop basic educational skills. They were intellectually curious but were *held back* by circumstances - the demands of rearing a family and the gendered expectations of their era. As a consequence: ‘My mum and dad didn’t know how to fill out a CAO form [the Irish university application form] and I had no idea how to do it. I didn’t even know what that meant’.

As a result of institutional misrecognition linked to class expectations she (and many others) left school unsure of her options and a sense of being an under achiever. This student suspected that she had capabilities that were not being tapped but nonetheless the dominant story remained that she was *stupid*. She eventually got work in a large organization and was *respected* at work but was still concerned about her capability as a learner and the absence of a degree held her back. She wanted work that matched her deeper concerns and interests. She decided: ‘I wanted to go back [to education] for my own self-esteem to try to see can I do this’

This student is emphatic that her decision to go to adult education and later to university was not motivated by a desire for more money afterwards, but greater choice in work and a job that was closer to her own interests and desires. She links going to college with self-esteem, proving her worth and undoing the impact of disrespect and low expectations. A sense of how she construes her choices can be gathered from the following exchange. This student was discussing her future plans after her course and says ‘I would love the idea of helping and teaching.’

Because I wasn’t helped. No one recognized any potential in me. You see these inspirational movies. Like a basketball coach comes in and inspires the kids to become scholars. I always had aspirations to do well, but at the time my family life wasn’t built in such a way that I was getting that from my home life. My mom and dad weren’t able for various reasons to support me in that way. But I would have loved a teacher or someone to recognize potential in me. To say this person is not performing, but it is not because they are stupid. It is not because they can’t do it. But no one recognized the potential ever. I have aspirations of helping in such a way of recognizing in others the reasons they are not achieving.... That I would be someone who would recognize and realize there is a different way.

It is clear that this student’s decision to come to college was informed by a desire for recognition of her capability as a human being and developing her abilities in a way that can contribute to the flourishing of others. She had carried a sense of an undeveloped capability linked to the experience of disrespect and misrecognition in school and work. The structural inequalities of gender and class in families, institutions and society play a significant part in the formation of learner identity. Renegotiating her learner identity in college has been a meaningful process which is underpinned by the logic of

intersubjective recognition as it relates to both her private and public self. It indicates that this is transformative learning.

Such stories tell of moments of recognition that are profoundly developmental. But they are always, it seems, also unpredictable as one cannot tell in advance (or at the time) which moment or event of recognition will trigger the 'experience of being recognised' as Honneth (1995, p. 128) expresses it. In turn the struggle for recognition opens the possibility and potential for transformative learning.

Critique of Honneth

Nancy Fraser, the most widely known critique of recognition theory, argues that the theory neglects unjustifiable and unequal access to material resources (Fraser & Honneth, 2003). Her critique is substantial but in the process of debate with Honneth they add significantly to the understanding of Honneth's contribution and this allows him rethink these important questions. He claims that the struggle for recognition lies behind all major social conflicts and that these conflicts over distribution of goods and wealth are (contrary to Fraser) 'locked into the struggle for recognition' (Fraser & Honneth, 2003, p. 54). The core of these debates is about whether recognition is a good enough construct for understanding economic relations and the nature of capitalism today. Both agree that the project of critical theory involves social justice. Fraser's response is that social struggles are better understood from a dual perspective, which includes both recognition and distributive elements. Honneth remains convinced that:

Critical theory, under present conditions, does better to orient itself by the categorical framework of a sufficiently differentiated theory of recognition, since this establishes a link between the social causes of wide-spread feelings of injustice and the normative objectives of emancipatory movements. (Fraser & Honneth 2003, p. 113)

Honneth responds to Fraser in two ways. Firstly, to reframe the undoubted importance of intersubjectivity in social reproduction and development. This is in line with traditional critical theory. Secondly, it contributes a welcome and overdue rethink of the importance of debates between social and psychological theories. In his rethinking of Hegel, G H Mead, Winnicott and Habermas the argument is rethought for a new era as to how the social and the personal may be kept in intimate connection. As in much of critical theory the best solutions are not to fix the priority given to structure or agency but to see how they are connected in dialectical ways.

Lois McNay's critique, *Against Recognition* (2008) (while not against recognition) is critical of the way Honneth's priority for the relational understanding of self-formation and social conflict prevents more systemic understandings of power to emerge. She presents Bourdieu's account of embodied habitus to analyse gendered power and claims this is a better understanding of power than Honneth's take on Winnicott. The face to face understanding of how gender is reproduced does not allow a structured understanding of how gender is socially reproduced in society.

Others (Petherbridge, 2013) have joined in this debate about whether intersubjectivity or structural issues provide a better basis for understanding social and individual reproduction. It is clear that these disagreements have not been resolved. However, Honneth is not immune to the impact of power through social class or gender. One way of offering at least a compromised position in the contested discourse is to acknowledge that individuals may be in the powerful grip of class, race and gendered relations and that there are also other powerful environments that contribute

significantly to the process of self-formation and these cannot be reduced to class, gender and race in any uncomplicated way. But the incomplete and contested nature of these studies allows the disputes to remain unresolved. Rather than resolve these current disputes it is appropriate to note the unfinished nature of the sociological journey and the contested nature of knowledge. But more importantly, and in an ironic way, these disputes have contributed both to Honneth's project of elaboration and to the enhanced reception of his ideas in sociological communities.

Honneth's work attempts to make social issues such as poverty, unemployment, injustices, globalisation and abuses of power open to being understood in recognition terms. Unemployment is experienced as misrecognition – and this is a way of emphasising that Honneth's theory is not merely a psychology of internal processes but a thorough social psychology with the critical theory intent of understanding and changing the material conditions of the oppressed. The more recent work of Honneth (2014) is testament to his ability to reframe his work in response to such sustained and immanent critique.

Implications and discussion

Honneth work has had little impact on education apart from a few (Murphy & Brown, 2012; Huttunen, 2007) and some work has been done on the connection with transformative learning (Fleming, 2014). Transformative learning theory has followed the communicative turn of Habermas and emphasised the pathology of distorted communication (Mezirow, 1991). I suggest that this learning theory might now follow the recognition turn of Honneth and identify the implications for transformation theory. Transformative learning is critical of presuppositions; aims to create discursive spaces in which the force of the better argument is the only force and in which all have full and equal rights to participate freely in democratic will-formation. Transformative learning requires critical reflection and now recognition becomes central to that learning process and to critical reflection.

Teaching adults and recognition

In order to engage in the discourses associated with transformative learning we now assert that the formation of democratic discussions requires three forms of self-relating. We need caring and loving individuals (teachers) and these are produced through and by those with self-confidence. It requires recognition of the reciprocal nature of legal rights and, as one might anticipate, a person who possesses self-respect (the capacity to know one's own rights) is in a better position to recognize the rights of others. And thirdly, a democratic discursive society requires the reciprocal recognition provided by work and solidarity. Again, a person with self-esteem can better recognize the contributions of others. This so called 'recognition turn' of Honneth suggests strongly that the high rationality of the often critiqued version of transformative learning is 'softened' by this understanding of the recognition that underpins the democratic discourse of a learning environment. Teaching might usefully address the struggles for recognition as motivations for learning. This Honneth inspired emphasis on the interpersonal dimension of teaching and of learning and the key importance of recognition is important so that current preoccupations with the technologies of teaching and teaching as a technique can be balanced by emphasising the importance of mutual support, peer teaching and student-centered activities.

The social dimension of transformation theory

Without altering the importance of critical reflection for transformative learning there is now the possibility of reframing transformation theory so that rational discourse is seen as grounded firmly in an interpersonal process of support and recognition that builds self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem. Mezirow (and Habermas) see democratic participation as an important means of self-development that produces individuals who are more tolerant of difference, sensitive to reciprocity and better able to engage in discourse (2000). It is important not to sink into a sentimental subjectivity here but build on this understanding; this is a precondition for rational discourse without losing rigor or the ambition to remain within the emancipatory agenda of critical theory. The emphasis on whether learning is individual or social can be re-configured in the same way Freire reconfigured subject/object, teacher/learner that is best expressed in his concept of *praxis* (1972).

The previously referred to individualism of Mezirow's theory is now reframed as a fundamentally intersubjective process of mutual respect and recognition. These relations of mutuality are preconditions for self-realization, critical reflection, engagement in democratic discourse and transformative learning. Recognition and emancipation are connected; recognition becomes the foundation on which emancipatory learning and social change are based.

The process of transformative learning commences with a 'disorienting dilemma' (Mezirow, 2000). In Mezirow's work this normally involves a disconnect between old inadequate frames of reference and the possibility offered by new ones. The dilemma for the learner is whether to stay with old ways of making meaning that have lost their ability to usefully guide understanding and action or search for new ones – reinforced by the RANLHE (2010) empirical findings. The struggle for recognition functions as a disorienting dilemma. It motivates the search for new meanings schemes and identities. Disorienting dilemmas for returning students involve whether to stay in the world circumscribed by old experiences of misrecognition or respond to the struggle to be recognized and acknowledged. This search for new meanings is found in social struggles, new social movements and in adult and higher education.

Another step in the process of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991) involves the recognition that one's problems are shared by others who have also negotiated similar change. Honneth sets individual problems in a wider social context and this confirms the Mezirow empirical finding that individual problems are shared and only understood properly when seen as such. The shared nature of individual problems and experiences is not just a useful step toward transformation but an essential aspect of knowing and of learning.

Emancipation and adult learning

The final implication of this study of Honneth involves the importance that freedom plays in his recent work. Transformative learning has always been grounded in critical theory with its priority for understanding society with an emancipatory intent, which is the aim of transformative learning. Social freedom becomes a well-founded aim of adult education. This enhances the emancipatory agenda of transformations so that adult education now become a learning project with the practical intent of increasing freedom, justice, care and equality in the spheres of family, law and work.

Teaching adults is a process of mutual recognition between teacher and learner. Teaching that is informed in this way has the potential to strengthen identity development. With the current emphasis on functional learning, competency and behavioural outcomes in education, and a neo-liberal inspired valorisation of the market

as the ultimate supplier of all needs, these ideas take seriously the contribution of intersubjectivity as important for teaching, learning and transformation and as an antidote to dominant models. The motivation to engage in learning becomes less economic, functional and instrumental and more communicative, social and potentially transformative and emancipatory. This is achieved not just by an emphasis on critical reflection but on the always presupposed imperative of recognition.

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Exploring misery discourses: problematized Roma in labour market projects

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to analyse learning practices in labour market projects co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF) targeting unemployed Roma in Sweden. The empirical material consists of 18 project descriptions from ESF projects, as well as national and European policy documents concerned with the inclusion of the Roma in contemporary Europe. The contemporary empirical material is analysed in relation to a government report from 1956 concerning the 'Roma issue' in Sweden. The analytical perspective of the study is governmentality, and the analysis focuses on different kinds of problematizations and the discursive positioning of the Roma subjects. One of the main findings is that unemployed Roma are situated in various discourses of misery and constructed as in need of reshaping their subjectivities in order to become educable as well as employable.

Keywords: Roma; learning; adult education; European Social Fund (ESF)

Introduction

In today's Europe the situation for Roma is problematized, not least in terms of lacking education (Miskovic, 2013). In what has been called 'the learning society' (Masschelein, Simons, Bröckling & Pongratz, 2007), lack of education becomes particularly problematic. The aim of this article is to analyse learning practices in labour market projects targeting unemployed Roma in Sweden. The focus of the analysis is on the discursive construction and governing of Roma in relation to contemporary norms of the employable citizen. Further, the analysis is historicised through a government report from 1956 concerning the 'Roma issue' in Sweden (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 1956). Questions guiding the analysis are: How are the Roma constructed, positioned and problematized in relation to un/employability and learning? How are the Roma to become employable and included in society?

In EU politics, there seems to be an agreement that 'Roma integration requires an enhanced political commitment to Roma inclusion' (European Commission, 2011, p. 11). This political commitment is to be brought into action in many different practices,

whereas the empirical focus for this article is one illustrative example: labour market projects, as co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF). These projects can be seen as sites for adult learning, not least in terms of learning to become employable (Garsten & Jacobsson, 2004).

The main reason for choosing Roma as a group to analyse stems from previous research on ESF projects targeting unemployed ‘people with a foreign background’ (Vesterberg, 2013). This research shows that, in spite of a political ambition in Sweden to maintain general welfare and integration politics, two target groups are pinpointed on ethnic or national grounds –Somalis and the Roma¹.

Analytical perspective

The analytical perspective of this study is inspired by Michel Foucault (2007, 2008) and other scholars who have elaborated on the concept of governmentality (cf. Dean, 2010; Rose, 1999; Walters, 2012). A governmentality analysis focuses on different kinds of problematizations, as ‘problems do not exist in themselves’ (Dean & Hindess, 1998, p. 9), but rather, are produced in specific times, places and institutional and professional milieus. Power is, from this perspective, understood not only as prohibiting and repressing, but also as productive (Foucault, 1980, p. 59). Thus, power relationships constructs subjects, directing the will and aspirations of people, and conducting the conduct of the targeted subjects. These processes are facilitated by claims to truth and knowledge. Hence, power and knowledge are intertwined and closely related to problematizations. From a governmentality perspective, learning becomes a way of governing people through power and knowledge in attempts to conduct the conduct of the targeted learner (Masschelein et al., 2007).

As governmentality has a discursive character, it is crucial to ‘analyse the conceptualizations, explanations and calculations that inhabit the governmental field’ (Miller & Rose 2008, p. 29f) one is analysing. Following Foucault (1991, p. 58), the focus of the analysis is on the discursive positioning of subjects, in other words, how these subjects are constructed, positioned and problematized through particular ways of reasoning about the unemployed Roma in relation to un/employability and learning. In this way, the targeted subjects are made governable through problematizations.

There is a long tradition of problematizing the Roma. Historically, the Roma population in Europe has been understood as ‘representative of an underdeveloped, uncivilized, non-European pariah culture’ in need of radical assimilation (van Baar, 2011, p. 78). In such ways of reasoning about the Roma concepts of race, nation, ethnicity and culture have been mobilized in constructing ‘the Roma problem’. It has also been argued that much research on and with the Roma is primarily concerned with who the Roma are what they are doing, and that theoretically informed research concerned with broader questions of discourses on the Roma are scarce (Tremlett, McGarry & Agarín, 2014). In line with a governmentality perspective the Roma is, in this article, understood as an ‘invented’ category, as well as any other ethnicity or nationality (Isin, 2012, p. 161). The Roma are understood and analysed as an ethnicized discursive construction. From this perspective, any ‘people’ is the effect of relationships of power and knowledge, producing subjectivities and making subjects governable in various ways. Regarding the construction of the Roma people, a range of ‘Gypsy scholars’ from the late eighteenth and early seventeenth centuries have been crucial in producing ‘truths’ about the ‘nature’ and ‘origins’ of the Roma as a European minority (van Baar, 2011). Such ‘truths’ have had a persistent impact on popular understandings

of the Roma in Europe, illustrating the close connection of power and knowledge in constructing ‘a people’.

Methodological considerations and empirical material

ESF in Sweden has so far co-financed more than 90,000 projects with more than one million participants. ESF is financing projects with up to 40 per cent of the total costs. The remaining costs are covered by public co-financing, for instance via the Employment Service, the Social Insurance Agency, local authorities, or county boards. The main empirical material analysed in this article consists of 18 project descriptions from projects found with the search word ‘Roma’ in the ESF project database.² The analysed projects existed during the ESF program period of 2007 – 2013, and the timespan of the projects range from six months up to three years. The total budget for the ESF (for the whole of the EU) during this programme period was SEK 750 billion. Out of these, the ESF in Sweden got SEK 6.2 billion.³ The analysed ESF projects have as their overarching goal to increase the supply of labour and to create social inclusion. The projects targeting the Roma are driven by a range of organizations, from civil society organizations such as adult education providers (eight projects), to universities (two projects), county administrative boards and municipalities (seven projects), and the public employment office (one project).

The size of the project descriptions range from approximately two to ten pages, and their content is, to a certain degree determined in advance, as there are several mandatory headings imposed by the ESF.⁴ From a governmentality perspective, the project descriptions are analysed as discursive texts constituting the learning practices which constructs and position the Roma subjects within the discourse (cf. Fejes, 2014, p. 6). The projectification of welfare (Brunila, 2011) produces a specific discursive language genre guiding the vocabulary of the analysed project descriptions to be aligned with policy from the area where projects are applying for funds. In the analysis, the project descriptions are related to national (Ministry of Employment, 2011; Ministry of Culture, 2010) as well as European policy documents (ESF, 2007, European Commission, 2011) dealing with the inclusion of the Roma people in contemporary Europe.

Walters (2012, p. 110ff) argues that many studies of governmentality have lost their relationship to genealogy. Historicising governmental rationalities may destabilize and problematize contemporary problematizations and ‘truths’. In order to deepen the analysis of the contemporary problematizations of the Roma, I historicize the problematizations of the Roma through a parallel analysis of a government report from the 1950s concerning the situation of the Roma, *The Gypsy issue*⁵ (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 1956). This analytical strategy aims to create a contrast to the contemporary project descriptions, and renders visible the ways in which being Roma has been problematized in two distinct time periods.

Situating the Roma in Sweden and the European Union

With 10 – 12 million people, the Roma constitute the largest minority population in Europe, and every European state has Roma inhabitants (Isin, 2012, p. 161). The EU has allocated substantial amounts of resources to tackling the problem of socially excluded Roma:

For the European Social Fund, € 9.6 billion have been allocated in the period 2007-2013 for measures targeting socio-economic inclusion of disadvantaged people – among them marginalized Roma – and € 172 million have been explicitly allocated for actions aiming at integrating the Roma. (European Commission, 2011: 173: 9)

While the main part of European Roma live in Central and Eastern Europe (Miskovic, 2009), they have also lived in Sweden since at least the sixteenth century (Selling, 2013). They constitute one of five national minorities in Sweden⁶, granting them certain rights regarding the use of Romani as a minority language. The status of national minority also includes being officially recognized as a ‘part of the Swedish cultural heritage’ (Ministry for Integration and Gender Equality, 2007). In spite of this minority status, the Roma have been depicted as incompatible with Swedish welfare society, and Roma culture has been constructed as a synonym for social problems (Selling, 2013, p. 41).

The problematizing of the Roma is a persistent practice which, for instance, can be noticed in contemporary debates on Roma begging in the streets of cities throughout Europe (Mäkinen, 2013), or on Bulgarian Roma migrants picking berries under precarious conditions in the North of Sweden (Mesic & Woolfson, 2015). In post-communist Europe, the Roma have been constructed as the ‘ultimate scapegoat’ for every hardship that came with the transition to market economy (Miskovic, 2009). Further, studies have shown how their presence can destabilize the ideals of European citizenship and free mobility within the EU (Aradau, Huysmans, Maciotti, & Squire, 2013). The Roma occupy an ambiguous position in relation to the EU, as they reveal the borders of inclusion and exclusion of EU citizenship (Caglar & Mehling, 2013).

This academic interest in the Roma situation is accompanied with a political concern for the ‘Roma issue’. Political responses to the this issue have differed among European countries in different times, from once having the goal of exterminating the Roma in Nazi Germany, to the ‘Gypsy consultants’ in the heydays of Swedish welfarism, to the demolishing of Roma camps and subsequent expulsion in France in the early 2000s (Fekete, 2014).

The European Commission released an overarching agenda for the treatment of ‘Roma issues’ in the European Union, the *EU framework for national Roma integration strategies up to 2020* (European Commission, 2011: 173), in which the ‘Roma issue’ is understood as not compatible with the *Europe 2020* strategy for a new growth path. The ‘prejudice, intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion’ facing the Roma in Europe is described as at odds with the ‘smart, sustainable and inclusive growth’ that are the maxims for the 2020 growth strategy. Hence, all member states shall ensure that Roma are ‘treated like any other EU citizen with equal access to all fundamental rights’ (European Commission, 2011).

Further, the commission encourages member states to ‘ensure that national, regional and local integration policies focus on the Roma in a clear and specific way, and address the needs of the Roma with explicit measures’ (European Commission, 2011: 173). The main argument put forward for this approach is that ‘classical social

inclusion measures were not sufficient to meet the Roma's specific needs' (European Commission, 2011, p. 4).

The guidelines from the commission's Roma strategy are conducting the conduct of various member states, encouraging them to formulate their own strategy to meet the economic and social problems among the Roma. This has resulted in the Swedish government report *A coordinated and long-term strategy for Roma inclusion 2012 – 2032*⁷ (Ministry of Employment, 2011), highlighting the need for adult education particularly targeting them⁸, with encouragement from the EU. One identified problem is that many Roma in Sweden drop out from elementary school. Hence, adult education targeting the Roma is seen as a prioritized remedy for this problem. With the ongoing projectification of welfare (Brunila, 2011), this kind of education is increasingly taking place in discourses of lifelong learning, provided by projects co-funded by the ESF.

What's the problem? Exploring Misery discourse

In the *EU framework for national Roma integration strategies up to 2020* (European Commission, 2011), the European Commission expresses a serious concern about the living conditions for the Roma throughout Europe. The commission states that Roma are 'marginalized and live in very poor socio-economic conditions' and that 'action is needed to break the vicious cycle of poverty moving from one generation to the next' (European Commission, 2011). One arena where this 'vicious cycle' is dealt with is the ESF projects analysed in this article.

Several projects are inspired by empowerment, and hence involve the Roma in planning and implementing them; other projects focus on spreading information about discrimination against the Roma to public officials, while others are more top-down oriented learning practices for the Roma. The kinds of projects that either are, or are not successful, and what consequences these different strategies might have, are important topics for the inclusion of the Roma. However, from the vantage point of governmentality, the analytical searchlight is directed to discourses problematizing, positioning and producing Roma subjectivities. In the projects analysed, there is a predominant rationality of problematizing and constructing the situation for the Roma in terms of miseries of various kinds. In the following, four such discourses of misery are analysed: *socioeconomic miseries*; *educational miseries*; *embodied and medicalized miseries* and *gendered miseries*, all of which shape and construct the subject position of unemployed Roma. Each one of these analysed miseries are contrasted with a government report (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 1956) where the discursive miseries are related to the ways of constructing Roma miseries in the 1950s, highlighting similarities and differences in historicizing the problematizations of the Roma in two distinct time periods.

Socioeconomic miseries

The project *Roma inclusion in the Stockholm region*⁹ formulates the discourse of social and economic miseries in a condensed way, as it is proclaimed that 'the Roma people's history of 500 years in Sweden is a story of social exclusion, marginalization and discrimination that persists even today'. The Roma are further positioned as being in a 'long-term isolation from the majority of society', leading to poor opportunities of finding employment.

The description from the project *New training program with and for Roma*¹⁰ states that ‘there is a need for specific training courses for the Romanis’, and that the goal of the project is to utilize and meet this forgotten group and to create models for helping Roma individuals. In this way, the Roma are constructed as a non-traditional group on the labour market as well as in adult education. The Roma are constructed as a targeted population in need of special interventions, making them governable towards learning to learn, since it is crucial for the lifelong learner to be *educable* (Tuschling & Engemann, 2007); afterwards in the next phase, they will be learning to become employable (Garsten & Jacobsson, 2004).

The project *Romano zor! – Roma force!*¹¹ constructs the target group as having no prior working life experience and a high degree of marginalization and social exclusion. In addition, they have for ‘several generations, had poor anchorage in society’ as well as insecure childhoods with traumatic events within families and clans’. Thus, these economic and social positionings of the Roma are ethnicized when constructed as deeply rooted in Roma culture, and even formulated in hereditary terms as they are passed on through generations.

One of the main remedies for the socioeconomic miseries is vocational training, seeking to tackle the pressing issue of *unemployability*. This rationality is clearly illustrated in the project *Newo drom*, providing education in entrepreneurship, which seeks to motivate and change the attitudes of the participants, making them able to break their social exclusion. This governing rationale is typical for contemporary labour market measures, as they both responsabilize the target group, encouraging them to break their own exclusion, and individualize the problematizations focusing on motivation and attitudes (Rose, 1999).

In contrast to the contemporary problematizations of the Roma, the government report from the 1950s (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 1956) puts more emphasis on structural problems such as a changing labour market, which renders traditional occupations for the Roma obsolete. The report states that divination has lost its market due to the majority population’s more enlightened view of life; amusement parks are no longer a temptation due to ‘the modern entertainment industry’, and the ‘rhythms of Gypsy-music’ have lost their enchantment to the tunes of jazz. Hence, the Gypsies life-rhythm is described as not in sync with the rhythm of normal society (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 1956). In the 1950s, the social democratic welfare regime (Esping-Andersen, 1990) was well established, and this problematization of a changing labour market rather than individual attitudes and motivations, indicates a tendency where government was able to understand Roma problems in terms of structural issues, in contrast to contemporary problematizations’ emphasis on the individual.

The political ambition in the 1950s was to normalize the Roma through assimilation, and the tone was positive when speaking about the ‘settled Gypsies’:

Sweden’s approximately 230 settled Gypsies have adapted remarkably well to society. In general, they seem to have been accepted by their environment, in work places as well as among neighbours. Many of them speak with great enthusiasm about their new positions as settled citizens¹². (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 1956, p. 140)

The discussion of the ‘Gypsy issue’ was divided between ‘settled Gypsies’, who were constructed as assimilated and normal, and ‘vagrant Gypsies’, those who clung on to the ‘nomadic culture’. The latter category posed the most urgent problem. In fact, the actual roving way of life was understood as the major deviance from majority society:

[The Gypsies] have come to take special status in relation to the rest of the population. First and foremost this special status is the Gypsies' roving way of life, and their deviant lifestyles in general. (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 1956, p. 11)

This divide was further stressed, and the authorities showed serious concern for those not willing to adapt to 'normal society'. The vagrant Gypsy was positioned as left behind or missing out on the great opportunities for social welfare offered by society:

Only the Gypsies, who left the typical Gypsy way of life and switched to settled life and settled conditions in general [have reached] improved economic conditions [...]. For the Gypsies who still live the itinerant traditional way, deprivation is still the essentially distinctive feature [...]. Unfortunately, the situation of the itinerant Gypsies is becoming increasingly worse with each year that passes. While development for other people has ensured rising cultural and economic standards, and increased social security, for the itinerant Gypsies, it has meant the opposite. (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 1956, p. 12f)

Hence, the key issue where the socioeconomic problematizations of the Roma differ between contemporary ESF projects and the government report from 1956, is this issue of vagrant lifestyles, which is not problematized in contemporary constructions of the Roma. Nevertheless, the remedy for the Roma problem partly remains the same, as we shall see in the following, when educational miseries are analysed.

Educational miseries

In order to make the Roma employable, they first need to become *educable*. The problematization of unemployment is hence related to education and learning; for instance, this can be seen in the project *Roma in Norrköping*¹³, which seeks to 'develop methods for motivation and personal responsibility in the Roma group focusing on education, work and self-sufficiency'. Once again, the emphasis is on individual problematizations and responsabilization (Rose, 1999) in contemporary constructions of the problematic Roma learner (cf. Brine, 2006).

In the project *Romane buca*, the Roma are constructed as not enhancing the accumulation of human capital by education and working life experience deemed necessary to reach a position in the labour market. The educational situation of the Roma is constructed as a catch-22 situation: 'Due to the high unemployment, Roma people lack incentives to seek education that could lead to future employment'. In order to break this vicious cycle, the Roma are encouraged to acknowledge the value of education in order to become employable; in other words, they need to need to become educable.

The project *New training program with and for Roma* places the responsibility for this lacking education with the Roma parents, as we can see in the following quote discussing their school situations:

Elementary school competence is a necessary precondition for further studies and for entrance to the labour market. A reoccurring problem for many Roma is that they have quit elementary school without complete grades. Many Roma children quit school early; many of the Roma families do not link school with the future prospects and the connection between level of education and material wealth. (New training program with and for Roma)

In addition to the Roma children's lacking education, their parents are represented as being unable to connect education with a good life and material wealth. The project description further problematizes the school situation of the Roma by concluding that:

Schools that receive Roma pupils must be prepared to give them extra time and resources [...] the [Roma pupils] often have very poor knowledge of society in general – a result of the isolated lives they have been living. (New training program with and for Roma)

This rationality problematizes the Roma family; the Roma children are lacking education, and Roma adults are irresponsible parents since they have raised them in isolation from the majority society, and kept them ignorant of the value of education. Once more the problematic situation of the Roma is portrayed in hereditary terms, as Roma parents pass on their lack of interest in education to their descendants. In the 'learning society' (Masschelein et al., 2007), a first step towards becoming educable is given as learning to recognize the value of education.

The main solution offered to this miserable educational situation is adult education, which targets the Roma. Echoing the current discourse of lifelong learning, there is a predominant rationality that it is never too late to learn, and the ESF projects provide an opportunity for the participants to educate themselves, steering them towards becoming learning subjects.

One project focusing on the learning of Roma adults is *Empowerment and participation among Roma in western Sweden*. Although the project description places much of the cause for Roma exclusion on discriminating structures and racism, the remedies are individualized. The focus of the project is on combatting low self-esteem and low education level by strengthening the individual with empowerment. The processes of empowerment offered by the project seeks to strengthen the individual Roma, as it will 'give them the power to break their powerlessness' as well as to gain more influence over their own lives and strengthen their self-control. This will for empowerment (Cruikshank, 1999) is constructed as a way to increase confidence and promote a better self-image in the project description by encouraging the targeted learners to work with themselves. These are individual qualities constructed as necessary to be able to take the first step towards 'greater knowledge and skills'. The courses given in the project include basic societal orientation, health planning and communication, focusing on individual, rather than societal structures, thus governing the subject towards education for employability.

The will to educate the Roma participants is formulated in a condensed way in the project *Pre-study on Roma education*¹⁴, where they propose creating tailored educations for Roma and mixing formal and informal learning in different milieus, typical for the learning society (Masschelein et al., 2007). The project concludes that 'raising the educational level of the Roma is the method we believe is most successful to get the Roma into working life'. This quote clearly shows the primary motive for educating the Roma: increasing the supply of labour by making them employable and productive, and hence included in societal normality.

The deficit in Roma education was a problem just as crucial in the 1950s as it is today. How the vagrant Roma children should get access to public schooling is formulated as the most urgent issue (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 1956, p. 51). In line with this, the report problematizes the widespread illiteracy among 'the Gypsies':

It is obvious that illiteracy is a grave handicap for people in our modern and complex society. Except for the personal barrier it means for the person, with forced isolation, the inability to read and write also means a severely limited freedom of choice regarding occupation and livelihood. (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 1956, p. 51)

Since Roma children at the time had been included in compulsory school attendance, the problem of illiteracy was seen as solved by itself, when the children grew up. In this way the Roma adults were positioned as the main problem, since ‘it will always be the older, ignorant Gypsies who leave their mark on the Gypsies existence’ (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 1956, p. 61). The solution to this problem was adult education, as it was seen as enabling the adult Roma ‘to transform to another way of living’ if they were given the opportunity to attend education (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 1956, p. 61).

In the contemporary project descriptions, the ability to read and write among the Roma is not a prominent problem. In this respect, education appears to be successful; illiteracy is no longer constructed as a major problem for the Roma in Sweden. Yet, the ability to read and write does not seem to have been enough for improving their situation in any significant way, since the position of Roma in contemporary Sweden is still problematized in a number of ways. However, in other EU countries, the issue of illiteracy is still posing a problem (Miskovic, 2009), as the commission encourages the importance of combating illiteracy among Roma children and adults (European Commission, 2011).

Embodied and medicalized miseries

Another reoccurring problematization concerns the physical and psychological wellbeing of the Roma; in other words, embodied and medicalized discourses of misery are put forth. The project *Romano zor! – Roma force!* targets Roma adults that are ‘dependent on welfare’. The following quote from the project description illustratively positions the targeted subjects in a discourse of medicalized misery:

The conditions of life are the foundation for high psychological and physical illness. Stress-related diseases with psychological uneasiness, headache, depressions and panic anxiety are relatively common with pill and alcohol abuse as a result. Poor general condition due to arthritic diseases, back pain and over-weight is common. Also asthma, heart trouble, rheumatism and kidney problems are common, as well as different kinds of women’s health issues. (Romano zor! – Roma force!)

Here, the social and economic marginalization, in terms of welfare dependency, is constructed through medicalized discourses with a focus on the psychological as well as the physical status of the Roma. The economically poor Roma are constructed as pathological subjects in need of medical interventions.

This medicalization of unemployed Roma is also evident in the project description of the project *Roma in the north*¹⁵ claiming that ‘many Roma suffer from psychological and physical illnesses’. The suffering from these illnesses is described as taking place in silence as the unemployed Roma are, once again, positioned as ‘completely isolated from possibilities concerning working life’.

In the project description of *Empowerment and participation among Roma in western Sweden*¹⁶ the goal of the project is described as follows:

[34] Viktor Vesterberg

The goal is to increase possibilities for the Roma people to take control over their life situations, their own health, and issues that influence their health and social inclusion. (Empowerment and participation among Roma in western Sweden)

In the quote, the starting point for thinking about the problems of the targeted Roma is constructed as their lack of control over life in general and their health problems in particular. These health problems are constructed as solvable by making the participants learn about dieting and wellness, with the goal of changing their unhealthy life-styles and risky behaviour. Responsibility for overcoming the excluded and isolated position is placed on the targeted subjects themselves, as they are encouraged to take control over their life situations. This individualized responsabilization (Rose 1999) is to be facilitated by the project through increased opportunities for the Roma to take charge over their life situations, spanning from health issues to social inclusion. The remedies proposed in order to deal with these medicalized problems are once more individualized; the individual must be made willing and able not only to educate herself, but also to work with herself, to learn how to improve one's body and soul, so that one might eventually become ready to learn how to become employable.

Medicalized problematizations of the Roma are nothing new or specific for contemporary ESF projects. On the contrary, it is an important aspect of the way 'the Gypsy issue' was thought of in the 1950s. The life expectancy of the Roma was a matter of grave concern in the report of 1956, since it was considerably lower than for the population in general. As today, the authorities then were worried that there was not adequate knowledge about the situation of the Roma:

Details of the roving Gypsies' health condition are admittedly not available, but that bronchitis and respiratory tract infections are particularly rampant among the Gypsies, especially the children, has been observed [...] (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 1956, p. 13)

The authorities were highly concerned with the 'severe deterioration of this population material', causing difficulties in 'conducting a normal social life' (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 1956, p. 13).

In the 1956 report, the issue of health and sickness was strongly connected to 'the Gypsies' ambulating way of living. Their inadequate, cold and draughty homes were seen as the source of much of the sickness flourishing among the 'itinerate Gypsy'. In relation to contemporary problematizations of the Roma, this is an interesting result. The homes of the Roma are no longer considered cold and draughty, or in any other way particularly problematic, but still the contemporary problematizations of the Roma's health is a pressing issue. Once again, we see the problematizations in the 1950s is focused more on structural problems such as housing and changes in the labour market, in contrast to the more prominent individualized psychological reasoning in contemporary projects positioning the Roma as unemployable and excluded in discourses of medicalized, as well as embodied miseries. Learning about oneself and how to live one's life in a particular way becomes in this situation a learning activity where power and knowledge operate as a way of conducting the conduct of the targeted learner in a specific direction (Masschelein et al., 2007).

Gendered miseries

In the project descriptions, there is a particular interest in the situation of the Roma women. The problem of gender inequality is explicitly stressed by the ESF, as ‘gender mainstreaming’ is a mandatory heading imposed in the project descriptions, where each project is to formulate their ways of working with gender equality, creating a gendered dimension in discourses of Roma miseries.

The position of Roma women tends to be constructed as extraordinarily miserable. The project *Roma in the north* places a specific focus on Roma women, and positions them in discourses built on the rationale of deficits. The Roma women are constructed as lacking a number of valuable qualities in contemporary societies. They are problematized as having none or lacking role models, lacking insights into society, lacking education, lacking participation and having low self-esteem. In addition, they are described as suffering from substance abuse in the form of sedative medicine and ‘hidden alcoholism’. This substance abuse is constructed as a way for Roma women to escape the pressure that they experience since they are forced to live ‘in isolated relation to society and the majority population, without the possibility to change their situations’. Once again, the isolation from majority society is fronted as a major concern. Further the Roma women are constructed as dependent on welfare, causing a ‘deprecated human dignity, social exclusion and a damaged self-confidence’. In focusing on problems of self-confidence and lacking personal attributes, the contemporary gendered problematizations are individualizing the social exclusion. The project description also pays a great deal of attention to the great burdens of Roma women, as being solely responsible for the economy of their families and for raising their children, implicitly constructing the Roma male as irresponsible.

Another illustrative example of gendered miseries is the project *Romano zor! – Roma force!*, which problematizes gender relationships within the targeted Roma community, constructing the Roma family structures as hierarchical and patriarchal. Here, as well as in other projects, gendered miseries are explicitly linked to femininity, focusing on the problem of Roma women, while Roma masculinity is not explicitly constructed as a problem, but rather implicitly understood as patriarchal and traditional.

In the project description of *Roma dilemma, from internal to external integration*¹⁷, the problematized gender relations are explicitly ethnicized as ‘Roma culture’, and are constructed as traditional with traditional roles and duties. This problematization gender relationships positions Roma as deviant in relation to the dominant discourse in Sweden, which is in the frontline regarding gender equality (de los Reyes, Molina & Mulinari, 2006). The Roma woman is constructed as belonging in the home, with the primary responsibility of taking care of relatives. This situation is constructed as being casually related to a range of miseries: low self-esteem, guilt and anxiety, deteriorated health and chronic problems, and dependency on sleeping pills and anti-depressant medication. The remedies to these problems are individualized, as they seek to support the Roma women in feeling better and developing a healthy self-image as well as developing their own potential. Discourses individualizing the miseries among Roma women also make responsible (Rose 1999) the targeted subjects, as they are governed to work on themselves through raising self-confidence and becoming empowered. Once self-confident and empowered, the Roma woman can be made able and motivated to ‘learn to learn’ (Tuschling & Engemann, 2007) in order to become employable.

The project *Roma dilemma, from internal to external integration*, specifically targets young Roma women. In the project there is a need for knowledge, both *about* and *for* the Roma women; on the one hand, there is a ‘need to study the younger

generation's desires and dreams', while on the other hand, there is a need to 'support young women to develop a more coherent self-awareness and consciousness of their needs'. This will to learn about young Roma women and the will to make them learn about themselves is governing the targeted subjects towards becoming educable and employable, since power and knowledge operate as productive forces, producing subjectivities and directing the will and aspirations of the targeted subjects (Foucault 1980).

What about gendered problematizations in the 1950s? Due to political struggles, issues of gender equality have gained a more prominent position in public debates in recent decades. In the 1950s, the discourse of Roma women in relation to gender equality was not problematized, as it is in contemporary projects targeting the Roma people. Back then, the Roma woman was described as marrying young, and made faithful to her husband through the 'tribal morale'. These practices were ethnicized and constructed as part of normal Roma life, but were not explicitly problematized. There are also similarities between the contemporary and the 1950s gendered problematizations of the Roma. The Roma women of today as well as the 1950s, are constructed as having a heavy workload including responsibility for raising children, sewing, cooking and bringing in money to the family. Additionally in the past, she was portrayed as having too many children and living very isolated (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 1956, p.43). This isolated position of the Roma women is, as we have seen, also prominent in contemporary gendered Roma miseries.

Discussion

This article has analysed learning practices in labour market projects targeting unemployed Roma in Sweden focusing on discursive positioning and governing. Further, the analysis has been historicised with a government report from 1956 concerning the 'Roma issue' in Sweden (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 1956). The constructions of the Roma are not always explicitly ethnicized, but when the Roma are singled out as a targeted population, it enables government of this specific 'group' through various problematizations (Dean, 2010). In order to include the Roma in the labour market through employability, they first must be problematized as excluded and unemployable. The same rationality operates in terms of learning; in order to make the Roma a group in need of learning, they first must be constructed as problematic learners (cf. Brine, 2006). Hence the Roma are constructed as subjects that first need to recognize the value of education – to learn to learn, and thus become educable (Tuschling & n, 2007) and then go on to learn to become employable (Garsten & Jacobsson, 2004). Next I will recapitulate and elaborate on the main findings of the analysis, following the analytical questions posed in the article.

How are the Roma constructed, positioned and problematized in relation to the labour market and learning? In analysing the discursive construction and governing of the Roma in labour market projects, we have seen their reoccurring positioning and problematization in four distinct discourses of misery: *socioeconomic miseries*, *educational miseries*, *embodied and medicalized miseries* and *gendered miseries*. All these discursive miseries construct the targeted Roma subjects as a group that is socially excluded, not the least being through the omnipresent discourse of isolation, which has been highlighted throughout the analysis. The analysis has shown that there is a wide concern about the welfare of the Roma, both today and in the 1950s.

During the 1950s, the ‘social democratic welfare regime’ (Esping-Andersen, 1990) was well established in Sweden and the decade to come has been called ‘the heyday of Swedish social democracy’ (Arter, 2003, p. 75). In the welfare policies of the 1950s, the formulas of government were exercised in the name of collective welfare (Rose, 1996, p. 48). In this period, the Swedish model had a reputation of successful economic growth, industrial development and full employment (Schierup, Hansen & Castles, 2006, p. 200). In the socioeconomic situation of the 1950s, the ‘vagrant Gypsy’ posed a political problem for Swedish authorities, as much of the miseries of the Roma were understood as being caused by an itinerate lifestyle. Today, itinerate lifestyles of the Roma are not explicitly problematized, but the Roma are still constructed as problematic in relation to education and employability. As the analysis of the 1956 government report shows, a serious concern was that the Roma were missing out on the ‘rising cultural and economic standards, and increased social security’ (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 1956, p. 12f) that benefitted the majority of the population.

The 1950s was also a period when Swedish policies targeting the Roma were changing (Selling, 2013). The previously explicit racist discourse gradually shifted to policies of including the Roma through assimilation. The Roma were to be included in the Swedish welfare society through political efforts concerning education, proper housing and participation on the regular labour market (Selling, 2013, p. 129ff).

The main discrepancies between contemporary problems and remedies and those from the 1950s are that the Roma miseries of the 1950s were constructed with a more explicit focus on societal structures, such as housing and changes in the labour market. Today there is a greater emphasis on individualizing problematizations in terms of low self-esteem and psychological illnesses where the remedies predominantly found are in the will to strengthen the individual through techniques of empowerment (Cruikshank, 1999). The more explicit focus on structural problems in the 1950s may be understood in relation to the wider political focus on collective welfare, in contrast to the contemporary focus on individual freedom of choice (Rose, 1996).

Gendered problematizations are constructed in somewhat different ways in the two time periods. The contemporary gendered problematizations have a focus on gender equality, something which was absent in the debate of the 1950s. Common for the two time periods is a will to learn how the Roma women feel and what they want and desire, which indicates an intimate relationship between power and knowledge (Foucault, 1980) in gendered constructions of the Roma. The rationality is that knowledge problematizing Roma gender relationships is needed in order to govern Roma women towards societal normality (cf. Dean, 2010) through the learning of gender equality.

How are the Roma to become employable and included in society? The rationality of the learning practices engaged in making the Roma employable first need to problematize them as *unemployable*. The same rationality is at play in the ambition of creating social inclusion. To make someone includable, (s)he first needs to be positioned as excluded. Positioning the Roma in socioeconomic, educational, embodied/medicalized and gendered miseries puts them in a position very far from what is understood as an ‘employable individual’ that is included in society.

The remedy as well as the cause for much of the Roma problems in both time periods is learning and education. Education is a problem for the Roma since many quit school either too early or with low grades. Adult education and lifelong learning provided to them have sometimes been criticized for being narrowly focused on vocational training and mainly concerned with increasing the employability of the learners (cf. Brine, 2006). The analysis of educational miseries shows that the scope of the learning practices are not narrow at all, since it targets the participant as a whole person,

including both their physical and emotional wellbeing, as well as their family life, gender identity, and especially their socioeconomic situation. The overarching goal of the learning practices is to transform socially excluded unemployed Roma to included employable citizens, and the means for doing so is embracing more or less the whole life of the targeted learner. In this sense, the learning practices of the ESF projects not only become a basis for lifelong learning, but also life-wide learning. More or less, the whole social life as well as the life-span of the learning subject is problematized as being in need of improvement through education and learning.

It has been argued that studies of the Roma need a more critical understanding and theoretical elaboration of concepts such as ethnicity and diversity, in order to move beyond the will to find out who the Roma really are (Tremlett et al., 2014). This can be achieved with a governmentality perspective focusing on discursive constructions and ethnicized problematizations seeking to make the Roma governable, employable and educable. From a governmentality perspective, learning is understood as governing the conduct of the targeted learner (Masschelein et al., 2007). In order to properly govern the conduct and aspirations of the project participants, they first need to *be known*. Governing requires knowing *who* is to be governed. This governing further encourages the Roma to work with themselves. To become educable, they need to verbalize their problems and formulate their dreams, goals and ambitions: they need to know what they want and how to achieve their goals in order to educate themselves properly. In this way, the educable subject has to adapt to the norms of the value of education in the greater society and then act accordingly.

To summarize the analysis, we have seen how Roma subjects are discursively constructed through productive power which positions them in discourses of isolation, deprivation, substance abuse, gender inequalities and poor education. Such positioning of the targeted subjects within discursive miseries are simultaneously producing knowledge about the Roma, constructing them as problematic, unemployable and in need of learning, and thus making them governable and educable in various ways.

In relation to a contemporary European project of building a ‘learning society’ inhabited by ‘lifelong learners’ (Masschelein et al., 2007), the Roma is problematized, not least in terms of lacking education (Miskovic, 2013).

The European commission (European Commission, 2011) as well as the Swedish government (Ministry of Employment, 2011) encourages adult education particularly targeting Roma as a remedy for social and economic problems and as a way to strengthen Roma civic rights as well as employability. Such practices of lifelong learning are also, as we have seen, taking place in projects co-funded by the ESF. On the one hand, Roma can be seen as non-traditional lifelong learners, as adult education tend to attract middle-class populations with a solid education background. On the other hand, the analysis have shown that Roma, as a particularly problematized group, have a history of being targeted by governmental interventions, not least in terms of learning and education.

Inviting Roma, as a marginalised and non-traditional group, to participate in adult education is important for many reasons. But, as the results of this study show, it is equally important to reflect upon if, how and why Roma are positioned in discourses of misery when engaged in facilitating learning for Roma or other marginalised and disadvantaged groups.

Notes

- ¹ I have analysed labour market measures specifically targeting the Somali in a previous study: Vesterberg (2013)
- ² <http://www.esf.se/en/Projektbank/Search-project/> Retrieved April 23, 2014
- ³ <http://www.esf.se/sv/vara-program/Socialfonden/Om-Socialfonden/> Retrieved June 8, 2015
- ⁴ The mandatory headings are as follows: summary, background, purpose, objective, accessibility for people with disabilities, gender mainstreaming, co-financiers, partners, and municipality.
- ⁵ Author's translation. Swedish title: *Zigenarfrågan*
- ⁶ The other national minorities are the Jews, the Sami, the Swedish Finns and the Tornedalers (Ministry for Integration and Gender Equality, 2007).
- ⁷ Author's translation. Swedish title: *En samordnad och långsiktig strategi för romsk inkludering 2012 – 2032*.
- ⁸ Who these projects actually target is a complex and somewhat fuzzy issue. Roma in Sweden are commonly categorized in a number of subgroups such as Swedish Roma, Finnish Roma, non-Nordic Roma or newly arrived Roma (Sametinget, 2015). What subgroup of Roma the projects are targeting is, in most of the projects, not specified.
- ⁹ Author's translation. Swedish name: Romsk inkludering i stockholmsregionen
- ¹⁰ Author's translation. Swedish name: *Nya utbildningsinsatser med och för Romer*
- ¹¹ Author's translation. Swedish name: *Romano zor! Romsk kraft!*
- ¹² All translations of empirical quotes are made by the author
- ¹³ Author's translation. Swedish title: *Romer i Norrköping*.
- ¹⁴ Author's translation. Swedish title: *Förstudie kring romska utbildningar*.
- ¹⁵ Author's translation. Swedish name: *Romer i norr*
- ¹⁶ Author's translation. Swedish Name: *Empowerment och delaktighet hos Romer i Västsverige*
- ¹⁷ Author's translation. Swedish name: *Romskt dilemma, från inre till yttre Integration*

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Informal learning processes of migrants in the civil society: a transnational perspective

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Abstract

The aim of the article is to examine the informal learning processes of migrants particularly in relation to their social engagements in associations, informal groups and transnational networks in the Estonia-Finland space. The theoretical framework relates to socio-cultural, situated learning tradition as well as transnational migration studies. In educational research, transnational perspectives are still relatively new and little explored. The research data (98 interviews) were analysed following theory-guided content analysis. Diverse learning trajectories in relation to the informants' associational engagement were identified. Engagement in various social groups in transnational environments had widened the informants' perspectives and understanding, enabling them to explore differences in societal conceptions and practices. Some of the informants had been acting as transnational brokers, conveying conceptions and practices between communities across national borders. There is a need to examine migrants' learning trajectories in relation to their social engagements not only in the country of settlement but also in transnational spaces.

Keywords: migrants; informal learning; civil society; transnational space; learning trajectories

Introduction

This article examines the informal learning processes of migrants in relation to their activities in non-governmental organisations, informal groups and in border-crossing social networks particularly in the Estonia-Finland space. The informal learning processes and learning environments of the informants are analysed from the perspectives of socio-cultural learning theories, specifically the situated learning approach (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), and social practice theory (Holland & Lave, 2009). *Informal learning* refers here to unorganised, everyday learning processes taking place in different social environments throughout people's lives (also Hager & Halliday, 2009). The key idea of situated learning studies for the purposes of this article

is how people experience on-going learning processes involving identity construction through engaging in various social groups during their life-course.

Transnational migration studies have explored how transnational spaces connecting both migrants and non-migrants are emerging and how cross-border flows of people, ideas, money and goods are transforming communities in at least two nation-states (e.g. Faist, 2000; Levitt, 2001; Portes, 1997; Vertovec, 2009). In this article, *transnational* refers to the social ties and activities of non-state actors as well as to the experiences, perspectives and identifications of individuals crossing national borders. *Transnational spaces* are defined here as socially constructed spaces, which transcend national borders and connect people residing or having resided in at least two or more different societies (cf. Alenius, 2015).

Combining theoretical perspectives from situated learning research, social practice theory and transnational studies makes it possible to explore the complex processes of social learning taking place between migrants and non-migrants in transnational environments. The research questions of the study are: 1) How do migrants engage in voluntary activities in the Estonia-Finland space? And 2) What kinds of learning processes and trajectories do migrants experience in relation to their associative activities and their social engagements in transnational spaces? The findings presented in the article are related to my recent doctoral dissertation on informal learning of migrants and emerging learning spaces in transnational settings (Alenius, 2015).

Only a few studies have been presented examining migrants' learning experiences and emerging educational and learning spaces from transnational perspectives (Cuban, 2014; Guo, 2013; Monkman, 1999; Waters & Brooks, 2012). Moreover, there has been little research applying situated learning theory to scrutinize cross-border learning processes between migrants and non-migrants (Shan & Guo, 2013; Williams, 2006; Williams & Baláz, 2008). Yet recent publications in RELA (Evans, 2014; Kurantowicz, Olesen & Wildemeersch 2014; Morrice, 2014) have drawn attention to the need to explore socio-cultural learning processes and environments in relation to increasing international migration.

Concerning the Estonia-Finland transnational space, the geographical and linguistic proximity of the two countries has facilitated people's cross-border mobility and diverse transnational practices. The macro level political developments related to the collapse of the Soviet regime in the early 1990s and the re-independence of Estonia (annexed by the Soviet Union from 1944 until 1991) as well as the EU membership of Finland since 1995 and Estonia since 2004 have caused an increase of migration flows in this space. The majority of migrants have been moving from Estonia to Finland although there have also been entrepreneurs, students, labour migrants and family members of these groups moving in the opposite direction. In Finland, there have been both temporary migrants from Estonia, including blue-collar posted workers and transmigrants, as well as more permanent immigrants, namely people of Ingrian Finnish origin, students, labour migrants, as well as those moving for family reasons (Jakobson, Järvinen-Alenius, Pitkänen, Ruutsoo, Keski-Hirvelä, Kalev, 2012). In the present decade Finns permanently or temporarily resident in Estonia amount to some 10,000 (Jakobson & Kalev, 2013). Among foreign residents in Finland, Estonians form the largest group: around 48,000 people in 2014, 0.9 % of the total population (Finnish Immigration Service, 2015). Estimates of transmigrating Estonians in the Estonia-Finland space have varied from 20,000 to 70,000 in recent years (Alenius, 2015).

Estonian society has undergone a rapid transformation in the space of a few decades from being a strictly monitored communist system to a neoliberal, free-market economy (Jakobson & Kalev, 2013). Finland could be characterised as a Nordic welfare

society, although there have been debates on how since the 1990s the welfare system has been eroding in Finland. While Finland is still economically more prosperous, for example in terms of average earnings, Estonia's economy has also been growing fast in recent years. Estonia has served as a kind of labour reservoir for Finnish companies, which have been profiting from obtaining less expensive labour force from the neighbouring country (Alenius, 2015). This has been supported by the Finnish legislative decisions in the 2000s' favouring mobility through firms rather than mobility of individual labour migrants (Kyntäjä, 2008).

Socio-cultural, situated learning perspective

The framework of situated learning introduces a social, informal perspective into learning: learning does not occur only in formal educational contexts but particularly in people's everyday lives through participation in various social communities, acquiring new skills and ideas, and constructing identities through such participation. Furthermore, the situated learning perspective challenges the traditional understanding of learning as an individual act of knowledge acquisition and transmission, and, instead, promotes the view of exploring learning as a collective phenomenon, exemplified through shared participation in the social practices (Fuller 2007; Hughes, Jewson & Unwin, 2007).

Lave and Wenger (1991) describe learning as situated activity through the concept of *legitimate peripheral participation*. With this concept they refer to the processes by which individuals participate in different social groups, enhance their knowledge and skills by engaging in shared activities and gradually move toward full participation in these groups. The model of Lave and Wenger (1991), focusing on learning the existing know-how through the journey to becoming a full master of practice, has been criticised for failing to explain how new knowledge can be produced within the communities (Edwards, 2005; Jewson, 2007). Moreover, novices may also bring new knowledge and support the learning of both their peers and experts (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2003).

Individuals belong to different kinds of social groups and communities throughout their lives. Some of these groups can be described as *communities of practice* (hereafter CoP), which Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 98) first defined as 'a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice'. According to Wenger (1998), the three main dimensions of CoP are 1) mutual engagement 2) a joint enterprise and 3) a shared repertoire. The description of CoPs by Lave and Wenger (1991) can be interpreted as referring either broadly to all social environments in which people participate throughout their lives or, more narrowly, to relatively small groups united by common practice and goals (Fuller, 2007). Criticism has been voiced that the meaning of community remains obscure in both Lave's and Wenger's (1991) and also in Wenger's (1998) work. They do not position themselves unequivocally in relation to different definitions of community within sociological tradition although they seem to draw on the idea of symbolically constructed, imagined entities (Jewson, 2007).

The significance of power relations and internal struggles within CoPs for social learning processes have not been sufficiently addressed by situated learning theory and its applications (Contu & Willmott, 2003; Jewson, 2007). In addition, the ways in which CoPs are related to wider historical developments as well as to political and socio-cultural structures are not clearly explained. *Social practice theory* developed by Holland and Lave (2009) focuses on the differences and conflicts among participants of

local practices as well as the impact of macro level developments and wider, historical struggles shaping local communities. The individuals engaging in local practice are historically related and partially divided through power relations and unequal access to material and symbolic resources. Socio-historically developed divisions based, for example, on ethnicity, nationality, racialization and gender, are manifested and negotiated in local arenas—these divisions shape learning opportunities of the individuals (Holland & Lave, 2009; Lave, 1996). Furthermore, Shan and Guo (2013), applying the socio-cultural learning perspectives, have drawn attention to how migrants' learning processes often involve institutionalized processes of othering.

Wenger (1998) examines how individuals may create connections across social groups through brokering and boundary encounters. People throughout their lives participate in the activities of various social groups and communities. Through such multi-membership, they can adopt and share new skills and ideas. *Boundary encounters* are usually events that provide connections between communities, including one-on-one conversations and meetings of delegations. *Brokering* refers to liaisons created by individuals between different communities (Wenger, 1998). It requires translation, coordination and alignment between different perspectives (Wenger, 1998; Williams, 2006). In this research, these concepts are applied to examine cross-border exchanges of beliefs and practices. Previously, Williams and Baláz (2008) examined how particularly famous scientists and politicians acted as knowledge brokers in transnational, professional arenas.

In relation to individuals' engagement within and between CoPs, Wenger (1998) differentiates five types of *trajectories*. *Peripheral trajectories* provide limited access to a community, *inbound trajectories* refers to newcomers with the prospect of becoming full participants, *insider trajectories* relates to full members who continue developing their practice, *boundary trajectories* refers to brokers linking CoPs and crossing boundaries, and *outbound trajectories* lead out of the community. The interaction of multiple trajectories contributes to individuals' on-going identity construction throughout their lives.

In addition to engagement in the activities of the CoPs, Wenger (1998) also explores another mode of belonging. The concept of *imagination* refers to 'a process of expanding oneself by transcending our time and space and creating new images of the world and ourselves' (Wenger, 1998, p. 176). Through imagination, people can locate their engagements and CoPs within broader structures and systems. Imagination can assist in creating communities in which people sharing the same characteristics or experiences feel a sense of unity even if they do not develop shared activities.

Transnational spaces, associative engagement and the informal learning of migrants

Nowadays migrants often engage in transnational activities. The rapid development of information and communication technologies has facilitated the maintenance of frequent contacts between migrants and their relatives, colleagues, and community members residing in the country of origin or in other countries. The decreased costs of transportation have also facilitated cross-border visits by migrants to their former home countries. (Vertovec, 2009) Different forms of migrants' transnational practices have been identified and investigated, such as transnational care, transfers of money and items (*financial and material remittances*), political cross-border cooperation between migrants and associations in their countries of origin, formation of professional networks and exchanges of professional information.

Since the 1990s the ‘transnational turn’ in migration research has introduced a new perspective to analyse migrants’ cross-border activities. Transnational studies question previous ideas on the nation-state as a container of social, political and economic processes and also traditional migration research focusing particularly on the integration of migrants into the ‘receiving’ countries (Faist, 2004). Research on migrants’ transnational practices has highlighted the ways in which people’s lives and their communities have been transformed through intensive transnational contacts and collaboration (Levitt, 2001). Research on *social and political remittances* (for example, Jiménez, 2009; Levitt, 2001) has examined from the perspective of socio-cultural transmission how migrants convey beliefs, practices and mindsets particularly from the countries of settlement to the countries of emigration, and how such ‘transfers’ may affect both individuals and their communities. Research has been done on how migrants engage in transnational social fields, spaces or circuits embedded in at least two societies across national borders (for example, Faist, 2000; Levitt, 2001; Portes, 1997; Vertovec, 2009). These socially constructed, transnational spaces connect migrants and non-migrants particularly between the country of immigration and migrants’ country of origin.

The term *migrant transnationalism* has referred to cross-border practices and institutions connecting migrants and non-migrants living in different nation-states (Vertovec, 2009). Migrant transnationalism has been examined ‘from above’ (macro-structural processes and actors) and ‘from below’ (individuals’ cross-border practices), and also taking into account the meso level: transnational networks, communities and organisations (Guarnizo & Smith, 1998; Portes, 1997). Although this term has been widely used in migration research, it could be interpreted as referring to a particular ideology, i.e. *transnationalism*, although it mainly concerns migrants’ transnational practices and the formation of transnational spaces. Therefore, *transnationality* could be a more appropriate concept to describe the border-crossing activities of individuals, groups and organisations in all spheres of life. (Faist, Fauser, & Reisenauer, 2013).

The critics of transnational studies have underlined that transnational communities as such are not a new phenomenon although the term is a neologism (Kivisto, 2001). In addition, it has been pointed out that not all migrants are transnationally active and the intensity of their cross-border activities may vary throughout the life course. In fact, transnational migration studies may exaggerate the extent of the phenomenon by focusing on migrants with active transnational contacts (Guarnizo, Portes & Haller, 2003, p. 1213). Furthermore, transnational research often focuses on migrants’ ties to their countries of origin, highlight the bipolarity of such spaces and disregard migrants’ other border-crossing ties (Qureshi, Varghese, Osella & Rajan, 2012).

In educational research, transnational perspectives have been applied rather rarely (Guo 2013; Waters & Brooks, 2012), and the focus has mainly been on examining the learning of migrants and migrants’ integration paths from the perspective of ‘receiving’ societies. Yet a few studies have been accomplished exploring migrants’ learning processes and informal learning environments in transnational settings. Ligus (2011) noted how migration influenced both those who migrated and those who stayed behind. For the migrants, migration posed challenges and offered opportunities for border-crossings in emerging learning spaces. In the study of Ligus (Ibid.), the migrants described their lives as balancing between two parallel worlds. Kurantowicz et al. (2014) likewise discussed how cultural learning processes related to increasing international migration flows concerned both immigrants and host country citizens. They pointed out that only few studies had contemplated migration as a process of education and learning.

Morrice (2014) highlighted how migration involved movement across space: the learning trajectories of migrants related both to the social spaces in which they had engaged in the countries of emigration and to the social spaces in the countries of destination. Furthermore, the transformative situations migrants faced in their everyday lives created a need for reflection and on-going identity construction. Evans (2014) explored how a migrant navigated between two cultural and linguistic spaces (Turkish-German). Gender, ethnic and political meanings have shaped migrants' learning trajectories and agency in overlapping spaces. Concerning Mexican migrants in the USA, Monkman (1999) showed how the social, gendered network dynamics and cross-border orientation of migrants affected their informal learning experiences.

Voluntary associations have been portrayed as arenas supporting migrants' enculturation into the host society. Community and voluntary work may enable newcomers to learn the local practices and foster social and cultural capital needed in job acquisition. (Bay, Finseraas & Hagelund, 2010; Webb, 2015). In addition to ethnic, religious and multi-cultural associations, immigrants have also participated in mainstream voluntary organisations along with the citizens of the host society. Some associations of migrants focus on transnational politics and charity activities targeted at their country of origin (Pyykkönen & Martikainen, 2013; Vertovec, 2009).

Data and methods

The data were gathered in an international research project entitled Transnationalisation, Migration and Transformation: Multi-Level Analysis of Migrant Transnationalism (Trans-Net), conducted in 2008-2011¹. The research project examined the transnational practices of migrants in four bi-national spaces (Estonia-Finland, India-UK, Morocco-France and Turkey-Germany) and how these practices were connected to wider, macro-level transformation processes (Pitkänen, İçduygu & Sert, 2012).

The data set of the study includes 78 semi-structured and 20 life-course interviews conducted in Finland. For the interviews, the Finnish research team interviewed people who had migrated to Finland from Estonia either after re-independence (1991) or when under Soviet domination (1944-1991), and also Estonian nationals transmigrating between these countries. A few informants had migrated first to another foreign country, and then to Finland. The respondents included long-term and temporary migrants, labour migrants, entrepreneurs, people migrating due to family reasons, foreign degree students, as well as so-called 'returnees', i.e. Ingrian Finns². At the time of the interviews, the respondents were aged between 19 and 64 years. They had been either living in Finland or transmigrating between the two countries (due to work, studies, business or family reasons) for diverse periods, ranging from one year to more than 20 years. The native languages of the respondents were Estonian, Russian and Finnish. The respondents were relatively highly educated; 31 out of 80 respondents had already obtained university degrees in Estonia/Soviet Union, and nine informants had earned higher education qualifications in the host country. The rest of the informants had completed either primary or upper secondary school education, or had obtained a vocational qualification either in Finland or in Estonia, before or after its regained independence. The informants were mostly selected through snowball sampling and with the assistance of migrant associations and educational institutions. Some contacts were gathered by following the media. In the interview extracts, all the names of the informants are fictional and details that could reveal the identity of the interviewees have been removed.

The interview data were analysed qualitatively, following theory-guided content analysis (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009). The aim was not to test particular theoretical models but rather to enhance the analysis with the assistance of theoretical concepts and perspectives. The first phase of analysis included familiarisation with the data: preliminary readings and identifying significant themes arising from the data. The preliminary organisation and analysis of the data followed the model of data-based analysis (cf. Krippendorff, 2013, text-driven content analyses): the data was organised into main thematic categories and sub-categories in relation to the research questions. The second phase of analysis involved re-examination of theoretical perspectives and choosing the concepts, which assisted in conceptualising the phenomena theoretically. The final stage of analysis involved comparing and assessing the results in relation to the entire data set, the theoretical perspectives applied, and also exploring the meaning of the results with respect to earlier theorisation. The situated learning approach provided a perspective from which to observe how learning took place in people's everyday lives through engaging in different kinds of social groups and communities, and through such participation obtaining new ideas and practices as well as constructing their identities. In my dissertation research, I examined migrants' learning processes not only in associations but also in work communities, families and in other informal groups and border-crossing networks. Transnational migration studies and related concepts enhanced my understanding of how migrants' social engagements and related learning experiences were not necessarily limited to one single society.

Learning trajectories of the migrants in voluntary organisations

The results showed how non-governmental organisations (NGOs), informal civic groups and transnational networks provided informal, social learning environments for many informants. Participation in various associations provided opportunities for the informants to learn the local ways of civic engagement, to explore their historical and socio-cultural heritage, and foster their agency in transnational domains. Several informants had participated in the activities of associations, such as sports clubs, religious organisations, trade unions and ethnic associations in the host country (Finland). Some had engaged in cross-border cooperation between Estonian and Finnish associations, and also a few in international, non-governmental activities. In Finland many associations in which the informants engaged had as their members a majority of the host country citizens. Participation in the shared activities of these groups enabled respondents to observe and reflect on the Finnish ways of conduct, and also compare these with their previous experiences in various social groups and communities in their country of origin. Participation in organisational life fostered the agency of the informants both in the new societal setting and also in transnational arenas. For example, an informant, here called Reet, had improved her self-confidence, professional skills and enlarged social capital by taking part in the activities of Finnish associations as well as in international ecumenical activities.

What do you think this associational engagement has given you?

First of all, assurance that although I'm an immigrant, I have a voice, and they listen to me, and [heed] my professional skills, and I have something to give /.. / it has taught me a lot about the world of associations both here and abroad that I see why associations are useful. In Finland, one couldn't tackle many issues without strong, old associations /.. / and in my own work, I have to be a strong superior and this associative sector has given

this strong competence /../ it also provides networks. All these are networks, and day by day, these become wider. (Reet, age group 30-39 years)

Participation in ethnic associations was considered meaningful for maintaining one's native language and being able to share experiences with others having similar roots. An interesting feature of the clubs for Estonians in Finland was that there were also native Finns taking part in the activities, namely Finns interested in Estonian culture. Consequently such clubs let both native Finns and Estonian speakers get acquainted with another linguistic group and different cultural practices, and provided local, border-crossing learning environments connecting both migrants and non-migrants.

There were a few informants with high levels of associational engagement by establishing new associations themselves, and participating in these as full members, continuously developing the practices within the organisations, exemplifying *insider trajectories* (Wenger, 1998) in such communities. For example, an informant here called Airi, who had worked as a shop assistant, had set up a local association for Estonians to widen her own social contacts as well as to foster her children's fluency in their native language. The members of this association, mostly Estonian-speaking mothers and children, formed an *ethnic community of practice* (cf. Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) which enabled them to foster their ethnic identities and engage in shared activities, such as informal meetings, play acting, and arranging festivities. Airi had also been one of the founding members of a multicultural organisation, which was open to all immigrants. The aim of this organisation was to provide a platform for meeting others with migrant backgrounds, and to promote the empowerment of its members. The shared activities and discussions provided opportunities for *brokering* (Wenger, 1998) across linguistic, ethnic and national demarcations.

Social practice theory has drawn attention to socio-historically developed divisions and frictions that are manifested and negotiated in local communities (Holland & Lave, 2009). The account by the informant Annikki reveals the latent ethnic tensions embedded in the activities of an Ingrian Finnish association. Annikki had grown up in a multilingual environment in which Estonian, Russian and Ingrian Finnish were spoken. Her attempt to engage with the activities of an Ingrian-Finnish association in Finland failed because she felt she did not share the same language, cultural habits, or life experiences as the other members of this club. Therefore, her learning trajectory can be characterized as an *outbound trajectory* (Wenger, 1998) leading out of the community due to failing to associate her interpretation of Ingrian Finnish identity and tradition with the shared practices of this group. One can also reflect to what extent power relations restricted her opportunities to fully engage in the shared activities of this group.

I joined an association for Ingrian Finns but then I realised that I'm so far apart from that association because I was brought up in Estonia and there [in the association for Ingrian Finns] the younger ones didn't speak Finnish at all. The wives and husbands of the offspring of Ingrian Finns spoke Finnish and even they spoke it so badly, and some of the elderly people spoke it and some didn't, and the others, I didn't understand them, and also the manners were rather Russian, and then I decided not to go there. It was not the Ingrian [Finnish], which my mother spoke to me. (Annikki, age group 50-59 years)

Only a few informants had actively engaged in religious or political organisations. The informants often underlined how religious activities were forbidden or strictly monitored in Estonia during the Soviet occupation. Therefore, religion as such, and religious associations had been remote for many interviewees. Although some had

joined religious organisations or taken part in religious ceremonies in Finland, their participation in such practices was often rather sporadic. Concerning local political associations, the informants with higher education who had actively participated in these in the new host country described how they lacked opportunities to engage fully in joint activities and that they were not treated as full members of these associations. They described how political associations had disregarded their professional knowledge and had highlighted their migrant background in the campaigns. Therefore the informants' engagement with political associations can be described as following a *peripheral trajectory* (Wenger, 1998) providing only a limited access to the practices of these groups. The position of politically active informants could be described as disempowering peripherality (Lave & Wenger, 1991), which diminished their opportunities for full engagement within these groups.

Transnational brokering through cross-border voluntary activities

A few informants took part in professional and political associations in Estonia. Regarding professional organisations, membership was useful for enlarging the professional networks of the informants, and also facilitating cross-border exchange of ideas particularly on business and scientific affairs. With respect to the political realm, membership had more a symbolic function. For example, an Estonian-speaking informant, Kert, explained how she had actively been engaged in civil defence organisations and patriotic students' associations while she was studying in Estonia, but she had maintained her membership due to a desire to maintain her national affiliation. Participation in these associations allowed her to cherish and promote nationalist ideas and foster her sense of being Estonian.

A few informants reported on present or past cross-border cooperation between Estonian and Finnish associations in the cultural, social and health sectors. The informants underlined the importance of these activities for their workplaces, and also for providing the first direct contacts with the Finns and the Finnish language, which later also facilitated their immigration to Finland. For example, an Estonian doctor explained how, thanks to non-governmental, cross-border cooperation with the Finns in the late 1980s and early 1990s, she was able to improve her language proficiency and obtain new, professional knowledge through the material cross-border transfers. Transnational cooperation provided opportunities for *boundary encounters* (Wenger, 1998), such as meetings of delegations, between migrants and non-migrants, which enabled cross-border flows of material, people and ideas to take place particularly after the regaining of Estonian –independence in 1991, also resembling the notion of *transnational social space* (Faist, 2000) characterised by such flows.

One of the informants, Silvi, had been a particularly active *transnational broker* (cf. Wenger, 1998) between Estonian and Finnish organisations and local communities. During the Soviet era in Estonia, the authorities had strictly curtailed the activities of organisations. Silvi explained how she had re-established voluntary activities and community development programmes in her former home village in Estonia with the assistance of Finnish associations, educational institutions, entrepreneurs and municipal authorities. Silvi had also cooperated with ethnic and religious minority groups in Estonia, and discussed the need for the reinterpretation of national history, mutual understanding and democratic ideas. Through such transnational cooperation one can identify the *flows of social and political remittances* (for example, Levitt, 2001;

Jiménez, 2009), i.e. social and political beliefs and practices being conveyed particularly from Finland to Estonia but also in the other direction.

Some respondents had taken part in transnational cooperation that was not limited to the Estonia-Finland space but also extended to other countries. These transnational communities and networks united Estonians living in different countries. For example, an informant here called Jaanis had engaged in cross-border cooperation with other Estonian migrant associations and groups located in different countries. Such transnational collaboration enabled the participants to share ideas about their activities and, more generally, about the integration policies of the host countries. Another informant, Kaarina, had taken part in the activities of an Internet community of handicraft enthusiasts. This community consisted mostly of Estonian-speaking women living in different countries. It enabled them to communicate in Estonian with other members sharing the same passion and also to socialize with others of the same national origin. The activities were not limited to net communication but also included charity projects in Estonia. This mostly *virtual community of practice* exemplifies different features of CoPs as described by Wenger (1998). *Mutual engagement* was related to their shared on-line activities and also jointly organised charity projects. Their *shared repertoire* included shared ways of displaying their products, shared concepts and projects, such as ‘Nominations for the Mother/Father of the Year’ in which they crocheted bed covers in the colors of the Estonian flag, and gave these to the nominees. *Joint enterprise* covered, for example, their net discussions and negotiations on forthcoming activities and targets. Through shared activities these participants could also foster their gender and national identities.

A couple of informants with higher education had engaged in cross-border activities aiming to influence political beliefs and decision-making through their professional activities. For example, they had written newspaper articles, updated blogs on societal issues, and lectured on political themes. The purpose of these activities had been to introduce new political perspectives, ideas, concepts and successful civic innovations mainly from the country of settlement to the country of origin. These endeavours can therefore be explained through the concept of *political remittances*, i.e., conveying political conceptions and practices from the country of immigration back to the country of emigration (also Jiménez, 2009). Such agency can also be described as an example of *transnational brokering* (cf. Wenger, 1998) in the civic realm: introducing beliefs and practices from one community to another across national borders. Concerning the media, these activities were, in fact, targeted at a wider audience, not only at one specific community of practice.

Migrants’ informal learning processes in a cross-border context

Non-governmental associations and informal civic groups had provided informal learning arenas for several respondents. Through their active engagement in these groups they had been able to learn the local ways of civic engagement, understand their own heritage, and foster their agency both in the new host society and in transnational arenas. In associations various cultural conceptions and traditions were negotiated and contested, and the informants had also been opposing and criticising prevailing practices. Therefore, as noted by several researchers (for example, Contu & Willmott, 2003; Holland & Lave, 2009), conflicts, disagreements and struggles are an integral part of the on-going development of social groups sharing practices. Cross-border cooperation between Finnish and Estonian associations had provided opportunities for

transnational brokering: sharing conceptions and practices regarding civic activities between different communities, across national borders. In addition, brokering also took place at local level: through multi-membership of different associations the informants had been able to convey ideas from one association to another. These *brokers* had facilitated the exchange of conceptions and practices across linguistic and cultural borders, and had followed *boundary trajectories* (Wenger, 1998).

In addition to engagement in associations, ties to host country citizens and to friends and relatives living in other countries provided opportunities for the respondents to share and adopt new conceptions and practices. Through these various cross-border contacts, contemporary societal issues related to Finland and Estonia was discussed and ideas questioned. This informal communication, often occurring in pairs (one-to-one) and sometimes in small groups, enabled informants to share ideas with others. Communication between friends was mostly limited to one-to-one conversations representing one form of *boundary encounters* (Wenger, 1998) between individuals belonging to different communities of practice; such encounters offer opportunities to exchange and adopt new practices and ideas. According to Wenger (1998), the advantage of such one-to-one contacts is that participants can be candid about their own communities and practices, although individuals cannot fully convey all aspects of their own practice without the presence of others and everyday activities.

Historical, socio-cultural and political struggles shape local practices and also the individuals participating in these (Holland & Lave, 2009). In this study, the informants compared Estonian, Russian and Finnish behaviour and values in light of their experiences in local communities. Differences in people's conduct were often associated with the historical development of Finland, Estonia and the former Soviet Union. The effects of the Soviet system and the rapid social change in Estonia after 1991 on people's ways of thinking and acting were discernible. In general, Finnish society was regarded as more mature and developed than Estonian society. It was moreover perceived that the institutional and historical developments in these societies had affected people's values and practices. Several informants underlined how Finns in general diligently followed the rules and laws, while in Estonia people considered whether the rule in itself was useful or whether one would be caught for breaking the law. Dishonesty and fraudulence were linked to the Soviet influences in Estonian society.

The informants reflected how experiences of living in two (or more) different societies and engaging in various social communities within these had been an enriching learning experience. Multi-membership of various groups had provided opportunities to observe and compare differences in behaviours and beliefs at both local and national levels. Yet the informants also highlighted that adjusting to 'living many lives simultaneously' in two societies required individuals to engage in self-reflection and carry out identity work. One needed to explore one's own roots and frame of reference, and to challenge previous assumptions. In order to integrate into the new environment, people had to make some adjustments to their conduct and perspectives. Yet adjusting one's behaviour according to the setting was a constant challenge.

In addition to voluntary organisations, work communities and families had also been significant learning environments for many respondents. At workplaces the informants had discussed and debated various social issues with their colleagues. Participation in a Finnish work community was considered important for fostering one's feeling of belonging to a Finnish community, and more broadly, to Finnish society as a full, respected member although a few informants reported having experienced discrimination at their workplaces because of their gender and/or ethnicity. Everyday

interaction within families involved on-going socio-cultural learning that had also affected the informants' ways of identification. Those informants in particular who were married to native Estonians had maintained a firm national, Estonian identity. Informants living with native Finns, connected their gradually transformed transnational identity with adopting and combining Finnish, Estonian or Russian beliefs, practices and mindsets in their everyday lives. Therefore informants' accounts of their identity development revealed how the processes of transnational, social learning were taking place in bi-national families. Transnational identity was moreover connected to the changing linguistic behaviours, such as speaking Estonian with a Finnish accent.

The on-going construction of identity through participating in the shared practices of social communities is an integral aspect of situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Identity development was also an essential part of the informants' informal learning processes in transnational social environments. Participation in different social groups and communities, such as families, work communities and associations, involved on-going identity reflection and construction. The majority of the respondents had maintained a strong, national identity. Many long-term residents in Finland as well as those who had bonding ties with Finns, particularly through marriage, manifested *transnational identity*, feeling Finnish-Estonian, Finnish-Russian or in-between these. Some informants had adopted *multicultural identities* as well as *regional, global and glocal identities* (see also Pries, 2013). In addition, there were a few reporting *ambiguous identity*, i.e. who were unable to explain their ethno-national identity and felt alienated from both societies. These informants belong to ethnic minorities in both societies and had experienced discrimination both in their local communities and in public spaces, which increased their sense of exclusion in different arenas. The informants' trajectories of identity construction were shaped by trans-local, historical forces, struggles and debates (also Holland & Lave, 2009) and by their experiences of participating in various social groups and the ways others perceived them in local communities. Particularly the language of communication and the ways of speaking were used to categorize people as insiders or outsiders of social communities.

Discussion

This study focused on exploring the experiences of migrants as non-traditional learners in the Estonia-Finland space. Compared to other migrant groups in Finland, Estonians in particular enjoy a privileged position. In relation to the attitudes of native Finns towards different immigrant communities, Estonians are favourably perceived by the majority of local citizens (Jaakkola, 2009). Therefore, this may also be reflected in the informants' interview accounts: there are not many reports of discrimination or experiences of exclusion. The fact that many informants were fluent in Finnish may also have facilitated their integration into the local communities. Consequently, one could examine and compare the informal learning experiences of different migrant groups both in this space but also in different transnational spaces. Such comparisons could reveal the different ways in which power relations and discrimination may affect the transnational learning opportunities of migrants in various settings. In addition, focusing exclusively on one community of practice might yield a more nuanced analysis of the social relations and interactions in the community.

For adult educators, it is useful to understand the life-worlds of migrants as non-traditional learners, their learning trajectories and the meaning of transnational ties in their everyday lives. Monkman (1999) has underlined that understanding the

transnational life-styles of migrants could support educational planning and practice to better satisfy the needs of learners with migrant backgrounds. Education professionals could reflect on how migrants' learning paths have been shaped by the various communities in which they have engaged and by their experiences of living in at least two different societal settings. Moreover they could draw on and utilise migrants' prior knowledge obtained in formal, non-formal and informal educational settings as well as their abilities to compare different societal and cultural environments.

Although migrant's integration paths have often been examined from the perspective of the receiving society, transnational migration studies (e.g. Faist, 2004; Portes, 2003; Vertovec, 2009) have argued that migrants can maintain emotional bonds to more than one society. The findings of this study also highlight the ways in which migrants construct identities through their multi-membership of various communities in transnational spaces. Yet sustained ties and attachment to the country of origin do not necessarily prevent individuals from integrating to the new host society. Migrants' integration into the country of immigration and enduring transnational linkages should not be seen as mutually exclusive nor binary opposites (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004).

Instead of applying intercultural learning perspectives, this study has combined ideas from the situated learning framework and from transnational migration studies. With this approach, I have endeavoured to provide a new way to explore cross-border learning encounters. When exploring multicultural environments, it is often difficult to avoid essentialist understanding of cultures, i.e. representing these as separate, static units determining human action, and portraying individuals as representatives of 'their cultures' (Dervin & Keihäs, 2013). The theoretical perspectives adopted in this study emphasise the need to understand the ways in which multi-membership and engagement in various social groups shape individuals' learning paths and on-going identity construction. For migrants, informal learning is simultaneously situated in diverse local learning communities but also shaped by the macro-level development of the societies in which they have lived and in which their lives are embedded.

Notes

¹ The project was funded by the European Commission, 7th Framework Programme for Research, see <http://www.uta.fi/projects/transnet/>

² The Ingrian Finns include Finnish, Estonian, and Russian speakers who have Finnish/Ingrian Finnish speaking ancestors. The immigration of Ingrian Finns to Finland was supported by the Finnish government in the 1990s and 2000s.

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Academic success of mature students in higher education: a Portuguese case study

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Abstract

The increasing number and diversity of non-traditional participants who are now entering Higher Education Institutions (HEI) highlights the relevance of questioning on mature students' academic success. Thus, the purpose of this study is to characterise mature students over 23 years old (MS23) of two Portuguese HEI, and understand their academic success. The study focuses on results obtained through a case study, based on quantitative and qualitative data: questionnaires and focus groups, respectively. We discuss the influence of different variables (such as: age, gender, area of study, schooling level at the entrance to the university, family monthly income) on MS23's academic success, and we also describe some obstacles they face and changes they perceive when attending HEI. Results seem to demonstrate a similar tendency between data gathered on both HEI. Some recommendations for HEI, based on the results, are presented in the final section of this article.

Keywords: academic success; higher education; lifelong learning; mature students

Introduction

The internationalisation, expansion and massification of Higher Education (HE), and concomitant heterogeneity of students' profiles at all levels of study are just some contemporary factors that challenge the HE mission. These tendencies and the European guidelines, embedded in the Bologna Process, demand from Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and individuals (students, teachers, managers, stakeholders and employers) to change the way they view the mission of HE, thus highlighting its social dimension (Görason, Maharajh, & Schmoch, 2009; Soeiro, 2009). Hence, it is essential to question the openness to diversity, the creation of new opportunities, and the focus on equity and on teaching and learning processes (Roberts, 2011). Since 2006, Portuguese HEI were provided with a new admission framework that allowed 'mature students aged 23 and above' (MS23) to access HE through a three-step evaluation process that recognises their prior formal, non-formal, informal learning and academic skills (Fragoso, Gonçalves, Ribeiro, Monteiro, Quintas, Bago, Fonseca & Santos, 2013).

The study here presented is part of a broader research project carried out by two Portuguese universities, aiming to characterise and to get a deeper understanding of the factors that influence the academic success of MS23 enrolled in those two HEI. As such, the following research questions are here analysed: 1) how do different sets of variables influence academic achievement of MS23? And 2) what are the obstacles and difficulties experienced by MS23, and the consequences of attending HE? Though this study was developed at specific Portuguese HEI, we envisage that the results and discussion will have a wider scope and address other national and international contexts' concerns.

Lifelong learning in higher education: intertwining the concepts

The agenda of lifelong learning (LLL), that emerged from earlier notions of lifelong education (European policies in the 1960s, UNESCO and OCDE discourses in the 1970s and European Documents in the 1990s), received in 1996 new visibility with the European Year of LLL defined by the European Commission (Fragoso & Guimarães, 2010; Nicoll & Olesen, 2013). Since then, LLL has evolved in the sense that educational policies should meet the needs of economic growth, which is particularly linked to training, the individual development and the promotion of partnerships and networks with diverse stakeholders (Fragoso & Guimarães, 2010). LLL is thus understood according, at least, to two different viewpoints: one considers that LLL includes in its 'essence' the instrumentalist and economic perspective. In this sense, LLL can be understood as education in general, i.e., vocational education and training, non-formal and informal learning that results in improvement of knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective (European Parliament and Council, 2006). The other viewpoint proposes to address the personal development, instead of what the labour and economic markets may gain from education. Thus, LLL can be assumed to be 'the development of human potential through a continuously supportive process which stimulates and empowers individuals to acquire all useful knowledge, values, skills' (Longworth & Davies, 1996, p. 22). These different perspectives on LLL seem to depend on policy-makers, and are transversal to all sectors of society. HEI are part of this process and have to be prepared for new demands and challenges and, therefore, should offer learning opportunities, services and research to support personal and professional development of all

individuals (Leuven Communiqué, 2009). Taking into account a viewpoint of LLL as stated by Longworth and Davies (1996), Portuguese HEI, as other European HEI (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015), established a network of academic pathways whereby students can use to (re-)enter HEI, to move between academic courses' subjects, or even between HEI within the Portuguese educational system.

Portugal widened the participation and access to education, namely to HE, however, is still far from attaining the ET2020 targets despite the implementation of tools such as the European and National Qualification Frameworks (as in 14 of 28 EU countries) and mechanisms to validate non-formal and informal learning (along with 10 other EU countries). Moreover, lifelong guidance policies are not yet fully implemented in Portugal at HE level (European Commission, 2015).

In Portugal (as in other 10 EU countries), the participation of adults in LLL are below European average (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015). As in France, UK, Sweden, Spain, and Ireland, Portugal developed a preparatory program for non-traditional HE candidates, MS23 (Fragoso et al., 2013) that is twofold: it provides alternative credentials to enter HE and, at the same time, it aims to ensure that non-traditional HE candidates possess the skills necessary to succeed in their learning goals. This opportunity offered by HEI, within LLL approach, led to the emergence of a new public at HEI: Mature Students (alias, MS23).

Mature students at a glance: reviewing some distinctive characteristics

According to the literature, mature students (MS) are named 'mature', because they share a particular set of inter-related characteristics. Generally, they dropped out school earlier, have been away from formal academic system for quite a while, and therefore often demonstrate a lack of full academic qualifications and no previous HE experience: 'students/learners who have passed the usual age associated with initial education at different International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) levels' (European Commission /EACEA/Eurydice, 2015). Additionally, the majority of MS comes from low economic and social groups in society, has several responsibilities and commitments at work and at home. They usually attend HE in part-time, due to factors like limited time to study, lack of proper opportunities provided by HEI in terms of diversity of classes' schedules, and the lack of flexibility of employers so that MS can attend HE. MS are often financially independent and, when compared with their younger colleagues, are more responsible, mature with defined goals (e.g., Chao, DeRocco, & Flynn, 2007; Crawford, 2004; Jarvis, 1995; Kasworm, 2003; Kelly, 2005; Rogers, 2002).

The key motives for MS to enrol into HEI are multifaceted and cannot be considered in isolation, they have different weights and relate to the context, background, and life situation of each student. MS generally have no major issues regarding motivation: they are ready to learn and want to be successful in reaching their goals (Crawford, 2004). Besides career issues which impel MS towards HE, other reasons of personal, emotional, social and cognitive nature may be involved in the decision. These may relate to life transitions or changes, because of external expectations or for escape purposes (Jarvis, 1995), the interest in a course's subject, and a desire to give a new direction to their lives and to continue their studies (Davies & Williams, 2001).

The number and diversity of MS in the Portuguese HEI experienced major changes since 2006 when the framework for MS23's access was implemented ('deleted for

anonymity', 2013). This new reality led to the emergence of some research studies, regarding, among others, the MS23's characteristics, their motivations to enrol HE, their particularities concerning the teaching and learning process, and therefore MS23's success (e.g. Ambrósio, Araújo e Sá & Simões, 2013; Batista, 2011; Correia & Mesquita, 2006; Field, Merrill & West, 2012; Fragoso et al., 2013; Oliveira, 2007).

Mature students' academic success

As observed above, the literature on MS focuses largely on the characteristics that distinguish them from the so-called 'traditional students', concerning their socio-economic origin, motivations, access and participation in HE (e.g., Burke, 2002; Schuetze & Slowey, 2000). Research seldom addresses the teaching and learning processes, gives suggestions and/or reflections on "(re)new(ed)" pedagogical methodologies and strategies to help MS to overcome their difficulties and to enhance their experiences in HE (Garratt, 2011; Kelly, 2005).

Within the Portuguese context reasons do not differ substantially from those described above (e.g., Correia & Mesquita, 2007; Oliveira, 2007). MS often have multiple commitments; they are required to manage time between work, study and family responsibilities. Lack of time is the major obstacle expressed for MS in HE, specially dissatisfaction with teachers who are unaware of their difficulties to meet deadlines and to achieve certain academic objectives (Correia & Sarmiento, 2004). Moreover, they experience stress in their social relations because they fear rejection by younger colleagues – a feeling that tends to fade with time, social exposure and integration (Fragoso et al., 2013).

The concept of academic success itself is complex and multifactorial and, thus, it does not represent the same thing to most individuals (students, teachers, stakeholders, researchers). To circumvent this difficulty, most studies choose to analyse academic success as student retention and/or as successful conclusion of studies within a specific period of time (Higher Education Academy, 2008), where success is reduced to rates. Moreover, there are multiple ways to measure academic success or retention (depending on the perspective adopted), according to specific institution's evaluation aims and policy. For example, retention may be measured as the proportion of an institution's intake which is enrolled in HE in the year following their first entry (National Access Office [NAO], 2007, p. 5), while academic success may be defined as the product of a set of results obtained by students during their time in academia (Tavares & Huet, 2001).

Thomas (2002) identified seven main factors that influence MS' success: 1) academic background, 2) academic experience, 3) expectations and institutional commitment, 4) academic social match, 5) income and employment, 6) family support and commitments, and 7) university support services. Additionally, Thomas and Quinn (2007) described scenarios where the degree of success relates to practices that lie within the institutions. Thus, we may regard HEI as responsible for creating opportunities that promote diversity and inclusion – concepts that should be integrated into their own mission. More recently, Wyatt (2011) presented some key measures towards the enhancement of MS' academic success: improving information about the campus and university practices; stimulating teachers' availability to understand MS' learning styles; stimulating the communication between MS and the academic community; promoting their integration; and understanding MS' external time constraints.

To conclude, we would like to bring two additional ideas. When talking about academic success, one may approach the issue through a positive and/or negative perspective – thus adopting a specific point of view according to particular type of reasons. Secondly, when approaching MS' academic success, it is impossible to understand the issue without a thorough knowledge of what MS' characteristics are (Ross-Gordon, 2003).

Methodology

Setting the scene: description of the research project and scope of this study

This paper is part of a broader research project 'Non-traditional students in Higher Education Institutions: searching solutions to improve academic success', steered to understand the situation of MS23 with data collected in two Portuguese universities through questionnaires, interviews and focus groups interviews (FGI) directed to students, teachers, and persons with management positions. In this study the authors present only data from MS23 interviews and FGI.

Method: case study

A case study with two-cases design (MS23 at two universities), but with a single-unit of analysis (the characterisation of MS23) (Yin, 2009) was followed because 1) the main research questions were supported in the “how”/”what” and “why” of a specific phenomenon, 2) a contemporary phenomenon was chosen to be researched, over which the investigators have little or no control, 3) it opened the possibility of using multiple sources of evidence (of qualitative and/or quantitative nature), giving high importance to participants' voices (data from questionnaires and FGI will be analysed), 4) and it allowed an analytic generalisation. As such, the conclusions and outputs may be important not only to HEI here represented, but also to other contexts – assuming thus, a perspective of instrumental case study (Stake, 2000).

Instruments and participants

Questionnaire surveys

Two independent questionnaires, applied in 2011 at universities U1 and U2 (referred in this way to assure the anonymity of each HEI), were developed with a similar outline and content to characterise MS23' populations from both HEI. They were organised in 6 sections: 1) socio-demographic and family background, 2) professional and educational pathway, 3) academic path at HE, 4) learning and teaching process at HE, 5) social relations, and 6) comments/suggestions. The questionnaires were made available online so the students could answer in their available moments, during a fixed period of time and applied to all MS23 of both HEI. From the U1 we had 164 respondents and for the U2 283 (respectively, 59.5 % and 77.5 % of the total MS23's population).

The variables selected were age, gender, area of study, schooling level at the entrance to the university, and family monthly income. In the context of this study academic success was measure as students' average grades, because the preferred multifaceted approach (Thomas & Quinn, 2007) was unattainable under our research conditions.

The areas of study were divided into three groups 1) education, arts, humanities and services (EAHS), 2) social sciences, trade, law, health and social protection (STLHS), and 3) science, mathematics and computer science, engineering, manufacturing and construction (MEMC). The schooling level that MS23 possessed when entering HE was obtained by asking in an open question and later coded into the following categories: students with completed secondary education, students with incomplete secondary education, and students with completed primary education. Monthly family income was also one of the dimensions considered that was ranked into 4 options: less than 1000€, 1000-1500€, 1501-2500€, and above 2500€.

Finally, the question formulated as a multiple-choice query ‘What are the main obstacles you feel during the teaching and learning process and also throughout the entire academic pathway?’ and which establishes a semantic relationship with the discussion carried out in FGI must be detailed. The respondents could select their answers from the following options: 1) ‘The bachelor/master degree does not match my expectations’; 2) ‘I have difficulties in understanding certain contents from some curricular units’; 3) ‘Due to professional issues/mismatch between professional and university schedules’; 4) ‘Due to financial difficulties’; 5) ‘Lack of motivation’; 6) ‘Lack of structural/material conditions (equipment, labs, and so on)’; and 7) ‘Lack of specific support that should be given to MS23’.

The validation of the questionnaire was assured by cumulatively (i) being designed taking into consideration recurrent topics that emerged from the international literature on the subject as fitting the questionnaire’s purposes, and (ii) being validated by experts in the area, namely the external consultant of the project and the coordinator of the project as well. Reliability is demonstrated by the fact that the data gathered in two distinctive Universities were not so different, as it will be explored in the next section. The disparity that exists in the results demonstrate that two HE institutions may have different culture, which may also determine different experiences and/or perceptions over a same topic. Nevertheless, homogeneity in the results is more recurrent as it will be highlighted.

Universities’ databases

In order to cross several types of information with questionnaires’ results we accessed the registries of both universities’ databases (Udb) from the academic years of 2006/07 to 2009/10. Information from 276 (U1) and 365 (U2) MS23 regarding variables such as gender, age, area of study and students’ grades were hence collected.

Focus groups

To ‘monitor’ the progress of MS23 at HE, three independent semi-structured FGI were carried out in each university during 2011. We had the participation of 3 to 8 MS23 (24 students in total), depending on their time availability to join in the FGI. These students volunteered to participate in the FGI. This may be an indicator of their motivation and interest in being actively involved in HE. Consequently, this may influence the results we may have when approaching FGI’ data: since the questionnaires were self-administered and FGI’ participants volunteered to be participate, differences in motivations may influence the results. To address MS23’ perspectives on the obstacles they face while attending HEI and the impact of HE in their lives, the following topics were explored: 1) main reasons to apply to HE, 2) expectations towards HE, 3) adaptation to HE, 4) pedagogical issues, 5) social relationships with teachers and other students, 6) obstacles perceived, 7) relations between HE and work, 8) consequences of attending HE, and 9) suggestions to improve their HE experiences.

Thus, FGI were carried out to get more understanding of a particular phenomenon. As such, since this research was being carried out at two HEI, the same template was used. This was an enriching way of achieving a grounded comprehension by exploring the topics identified in the previous paragraph. Those aspects emerged from the international literature in the field and the expert feedback of the project's external consultant and coordinator. We may assume the results from the qualitative approach may be transferable to other contexts or settings, due to the overarching method chosen – the case study – and the links the qualitative results have regarding the literature in the field.

Data analyses

Quantitative data: statistical analysis

Quantitative data gathered through questionnaires and Udb were analysed with SPSS version 18.0 (SPSS, Chicago, IL, USA) using the appropriate statistical tests (see Results' section for additional details): Chi-square test for independence (chi-square), Kruskal-Wallis H test (H), Spearman's rank order correlation (r_s). Two additional parametric tests were also used: the Independent T-test (t) and the One-way ANOVA (F) with Post-hoc comparisons by Bonferroni test. All variables were checked for compliance with applied tests and when required transformed using the Box-Cox Normality Plot Free Statistics software (Wessa, 2012). The significance level was set at $P=0.05$.

Qualitative data: content analysis

FGI's content analysis was carried out with support of NVivo8 software. This tool was important to organise the data, since we had long transcripts and many evidences to support each category and subcategory. It enabled us to visualise the tree of categories, to record the categorisation and make changes/ amendments in the categories' tree as well as in the process of content analysis. We have decided to follow semi-structured focus groups, since it was essential for us to follow certain dimensions and questions, but allowing diversity, flexibility and openness in the discussion. In fact, our major objective of engaging the participants in an in-depth reflection and discussion was fully accomplished. The use of a semi-structured template facilitated the semantic search for patterns, despite the huge amount of data to be systematised and conceptualised. The major challenge in the process of content analysis was to achieve semantic consistency and suitable subcategories, descriptions and indicators. Therefore, to achieve a categorisation that made sense, we passed through different phases in the content analysis' process in order to reach a coherent semantic pattern and organisation. Thus, an interactive and reflective process was followed, which was constituted by: analysing --> systematising --> reviewing --> analysing again --> systematising --> and trying again to reflect on the semantic organisation.

Results

The data here presented only characterizes the subset of mature students, referred to as MS23, hence no comparison is presented with their younger colleges, also called "traditional students".

To better read, understand and attribute meaning to the quantitative data gathered at U1 and U2 (through questionnaires and Udb), these results will be presented separately in the first sub-section. We will therefore look at the influence of different variables (age, gender, area of study, schooling level at the entrance to the university, and monthly

family income) on MS23's academic achievement (that is, for this study, grades). The second sub-section deals with the description of obstacles MS23 face and the consequences they experience because of attending HE. In this case, results gathered through a questionnaire open answer and FGI will be presented together in order to reveal common patterns observed in both HEI.

Influence of different variables on MS23' academic achievement

U1

At U1, the questionnaires' results indicate that almost half of MS23 (42.4 %) were already in the 3rd year of their degree, 24.1 % in the 2nd year, 20.3 % in the 1st year, and the remaining respondents (13.3 %) had completed their course. In addition, 47.6 % of MS23 were enrolled as part-time students and 81.4 % made use of the student-worker status - a legal framework to promote continuous education - which means they were working while pursuing a HE degree.

These students have diverse (formal) educational pathways before entering HE, from which three major profiles may be identified: 1) students who have completed secondary education (59.4 %), 2) students with incomplete secondary education (22.6 %), and 3) students who only completed primary school (10.3 %). Another parameter of interest for MS23's characterisation is the time span of the interruption in their formal education. We observed that 31.1 % returned to formal education (in this case, HE) after a period of 6-11 years, while 52.4 % indicated more than 11 years out from school.

Regarding MS23's academic achievement at HE (in terms of grades in a scale between 0 and 20), the responses to the questionnaires show that 6.5 % of MS23 failed to pass, 31.6 % achieved grades between 10-12, 54.8 % had grades between 13-15, and 7.1 % pass with distinction (grades above 16).

Considering the influence of certain variables on academic achievement, we observe that Spearman's rank order correlation to determine the relationship between age and the classifications MS23 achieved in the courses, shows a statistically significant positive correlation between these two variables [$r_s(8) = 0.201, P = 0.012$]. To explore complementary information from Udb, one-way ANOVA was conducted on average grades of four age groups: group 1, less than 29 years old; group 2, 30-39; group 3, 40-49; Group 4, 50 and above. There was a statistically significant difference for the four age groups in MS23' scores [$F(3, 272) = 9.04, p < 0.001$] with an effect size, calculated using *eta squared*, of 0.091 (Table 1).

Table 1 – Average grades of 4 age groups of MS23 obtained from the registry databases of the universities U1 and U2

Age group	U1			U2		
	n	Mean ± Std. Dev.		n	Mean ± Std. Dev.	
Group 1 (Less than 30)	114	12.21 ± 1.35	a	134	12.68 ± 1.25	a
Group 2 (30 to 39)	101	13.12 ± 1.32	b	130	13.12 ± 1.46	a
Group 3 (40 to 49)	52	12.80 ± 1.36	b	83	12.70 ± 1.40	a
Group 4 (50 and above)	9	12.96 ± 1.38	ab	18	12.82 ± 1.06	a
total	276			365		

Different letters within columns indicate significance at 0.05 levels (Bonferroni test).

We may conclude that younger MS23 achieved lower marks compared with older students - however, the small sample size for older MS23 requires some caution in interpreting this result.

Additionally, questionnaire responses indicate that gender had no significant effect on MS23' academic achievement [chi-square (3) = 3.171, $P = 0.366$]. Even though the analysis of data from Udb showed statistically significant differences [$t(273.9) = -2.483$, $p = 0.014$] in scores for male (12.5 ± 1.47) and female (12.9 ± 1.29), the magnitude of these differences explained by gender were very small (eta squared = 0.022).

When MS23 were grouped according to their area of study, we found a statistically significant association with academic achievements. The questionnaire data analysed with the Kruskal-Wallis test [$H(2) = 7.773$, $P = 0.021$] show that MS23 from the EAHS had best results, while those from the MEMC tended to achieve lower grades. This result is in agreement with the one-way ANOVA performed on data from Udb, exploring the impact of course's study area on MS23's levels of achievement for the same four groups [$F(2, 273) = 7.826$, $P < 0.001$] (Table 2). The area of study explains 5.4 % of observed variance, as shown by the effect size measured by eta squared.

Table 2 – Achievement of MS23, measured by the mean of academic grades in 3 area of study (for details see section 4.3.1) obtained from the registry databases of the universities U1 e U2.

Area group	U1			U2		
	n	Mean ± Std. Dev.		n	Mean ± Std. Dev.	
Group 1 (EAHS)	87	13.15 ± 1.34	a	85	13.04 ± 1.48	a
Group 2 (STLHS)	106	12.42 ± 1.33	b	195	12.95 ± 1.33	a
Group 3 (MEMC)	83	12.51 ± 1.43	b	85	12.43 ± 1.25	b
total	276			365		

Different letters within columns indicate significance at 0.05 levels (Bonferroni test).

The economic situation of the family is often said to have an influence in MS23's success. To observe this effect, we tested for a Spearman's rank between family income

and classifications obtained by MS23 which showed no statistically significant correlation [$r_s(8) = 0.146, P = 0.079$].

To determine if there is any relationship between the results obtained by the MS23 and the schooling level on their entrance to U1, we used Spearman's rank order test which demonstrated no statistically significant association between the two variables [$r_s(8) = 0.058, P = 0.483$]. This result was unexpected, as the descriptive analysis showed that MS23 entering university with a higher school level tended to achieve better results - an assumption, however, not statistically proven.

Finally, when asked if they had failed curricular units, 62 % of MS23 answered affirmatively, indicating difficulties of these students in HE. The answers also revealed that 52.4 % failed at six or more curricular units in the 1st year of their course. In the 2nd and 3rd years, failure rose to 63 % and 82 %, respectively.

U2

At U2 more than a third of the sampled students (36.4 %) were enrolled in the 2nd year of the course, 27.3 % at 3rd year, and only 18.2 % in the 1st year. The rest of the respondents (12.9 %) were students that had already completed their studies. Moreover, 28.8 % of the respondents were part-time students, whereas 67.7 % had the student-worker status.

Regarding MS23's previous educational pathways at entry in U2, three distinct profiles can be identified: 1) 46.4 % of MS23 had completed secondary school, 2) 38.8 % entered HE without completing the secondary education, and 3) 14.7 % had only done basic schooling. We have also noted that more than half of MS23 (51.9 %) have interrupted their formal educational path for more than 11 years, 26.7 % between 6-11 years, and the rest of the respondents (21.3 %) less than 6 years.

Regarding the classifications, the majority of respondents (51.9 %) reported average grades in the range of 13-15, while only 26.9 % from 10-12 and 7.1 % over 16. The remaining MS23 (14.1 %) failed their academic year.

Considering now the influence of different variables on academic achievement, responses to questionnaires indicate no statistically significance between age and the grades [$r_s(8) = 0.020, P = 0.742$] - information also corroborated by data from Udb (Table 1). Similarly to what was observed in U1, gender does not have a significant influence on MS23' academic achievement [$\chi^2(3) = 2.661, P = 0.447$].

With respect to the area of study, one can conclude that this variable has a significant effect on the classification of curricular units. Kruskal-test [$H(2) = 27.822, P < 0.001$] shows that the grades obtained vary according to the subject studied. As such, the respondents from EAHS show better performance than those from MEMC. Likewise the questionnaires also show that MS23 from STLHS are likely to achieve higher grades than respondents from other areas - those that include 'hard' disciplines such as Mathematics, Physics, Algebra, Engineering and Biochemistry. These results are in agreement with data from U2's Udb (Table 2).

A statistically significant effect was observed between the course study area in the average grades, but only 3 % (effect the size calculated using eta squared) of the observed variance is explained by the course area [$F(2, 362) = 5.602, p = 0.004$]. Likewise, MS23's family income had no statistically significance effect on average grades [$r_s(8) = 0.068, P = 0.268$] - the same was noticed in U1.

Furthermore, no significant correlation was observed between the effect of MS23's schooling level at the entrance of U2 and their academic achievement [$r_s(8) = -0.020, P = 0.740$] - another aspect similar to U1.

When we asked MS23 if they failed any curricular unit throughout the course, 67.6 % responded affirmatively, many with five or more curricular units to do. Moreover, 57.6 % of respondents failed to complete the 1st year, 53.0 % failed in the 2nd year and 75.6% in the 3rd year. The same tendency was observed for U1.

Obstacles faced by MS23 and consequences for attending HE

Questionnaires responses to a particular question about the obstacles faced by MS23 throughout their experience in HE show a similar pattern in both HEI: obstacles are centred mainly on incompatibilities between job requirements and academic schedules, followed by the perception of a lack of specific support from HEI directed to MS23, and the difficulty to understand the content of certain curricular units.

When comparing the effect of obstacles with MS23's age, we found that lack of motivation is particularly noticeable among younger students at both universities. In U1, students aged 30 to 49 said they had fewer difficulties in understanding new contents and thus acquiring new knowledge, when compared with other MS23. For this group of students, professional motives were extremely important to their lives. In U2, however, older MS23 (over 50 years old) reported having greater difficulty in understanding the content within some subjects, and often were of the opinion that the course they were in did not match their expectations.

FGI gave further information to help getting deeper understanding of some results obtained from the quantitative analysis. The majority of participants had a job, so they had stricter demands on how they managed their time. Classes had to fit working time and/or during the time pre-arranged by employers. MS23 usually had extremely long and filled days, so they studied later in the evening. Moreover, the distance between the university, housing and work, often hampered the arrival on time at the university. We may highlight the following comments:

To work 8 or 9 hours a day, to leave the University at 9 pm or later, and then arrive home extremely late... And then to think: I have to study, I have to work, so I must get up at 7.30 am... It is so complicated... (Student 1).

It is very difficult to manage my time: to do all university works, to study, to come to classes, to take care of my children... Everything! (Student 2).

Attending HE is seen by most of MS23 as an investment towards the future, notwithstanding the enormous personal financial effort. Thus, the family budget was another important dimension, even though many had a job (seldom well paid). Their job is critical to their lives and took precedence over classes and other university activities, often requiring adjustments to their professional schedules. However, MS23 indicated that, despite the difficulties they faced, they consider HE attendance to be *worth the effort*. Furthermore, there was an obvious reluctance for MS23 to use some of the special student-worker rights they are entitled for fear of potentially jeopardising their job in a precarious labour market:

Regarding the schedule at the university, it was extremely difficult to do a certain course, which I could not attend at all. Practical classes were during the morning and my employer did not allow me to come, not even once, during an entire semester... (Student 3).

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MS23 considered the number of tasks that are required excessive, complex and with short deadlines – even though most still preferred curricular units where a continuous type of assessment was followed:

The most complicated thing for me is to do group works, since I am a student and also a worker. So I have many difficulties in joining with my colleagues to do group works (Student 4).

Additionally, in some courses, MS23 did not get as much information on planned activities as their other colleagues - a situation attributed to a lack of sensitivity of teachers concerning their specific needs:

I do not spend all the time at the university, so there are things that teachers do not tell me. For example, sometimes some teachers pass in the hallway and say: 'that assignment you had to do, after all it is to be delivered not Sunday but only next week'. They do not send an e-mail... They only share that information with some students and others do not know (Student 5).

The so called "hard disciplines", such as Mathematics, Physics, Algebra, Engineering and Biochemistry, were noted as being particularly difficult to MS23 who were several years away from formal education before enrolling in HE. These students indicated they needed extra time to review primary and secondary school topics to keep up with these disciplines:

I had never had Physics. So I was trying to study at home... And in classes, I tried to follow the subject... But it was so difficult... (Student 6).

Finally, some positive consequences of attending HE were expressed by participants in the FGI. They emphasised being more aware of daily events, linking them with content learnt in the classroom, and started to pay more attention to details. Therefore, it may be stated that attending HE contributed to expanding their critical attitudes towards the context of daily life:

I believe that it is a great asset to work and study at the same time (Student 7).

In my case, when I became unemployed I started to doubt myself (...) But entering this University led me to create objectives (...) And then the fact of being able of achieving all my goals enhances my self-esteem, my self-confidence in my own abilities (Student 8).

Additionally, they mentioned that (most of) their employers acknowledged the efforts they were making to balance their commitment and they were an asset to the company. In general, MS23 seemed to feel more self-confident, indicating a higher level of self-esteem, and believed that the investment made in their qualifications gave them a good return. We cannot forget that some discrepancy between qualitative and quantitative data results may be a consequence of FGI' participants: they were intrinsically motivated to participate in the research project and this may have had some influence in the results. Additionally, when talking about FGI' results, we consider a small number, when compared to questionnaires' participants.

Key findings and discussion

From 2006, the progressive increase of MS23 in the classrooms awoke ‘silent’ reflections on the academic success of these students. Soon after this increase in diversity of students, this subject became a major concern for teachers/researchers and university management. This paper is part of this broader reflection towards finding strategies and/or recommendations to improve these students’ academic success. The universities involved in this research, although more or less geographically close, have populations of MS23 slightly different indicating some degree of regional and academic identity (Table 3).

Table 3 – Summary of MS23’ academic profiles at the entrance in both Universities (U1 and U2).

	U1	U2
School level at entrance		
Complete Secondary school	59.4 %	46.4 %
Incomplete Secondary school	22.6 %	38.8 %
Primary education	10.3 %	14.7 %
Years away from school	10	12 to 21
Dominant study area	Education, Art, Humanities and Services	Social Sciences
Regime		
Partial-time	47.6 %	28.8 %
Student-workers	81.4 %	67.7 %

Despite the differences listed in table 3, the analysis of questionnaires showed similar tendencies among MS23 of both universities, reinforcing the international consensus on the distinctive features of these participants, as we will see later in this section.

Before proceeding any further, we consider important to note a limitation of this study. For the sake of operational purposes, the concept of “academic success” is here understood as the academic performance in terms of average grades. Consequently, this may be considered a simplistic interpretation of academic success, previously explored in the theoretical section; hence, the results presented here must be interpreted in light of this limitation. Thus, to mitigate this difficulty, we used information from different sources: questionnaires and Udb (quantitative in nature), and FGI (qualitative). This approach is not without its pitfalls, for example, the design and method of administration of FGI, which is strongly based on social interactions, may influence responses and the type of data collected. Often it opens space not only for comments and discussion of the participants, but also for researchers to be biased towards the view of students eager to be involved in the life of HEI, as well as the reflections of researchers about their own role in the process. However, it is this social background that is one of the most positive aspects of FGI, as it stimulates interaction, discussion, self- and meta-reflection among (all) the participants – at different levels and also at different times. Due to ‘the dynamic nature of the process’ (Greenbaum, 2000, p. 13), there is a gain in the in-depth perspective on the various interrelated topics, and allows the understanding other data (quantitative). Another limitation of this study refers to the interpretation of differences observed between the two universities. For example, why only U1 showed a statistically significant difference on the correlation between age and grade? Available data only allows some degree speculation regarding those differences,

which may be attributed to MS23 regional specificities, some already reported on Table 3.

Therefore, the assumption that quantitative and qualitative data can be useful when intertwined to better understand a specific phenomenon goes in line with the triangulation in the case study (Yin, 2009): multiple sources of evidence benefits data interpretation, discussion, and even the formulation of theoretical assumptions. For example, data from Udb and the questionnaires indicate no significant impact of parameters such as schooling level at entrance in HEI, the time span away from formal education, and students' income in MS23 academic results. However, the information acquired from FGI, used to understand 'reality' more in-depth, suggests that older MS23 are less prepared and lack basic skills and knowledge to enrol in HE work, when compared with their younger colleagues - a phenomenon also observed by Howell (2001 as cited in Wyatt, 2011) and NAO (2007). These difficulties occur mainly during the 1st and 2nd semesters and, to some extent, are mitigated by MS23's personal resilience, life and professional experiences, which may explain why it escapes from being captured by data from Udb.

Baxter and Hatt (1999) noted MS are more likely to achieve better grades, due to higher motivation and effort, a feature also shared by MS23. FGI also revealed that social class origin is an important factor in MS23's participation in HE, limiting or expanding opportunities - results that are in line with other studies (e.g., Burke, 2002; Thomas, 2002).

In both universities, MS23 tended to avoid enrolling in courses where disciplines are perceived to be 'hard' and/or complex. They seemed to seek courses where they assume they will be able to obtain better grades, i.e., choosing mainly degrees in the areas of arts and social science. This tendency, also presented in NAO (2007), highlights the need for academic management better informing candidates about the degrees available in HEI, their characteristics, success rates and even employment tracks.

MS23 often enter HEIs as full-time students, though most have a job, whereas for MS of other European countries part-time work is the predominant option (Kasworm, 2003). Thus, returning to the crux of this study, one may ask: how can MS23 overcome the main obstacle identified herein to achieve HE success, i.e., balancing both full-time commitments? Perhaps most of them cannot, otherwise we would not see such a high level of failure in curricular units along their HE pathway. Professional and academic commitments are not the only factors that may justify their academic failure, this may also occur due to lack of information concerning the existence of other alternatives for attending HE.

The size and weakness of Portuguese economy precludes adjustments that enable MS23 to maintain normal levels of family, social, cultural and professional commitments during the transition into HE. Under normal circumstances these changes need time to stabilise, to recreate their adjusted-identity and adapt to their new "environment" or contexts. From these the most important are the adjustments related with work motives (Davies & Williams, 2001; Kasworm, 2003) and/or to a lesser extent the thirst for knowledge (Kasworm, 2008). However, these motivations are being 'challenged' by difficulties amplified in recent years by the deep economic recession in Portugal, as in other countries of Southern Europe. For instance, the fear of losing their jobs in so hard economic environment makes MS23 refrain of using legal study-facilitating opportunities, such as the worker-student status, so that their jobs are kept safe. In this context it is not surprising to find significant differences between MS23 and their European counterparts.

Returning to the subject of operationalizing the study of “academic success”, the future approach to this subject should include a broader and complex set of parameters instead of just simple quantification of grades. Further studies are needed (with a holistic approach) to enable a deeper understanding of the set of factors that ‘really’ influence (and how) the diversity of motivations and obstacles faced by MS23, and how success is perceived by these students. Future studies must include, among other aspects, the reasons behind the decision to return to school and the adjustments to the new circumstances of life as HE students. For example, we consider worth trying constructing conditions where empirical research could follow Tavares and Huet (2001) perspective, as it would certainly bring into light some new and important perceptions and results. However, and following Thomas’ (2002) reflections, such approach should include variables like ... ‘academic experience: attitudes of staff, teaching and learning and assessment’ and ‘social experience: friendship, mutual support and social networks’, among other factors, which relate directly to teacher and staff training.

Conclusions

The effect of HE in the daily life of MS23 can be described as ‘choice and a life-changing engagement’ (Kasworm, 2008, p. 27), as the above results and discussion also allow to conclude.

Generally, highly motivated and more focused, these students will trigger and experience transitions as a process of change and adjustment to new life circumstances with an increase in their self-esteem, self-confidence and productivity. HEI should therefore reflect, adjust, and implement several types of procedures and pedagogical strategies that create opportunities and enhance the success of MS23, thus contributing to the success of the academic institution in general. As a result of this study, HEI should engage in different and interacting levels:

- At the level of management and administrative services - particular emphasis should be put on understanding the limitations of professional MS23, for example, intervening and/or negotiating with employers in order to make it possible for employees to attend classes more regularly.
- At academic level - providing greater diversity of schedules, enabling MS23 to attend classes over a longer period of the day. Implementing and deepening teachers training, making them aware of the diversity of students’ profiles in their classes. Tutorship and peer-monitoring should be implemented/fostered, in order to overcome difficulties on some courses content, especially for 1st year students.
- At research level - fostering institutional data collection and research, essential for institutional transformation towards academic success (Yorke & Thomas, 2003).

Although there is no evidence from the results and analysis of questionnaires and FGI that explicitly mention this aspect, a major inference from this study is that a comprehensive discussion within Academia about the academic success of non-traditional students in general, how success is understood and measured, should be promoted.

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The implementation of the previous mentioned recommendations would probably have a small effect on HEI' budgets, while greatly contributing to MS23' success – and thus, ultimately, also on how HEI's role(s) is(are) perceived by society.

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Like a rolling stone: non-traditional spaces of adult education

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Once upon a time you dressed so fine
You threw the bums a dime in your prime, didn't you?

...

When you ain't got nothing, you got nothing to lose
You're invisible now, you got no secrets to conceal.

(Bob Dylan, Like a Rolling Stone)

Abstract

In this article, I try to explore the squeezing concept of adult education that provides a kind of identity to the field characterised by vagueness, diversity and the links to social justice. This diversity is also present when talking about the participants in the process. After presenting the concept of adult education, I explore three different experiences that I have referred to as non-traditional spaces of adult education. In the conclusion, I consider that the diversity, the production of knowledge, and the role of both teacher and learners are essential to define non-traditional spaces and non-traditional participants in adult education.

Keywords: adult education; diversity; knowledge; non-traditional students; participation

A personal introduction

In a novel based on Oxford—‘All Souls’—the Spanish writer Javier Marías talks about the custom of some academics—when they lack a topic of conversation—to ask the other: What is your field? Usually I have problems explaining my own field: Is adult education only limited to literacy? Is it addressed to old people? Is it training for a job?

Is it a second chance? Where adult education is taken place: in classrooms, in social movements, in factories, in communities?

Sometimes I miss the clarity of my oldest brother. In the past, when somebody asked him: What is your field? He could reply: I am a nuclear physicist and he could also add some examples of his work easily understandable: Three Mile Island, Chernobyl and Fukushima!

The problem in defining adult education is the fact that it is a very wide concept, replete with diversity and vagueness, but also committed to common people. Paraphrasing Bob Dylan it is possible to say that once upon a time an adult education tried to provide an answer to the needs and people's wishes. It was born and grew in the struggle of working class and common people to have a better life. It dressed fine for a while. For instance, in Spain it was a 'rising star' linking learning and community life (Lucio-Villegas, 2012) in the period from the beginning of the Constitutional State to the end of the 1980s. But now adult education is invisible. As Gelpi (2004) stated: 'Adult education in Europe seems to have progressively forgotten its history made of fighting, resistances, creativities and it is transforming into an instrument of power only used for personal development and in the logic of the market' (p. 153). I think that—as teachers of adult education, adult or community educators—we can ask ourselves, while taking into account the current situation: how do we feel? Perhaps our answer could be: Like a rolling stone lost in the darkness of Lifelong Learning policies and practices.

However, adult education is still alive in liberating practices that come from the grassroots. I will try to present some of these practices by introducing examples that can help us to define some non-traditional spaces: the (re)construction of the own history by people themselves, a school to encourage and train people to participate and become citizens, and the process of organising a museum. I will try to present spaces where adult education takes place and how these spaces can enable people—teachers and learners—to constantly (re)construct a liberating adult education for emancipation that confronts the homogenisation tendencies derived from the policies and practices of Lifelong Learning. In this way, I hope to contribute to the debate about who are non-traditional participants in adult education.

Before this, in the next section, I want to approach to a specific view of adult education.

Does adult education even exist?

Using a quotation from McCulloch, Jarvis (1986) tries to present the difficulties in defining adult education.

To extract adult education from its surrounding world—or at least differentiate adult education from its social environment—is as difficult as considering how many angels can dance on a pinhead. Is adult education a practice or a programme? A methodology or an organization? A *science* or a system? A process or a profession? Is adult education different from continuing education, vocational education, higher education? Does adult education even exist? (as cited in Jarvis, 1989, p. 23, italic type in the original)

Considering these difficulties in the definition of a vague and wide field, I have explored different explanations. Faure et al. (1986) defined adult education in a way nearest that of McCulloch's statement.

Adult education gives a response to multiple definitions; it replaces elementary education for a significant number of adults around the world; it is supplementary to elementary education for a lot of people holding an incomplete education; it enlarges the education of those by helping them face the new demands of their environment; it improves the education of those who hold a higher level of education; it makes up, at last, a way for an individual expression for everybody. (p. 289)

In a similar direction, Barbier (2009) talked on *formation des adultes*, and asked himself how it could be recognised? At the end, when he is looking for a definition, he decides to start from the activities that are considered *formation des adultes*: social work, issues related to social environment, communication skills, management and others related to working places, therapy or spiritual life.

Diversity and vagueness are also related to different landscapes. Rubenson and Elfert (2014) differentiate between a North American and a European approach. Plus, the inclusion of China and the Republic of Korea in this map introduces new perspectives. After analysing some of the published research, they conclude:

In reflecting further in the fragmentation of the map of the territory, it is important to observe first at all that the field of adult education as such has begun to be split into its components with the parts becoming fields of studies in of themselves. (Rubenson & Elfert, 2014, p. 34)

This diversity, and perhaps the vagueness in defining it, is an essential element in understanding adult education. The diversity is either in conceptual terms or geographical. In fact, as Lima and Guimarães (2011) state, Lifelong Learning policies and practices have broken the ‘heterogeneity that is the feature of adult education in many European countries’ (p. 105). On the other hand, it is important to stress that this diversity seems to be what guarantees an adult education committed to people and communities.

In this direction, one of the most powerful—in my opinion—attempts to conceptualise an adult education committed to people derives from the work done by UNESCO.

Adult education denotes the entire body of ongoing learning processes, formal or otherwise, whereby people regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, and improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction to meet their own needs and those of their society. Adult learning encompasses both formal and continuing education, non-formal learning and the spectrum of informal and incidental learning available in a multicultural learning society, where theory and practice—based approaches are recognised. (1997, p. 1)

Let us examine some findings derived from this definition. Firstly, we have the cultural dimension of adult education. On the other hand, there is the wide spectrum of activities that can be considered as it, and the link between personal development and community circumstances. An emergent issue here is the things that people learn and not how, when or where. Education becomes, in this process, as diverse, continuing and global (Guimarães, 2011).

Adult education could also be considered as characterised in terms of methodology and individuals involved in the process of teaching and learning. A specific methodology that merges people’s daily life and curricula. In a Freirean way, I can say that adult education is related to the possibility to read and say the world at the same

time that people read and say words. People become more aware of their own situation starting from generative words as a basis of adult education (Freire, 1970). It could also be said that it uses methodologies based on the experiences of people and focuses on the surrounding environment in a perspective close to Popular Education defined as: i) rooted in the real interest of ordinary people and in their struggles; ii) overtly political and critical of the status quo; iii) committed to social and political change; iv) the curriculum comes from the experiences of both people and communities; v) pedagogy is collective, stressing the importance of the group; and vi) it tries to forge links between education and social action (Crowther, Johnston, Martin, & Merrill, 2006).

Adult education has been traditionally associated with decolonising programmes, social, cultural and productive projects. As Gelpi (1990) noticed, there is a long way from 'adult education as a both social and political project to an adult education focused on professional training' (p. 152).

In this train of thought, Finger and Asún (2001) follow Ivan Illich considering that adult education is characterised by: i) learning as opposed to schooling; ii) conviviality as opposed to manipulation; iii) responsabilisation as opposed to deresponsibilisation; and iv) participation as opposed to control. The latter is, for me, an essential element because 'In adult education, knowledge is created *by* the people, not *for* the people' (Finger & Asún, 2001, p. 13, italic type in the original).

According to Quintana (1986), I define some characteristics of adult education that can also help in its delimitation: a) it is a participatory education. Teachers and learners are the main actors in the educational process that has to take place in a context that promotes participation; b) it is an active process starting from the curiosity and the search for responses by the participants; c) the educator has to take a specific role, such as animator, supporting every proposal coming from the group; d) adult education is a collective process with a powerful social dimension; e) it also is a process of social transformation, either in an individual or collective perspective; and f) it is an attempt for adult people to discover their surrounding environment.

To finish this section, I would like to define adult education based on five dimensions and confront this view with the hegemonic one represented by Lifelong Learning. These five dimensions are (Lucio-Villegas, 2015): Dialogue, Participation, A Collective Approach, Experience, Diversity, and Autonomy and Emancipation.

Dialogue is the core of Freire's philosophy and methodology. Dialogue guarantees communication and establishes education as a cooperative process characterised by social interactions between people in which new knowledge is created by joining and sharing the knowledge that people have. In the current dominant view of adult education, it has shifted to learning as an individual process out of the social relations that dialogue produces (Dale & Hyslop-Margison, 2012). In this time of Lifelong Learning, cooperation and social interactions are not needed and they have been substituted by skills and competences to compete for a job.

Adult education has to be a participatory education and potentiates participation. As Botkin, Elmandjara, and Malitza (1979) stated, 'Participation is something more than to formally share the decisions taken. It is an attitude characterised by cooperation, dialogue and empathy' (p. 35). But participation in terms of adult education also means to build the knowledge collectively, develop a reflection and a mutual educative experience. But, the evolution of the policies and practices of Lifelong Learning show us that the approaches focused on community life as well as the approaches focused on the development of an active citizenship have lost their way and now the messages have its focal point in both the labour market and employability.

A Collective approach denotes, among other things, a specific concept/notion of community. According to Kurantowicz (2008) community is based on three elements: 'local resources, participation and citizen's actions as well as on reflectivity (reflexivity) of a community' (p. 55). In the world of Lifelong Learning, community, as a specific place where people create relationships, is not important. The singularities of the communities have been substituted for a catalogue of 'good practices' that can be implemented in every place.

Experience is a strategic element to develop an adult education full of significance for people. Experience is, in some ways, the result—and the process—through which an individual organises knowledge and shares it with others. The experience, and the expression of it, is decisive in this case because it is an important element in defining the role of the adult. 'What mobilized the desire and the ability to learn was the simple fact that the teaching was a real part of the reality that is outside of the courses as such' (Olesen, 1989, p. 115). Lifelong Learning policies and practices are only concentrated in the contents to become a 'good' worker and, for that, experience is not important. Even the processes of recognition seem to be an attempt to domesticate people's life experience.

It is possible to undertake diversity in two different aspects. The first one is related to the diversity of activities and the places where they take place that could usually be denominated of adult education: universities, adult education schools, companies and enterprises, social movements, community centres, and other informal spaces, etc. However, the most important thing is related to people involved in adult education's activities. I will focus on diversity in the next section.

Autonomy and Emancipation. From his early works, Freire (1965, 1970) considered the educational process as one of liberation that would enable people to move away from a *Culture of Silence* and to have the experience and confidence to say their own word. To maintain the oppression—the Culture of Silence—the prevailing sectors in society maintain an educational system that Freire called banking education: deposits are made; rules are given; knowledge is memorised not built. All these kinds of things maintain people in a state of alienation. To turn this around, his proposal is for a liberating education that encourages people to say their own word / world. This means that people can express their dreams, desires, hopes, and find ways to act on these as I referred to above. This cannot be done in the narrow framework of Lifelong Learning and, for that, adult and community educators are looking for non-traditional spaces.

Non-traditional learners?

As I noted above, an element that could be useful in defining adult education is related to people participating. Apart from a very confusing age criteria—varying in different societies and cultures—it seems important to stress people's experiences either in educational terms—people usually come from a previous experience of schooling—or life experience. Adult education can help individuals to understand and reorganise their own experience to deal with and change their personal and community situation. On the other hand, it could be supposed that an adult is a mature person that looks to improve both their own sense and opinion in facing the things that happen around him or her. But most importantly, in this direction, is to understand that adult education is diverse thanks to their participants. They are: women, men, older people, migrants, workers, and youth.

It is also important to consider the needs and desires that people have in the moment/process of becoming a learner. Those that Pineda (1999) named as *falling in love* (*enamoramiento* in Spanish). They are individuals that tend to strive for new knowledge not only related to the labour market, but to leisure time, cultural creation and expression, etc.

A last important issue is related to the context where adult people come to adult education. This last element correlates with their experience either in school or in life. In the current policies and practices of Lifelong Learning it is sometimes taken for granted that the context is not important. This is the essence of the transfer of ‘good practices’.

The main point here is how to deal with diversity and what is the meaning of this diversity. Sometimes the problem is that when people talk about diversity the first idea is always related to multiculturalism. In this sense, Besalú (2010) states that the difficulties that teachers stressed on diversity are defined as: ‘Difficulties in communication, either with learners that have a very limited knowledge of the official languages, or their parents that join with a lack of knowledge, they have a very significant ignorance about the usual functioning of the things’ (p. 156). This is a very limited position, based on the language and practices such as punishment, reward and a kind of stereotype that teachers sometimes create regarding diversity. Since Besalú is talking about primary school, this approach to diversity could be presented as something that disturbs the homogeneity of the process of teaching and learning. As Gelpi (2004) stated:

Differences owing to the language, religion or ethnic are significant, but it is necessary to not forget other elements that make up other different types of diversity such as: age, sex, access to training and education, access to information, relationships with productive work (the identity of an unemployed person is not the same as the one of a worker with a job), access to medical care, the right to a salary, the environment where people live, the degree of freedom (the citizen being free to go somewhere or the prisoner), the disabled, etc. Such differences also indicate the complexity of including a person in a specific group, or the membership of an individual to a collection of shared diversities. (p. 57)

Diversity is related to the context, the culture, economic situation, etc., but it takes form in individuals that feel threatened about their own way of life. In fact, the same person could experience these threats in a different way in different moments of their life. In this sense, the Freirean concept of the Culture of Silence is very important. People tend to silence their own voice and this voice is manipulated by the dominant culture. experiences presented below have, amongst others, as one of their main characteristics, the challenge of the Culture of Silence represented today by Lifelong Learning.

Spaces of adult education

When researching the situation of education in the world at the end of the 1960s, Coombs (1978) discovered the existence of diverse educational practices. One of their main characteristics was that they took place outside of the schooling system. From here, he differentiated among formal, non-formal and informal education. According to Coombs, in this first report and in the second one (1978, 1985) the most surprising fact was the richness—either in economic or educational terms—of the experiences and initiatives that took place outside of school.

The most important contribution of Coombs' ideas on different spaces in education is very useful to the field of adult education. It is considered that adult education was born out of school—see Cook-Gumperz's (1988) contribution on literacy—and closely linked to people living in communities. I think that this last issue is very important when talking about different and diverse spaces in adult education. In a Freirean perspective (e.g., Freire, 1970) the things that people learn in the cultural circles coming from the daily life of individuals. This means—among other things—that school is not the exclusive place for conducting education. Adult education is characterised by organising educational processes based on the place where people live.

The main argument to distinguish from formal, non-formal or informal education is based on two dimensions (Trilla, 1985): intention and institution. Intention, according to Trilla (1985) means that the goals of the process are clearly defined as educational ones. Institution, also according to the same author, means that the institutions responsible for the process are clearly recognised as educational in social terms.

In short, Trilla (1985) differentiates between: i) formal education: educational institutions and clearly defined educational goals; ii) non-formal education: non-educational institutions recognised as such but with a clear definition of educational goals; and iii) informal education: non-educational institutions and not educational goals defined as such.

This scheme could be very useful but it could also be very confusing because some new agents of education are arising at this time. Some institutions, and not only educational ones, have an important role in defining educational goals. For instance, a factory can have educational budgets greater than some schools. Therefore, today it could be not considered only as an element in the production system. On the other hand, some experiences that occur at school cannot be only considered as formal education as referred to above.

After presenting three experiences, I will return to these matters in the conclusions.

Non-traditional spaces of adult education. Three cases

I have decided to present three different experiences that I think can be defined as non-traditional. I name as 'traditional' the practices of adult education that are linked to a curriculum previously defined; the contents come from legal regulations and not from the curiosity of the people participating. I also name as 'traditional' the practices of adult education focused on the transmission of contents and organised in a hierarchical way.

On the contrary, I consider the experiences briefly described below as non-traditional because they mainly reside outside of the schooling environment and they present us new approaches to adult education. From now, I will briefly describe the experiences and later on discuss them in the conclusions.

Our painful history

This experience is related to the collection of both individual and social stories related to the Civil War and the Dictatorship. It is an attempt to help people recover their own memories yet at the same time connect them with history.

Starting from these interests, a group of people emerged, deciding to actively engage in the labour of recovering the memory of their neighbourhood, its inhabitants, its neighbours, and themselves. Therefore, a research group was formed within an adult

education school, composed by eight persons and one coordinator. From this point, the work begins. First, the collection of information was done, which was crucially dependent on the collaboration of other students who were available to write their life histories and/or to be interviewed and video recorded. It was decided that the older people should be interviewed first, in order to go back to the historical period correspondent to the 2nd Republic, the Spanish Civil War and the years of the post-war and Dictatorship. It is important to highlight that some of the members of the Workshop were also participating as informants, which further enriched the experience.

30 life histories were recorded in video, and more than 20 were written. The work of analysis, systematisation and elaboration of such material was carried out by all the members of the Workshop, which demanded profound discussions about the centres of interest, which could be defined as *generative themes* (Freire, 1970) and serve as categories to organise the information that arises from the reports and life histories. Three centres of interest were defined for this historical period during the process of analysis: repression—during the Civil War and the Dictatorship—work and education. A second book—forthcoming—of collected histories is focus on the history of the neighbourhood and it is associated to the fight for the restitution of democracy: political parties, trade unions, civil rights, etc.

Parallel to the analysis of the information, a literary and historical contextualisation of the period studied was made from an extended bibliography. The members of the Workshop read such texts and used them to frame the content narrated by people who were interviewed in a broader context. This, among its diverse effects, gives the possibility to enormously enrich the analysis (including the assistance in the definition of the generative themes), and to definitely deepen the knowledge about the historical period at issue.

Finally, selection was made on the narratives that were estimated to be more opportune under the light of the new understanding. This was the starting point for the first book that would bring together all the collective research labour, its design, development and effective or material execution: *El olvido está lleno de memoria. Relatos e historias de vida* (*The oblivion is filled with memory. Tales and Life Histories*) and a namesake DVD containing a small documentary with some selected interviews. As this article is being written, the new book is in the works and the group has told and reflected on their work in other papers (e.g., Taller para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica y Social, 2009).

Democracy

In the context of the Participatory Budget experiment at the city of Seville a *Participatory and Citizenship School* was launched. The main goal here was to do democratic work both within and outside social movements. While Offe (1990) suggests that new social movements have a non-hierarchical structure, this did not seem to be empirically true. In fact, as Tsuchiya (2007) states, deriving from a research on social movements in Japan, ‘it is still essential for the core members of NPOs [sic] to constantly scrutinize their practice in a democratic light’ (p. 82). The major finding of this research conducted in 2003,

Show that the organizational and social context was overshadowing the democratic practices of the respondents’ organizations. Many of the respondents, as managers, felt the need or pressure to value organizational efficiency and consistency or to lead their organizations in that direction (Tsuchiya, 2007, p. 81).

For that, the Participatory and Citizenship School sought to change the structure of social movements. For instance, a prerequisite of taking part in these courses was that one could not have been a leader of a specific association. Apart from this, the main goal of the initiative was to teach people how to do a project. In short, the major goal was to empower them to research and transform their own community.

The Participatory and Citizenship School (Lucio-Villegas et al., 2009) during the time of the Participatory Budget experiment was planned and organised through 14 courses that amounted to 24 hours each, concentrated in two weeks from Monday to Thursday, usually in the evening. The courses focused on participation, conflicts, mediation skills, community analysis, and finally, the development of a community project. In short, every course was divided into four components: (1) definitions of community problems; (2) a reflection on democracy and citizenship both at a macro (community) and micro (association) level; (3) the development of a project; and (4) finally, a section on how to look for and manage resources. Courses took place in community centres located in different districts around the city. This became a very important issue: these public places were, at that time, privileged spaces in terms of public and popular participation. The average number of people who attended the courses was 12, with the prerequisite that participating students had not had previous roles in leading association groups. Another important aspect of each course was that the collective of participating associations was heterogeneous. For instance, a course included a flamenco association, a fishing club, an immigrant workers association, a neighbours association, and a cyclist group. An outcome of this process was that membership in these different groups created networks in each district. It is important to remember here that knowing people from other neighbourhoods and organisations is the ‘Indicator of Learning and Change’ with a higher average increase in Lerner and Schugurensky’s (2007) research on the Participatory Budget in Rosario, Argentina.

Finally, two courses were addressed to specific groups: a gypsy women’s association, and adults attending an adult education school.

Blowing in the river

First, the major goal of this project could be defined as such: to recover the people’s memories of their own territory. These memories should also enable young people to know and understand their roots and the history of the place. I can also add two more goals: a) To recover and systematise the experiences of people living in the village that are related to the River, and b) To elaborate teaching materials that enable both young people and adults at school to reflect on their shared experiences. In the specific case of young people, the project stresses the importance of linking teaching materials to the history of the place.

At present time, the research team is working on recovering and systematising the experience by doing non-structured interviews. The criterion to select people to interview has been related to age: the older people that can give a framework of the history, changes and situation of the River in the last 50 years. A second criterion is related to interviewing people working—or who have worked—in crafts and trades linked to the River such as fishermen, sailors, potters, shipbuilders, etc. At present time, we have 9 interviews at an average of 50 minutes each. Some interviews were taped in both audio and video while others only in audio. There is not a balance in gender terms and this could be considered an important matter. In a previous research on fishing places, I have stressed the important role of the women in fishing villages (Lucio-Villegas, 2006).

The research team is composed of people coming from diverse backgrounds: retired adult education teachers, civil servants working in the City Hall, people coming from Social Movements, from the university or teachers and students from the adult education school.

The diversity of people holding the research team is, at the same time, a richness and a disadvantage. Some branches have derived from the original project and some troubles have appeared during the first year of the research. We have dealt with these problems thanks to a very slow process of dialogue and by a participatory approach.

At present time, the research project is focused on two different issues. On the one hand, interviews are being analysed in a preliminary way to systematise some categories that allow us to classify not only the interviews but also to organise other diverse materials such as pictures, artefacts, etc. These categories are related to the fact that the river is considered as both a source of richness and, at the same time, a danger; the craft is a familiar issue passed from fathers to sons; or the close relationships between industrialisation, emigration and the loss of crafts. Additionally, an exposition on the crafts associated with the River, including both pictures and objects, is being prepared to 2016.

If I consider this experience as one related to adult education in non-traditional spaces it is because its main goal are based on elaborate learning processes addressed to adult education students in adult education schools, but also addressed to people committed in different associations in the village. Finally, it is non-traditional because ‘teachers’ are the inhabitants of the village that, in some cases, are at the same time ‘learners.’

Conclusions

Why the experiences described above can be considered as non-traditional spaces in adult education? What are its contributions to define non-traditional participants in adult education?

My first answer to this question is related to the hegemonic view of adult education. This hegemonic view is today shaped for the policies and practices of Lifelong Learning. They are based on promote learning capable to dispatch diplomas to maintain people ready for employability. The target for Lifelong Learning is the producer and consumer, not the citizen, not the individual living in communities. Plus, the contents that it wants to transmit are related to the acquisition of some skills and competences defined in advance to the educational processes.

In the experiences described, the major goal is people’s emancipation. In the first case, people are encouraged to know about their painful history—that is a common history in the country—and transmit it to new generations. It is not only to reflect about their own experiences but also to create new learning experiences (Olesen, 1989).

Participation, citizenship and democracy are something more than elements to maintain social cohesion that enable the power to maintain specific social relations (Martin, 2003). As the participatory budget demonstrates, it is possible to expand democracy starting from social movements. But participatory democracy also means that individuals have to have some skills to understand the rules and the process of participation (Lerner & Schugurensky, 2007; Lucio-Villegas et al., 2009; Santos, 2003). Understanding these rules and participating in the making of the city is an emancipatory process that challenges the established system and builds really useful knowledge based on different social relations.

Lifelong Learning policies and practices are closely linked to Globalisation processes. The idea of ‘good practices’ (Lima & Guimarães, 2011) is based on the denial of local specificities in different territories and societies. The third case presented is focused on the idea of recovering the memories of the river linked with a specific cultural and productive settlement that is adequate to the resources and needs of people living in its environment and it shapes their cultural identity. It is not based on the exigencies of the global economy.

My second conclusion is related to the places where these experiences took—or are taking—place. It could be surprising that I consider as non-traditional an experience that resides in an adult education school. As I affirmed above the scheme based on intention and institution could be simplistic and not represent the complexity of some experiences.

The first example described above takes place in an adult education school and it could be expected to define its goals as educational too. In fact, some teaching materials were produced to explain the quotidian people’s life in the time of the Dictatorship, and research about the whole Spanish history was undertaken in the process. For me it is a non-traditional space because it challenges the way to build and transmit knowledge. In a traditional view of the school, knowledge is transmitted starting from the contents that the learners—adults in this case—have to learn. But in this case the construction of the knowledge is a collective process that comes, mainly, from outside the classroom and the school, and it is created and developed in the margins of the classroom and the school. Finally, it is a knowledge that challenges the dominant knowledge. As Santos (2009), when talking about the ecology of knowledge, states:

The ecology of knowledge does not perceive knowledge in abstract, but as practices of knowledge that are made possible or prevented by specific actions in the real world... life experiences of the oppressed are intelligible to them for an epistemology of the consequences. In their world [the world of the oppressed] consequences always appear before causes. (pp. 50–51)

The other two cases can be analysed in a similar way: the edification of a more powerful democracy inside social movements or the preservation/reconstruction of community identities also mean to build alternative knowledge. The major element here is that knowledge is collectively created—and for that, it is non-traditional thinking in terms of schooling system. As Gaventa and Cornwall (2001) state:

The emphasis is more upon the ways in which production of knowledge shapes consciousness of the agenda in first place, and participation in knowledge production becomes a method for building greater awareness and more authentic self-consciousness of one’s issues and capacities for action. (p. 71)

My third conclusion is related to the role of the educator in these kinds of experiences. In the scope of Lifelong Learning it is possible to find the educator’s role defined as mediator, facilitator or somebody that encourage the adults to take part in the process of learning.

The future role of guidance and counselling professionals could be described as ‘brokerage’. With the client’s interests in the forefront, the ‘guidance broker’ is able to call on and tailor a wide range of information in order to help decide on the best course of action for the future. (Commission of the European Communities [CEC], 2000, p. 16)

In the Freirean approach the educator is somebody that works alongside people in a dual process of teaching and learning. As Stenhouse (1984) stated:

From this perspective, teachers' development implies that teachers define their profession, carrying out a personal assessment of situations and how these can be improved. Consequently, [teachers] do not face problems in generalising beyond their experience. In this context, theory is simply a systematic structuring of the understanding of his own work. (p. 211)

In the non-traditional spaces that I have presented, the role of the educator seems to be very diffused. Only in the case of the Participatory and Citizenship School was there an educator and a group of learners in a more traditional way, but also working in a Freirean approach. In the other two cases it is difficult to define an educator as such. In the first case, we can consider that each person in the group that tells, recovers and/or organises the histories is an educator. The teaching materials published—two books, a DVD and some other papers—are a collective work, and the concept of memories is, in fact, collective.

Finally, in the case of the river I do not consider there to be an educator. The work was undertaken for a very diverse group of people that, in this case too, can be considered as a kind of collective educator.

In short, I think that these non-traditional spaces of adult education are characterised by the breaking of some borders. In first place, the frontier between knowledge, which is only useful for attaining a diploma, compared to a knowledge coming from the people's desire and curiosity to learn something really useful to their life. Second, these non-traditional spaces are based on the collective production of knowledge. There is no border between the producer and the owner of the knowledge. The last breach is, in my opinion, related to the educator's role, which obliges us to rethink our own role.

As Williams (1961/1993) stated, when addressed to WEA tutors, 'It has been a job, but always, as for most tutors, it has been more than a job' (p. 222). Is in this sense that I think that we have to rethink the role of the educator and consider, paraphrasing Williams (1961/1993) that

The W.E.A [the liberating practices of adult education] represents a vital tradition which we are always in danger of losing and which we can never afford to lose. The organisation of social justice and the institutions of democracy are worth working for, in the society as a whole. (p. 223)

Finally, my last conclusion tries to provide an answer to the question: what could be the contributions of this article to define non-traditional participants in adult education? I have studied participation rates in adult education in Spain (Lucio-Villegas, 2012). One of the conclusions of this research was that participation rates were very low—at the moment of publishing the paper but also now. The change that occurred in 2010 is more related to the way of holding people accountable, than to the people's interest in taking part in adult education activities. Why are people not interested in taking part in adult education? The answer to this question is, from my point of view, an answer to the previous one.

Adult education today is only focused on the development of skills and competences addressed to the labour market; this is the seal that policies and practices of Lifelong Learning want to mark in adult education. But,

Out of the narrow walls of the school we see a new hope rising. Learners, in a true Freirean approach, are organising for the return of the older practice of adult education that is appropriate for their needs and wishes. (Engesbak, Tønseth, Fragoso, & Lucio-Villegas, 2010, p. 631)

At the end of the day, it is possible to say that the foundations for organising learning processes with adults lie in the curiosity that derives from the surrounding environment as Freire said (e.g., Freire, 1965, 1970). This curiosity is also related to the possibility to create knowledge that enables people to understand and transform their daily life together with others, as it is one of the basis of Participatory Research (Fals-Borda, 1986; Hall, 2001).

In the cases described above it is possible to find individuals that, joined with others, are looking to find creative responses to their curiosity and desire to learn. As Gelpi (2004) stated: ‘Adult education is made hierarchical and, related to production, there are adults without any right to formal education. Fortunately, these adults, non-integrated, hold creative responses and look for a self-education by their own resources’ (p. 147). Unfortunately, in this age of Lifelong Learning, the ancient search for the truth has transformed the searchers in non-traditional participants in educational processes.

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Examining work-education intersections: the production of learning reals in and through practice

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Abstract

Working within an assemblage analytic, this paper examines work – education intersections using the notion of learning reals. The learning real examined is learning as mastery and skills development. The concepts of embodiment and performativity guide the exploration. The paper draws on interview and observational data collected during a three year research project exploring the everyday learning (of employees) in a post-secondary education institution in Australia. The project was an industry-university collaboration between a group of professional developers from the organisation and a group of workplace learning academics. The assemblages making up learning as mastery are traced through examining the enactment of this real by a group of trade teachers, one of the workgroups participating in the project. I propose that this learning real was produced and made durable in and through the practices of the trade teachers. Furthermore, the ongoing performing of mastery produced particular effects, including the separation of theory and practice in the trade school. The notion of learning reals enables an exploration of the way particular ways of conceiving learning are made durable in particular workplaces as well as opening up the space to examine the partial connections between workplaces and educational institutions.

Keywords: learning reals; work practices; assemblages; work-education intersections

Introduction

The organisation of education (and learning) has arguably always been a matter of concern. However, now that knowledge production is understood as no longer residing only within the academy (e.g. Garrick & Rhodes, 2000; Gibbons et al., 1994; Nerland, 2012), now that spaces other than educational institutions have been identified as sites of learning (e.g. Argyris & Schön, 1978; Gherardi, 2006; Lave & Wenger, 1991), now that learning is ‘lifelong’ and no longer confined to childhood and early adulthood (Andreas Fejes & Nicoll, 2008; Field, 2006; Jackson, 2013), and now that practice is

increasingly used as a lens for examining learning at work (e.g. Gherardi, 2000; Green, 2009; Hager, Lee, & Reich, 2012; Wenger, 1998), this matter of concern seems ever more pressing. Yet, as Fenwick (2010, p. 80) has pointed out, learning tends to be understood as ‘a single object, self-evident and mutually understood’. In other words, what learning *is*, is generally taken as a matter of fact.

Taking up Latour’s call to get closer to ‘matters of fact’ rather than moving away from them (2004, p. 246), this paper examines assemblages that work to produce and maintain particular learning reals (Fenwick, 2010; Fenwick & Edwards, 2011). This is connected with a broader concern with who and what are able to be present in research accounts of workplace learning, the performative practices of both researched and researchers, and the politics of learning at work (e.g. Andreas Fejes & Nicoll, 2008; Fenwick & Edwards, 2013). Rather than learning being singular, it may be multiple, take different forms and be ‘made up’ from both human and non-human connections.

The notion of multiple learning reals links with Mol’s concept of ontological politics (1999). Ontological politics enables a shift beyond thinking of multiplicities as multiple perspectives on a single object to the more provocative concept of multiple reals, which Mol argues are produced through the enactment of different practices. Mol discusses the production of different reals in relation to medicine and health practices, and Fenwick (2010) has suggested this may be a fruitful concept for examining the heterogeneous field of workplace learning. The notion of ontological politics enables how learning is ‘made up’ to be examined, rather than assuming learning always takes the same form. What counts as learning might be different depending on how it is enacted (or performed) in and through different practices.

The learning real examined in this paper is learning as skills development and mastery. This is a commonly held conception of learning at work and workplace learning is frequently represented in this way (Harman, 2014; Mulcahy, 2012). For example, this view of learning is expressed in a community of practice perspective, whereby learning is understood as the movement from peripheral to full participation in a community of shared practice and transition from novice to master (e.g. Wenger, 1998). While this view of learning has received critique (e.g. Gee, Hull, & Lankshear, 1996; Hughes, Jewson, & Unwin, 2007), it has become a popular model for theorising learning at work (e.g. Jawitz, 2007; Köpsén, 2014; Mittendorff, Geijssels, Hoeve, de Laat, & Nieuwenhuis, 2006).

The exploration of how learning is ‘made up’ as mastery and skills development is an ambitious project, and well beyond the scope of a single paper, as arguably this particular learning reality is enacted in multiple sites, including HE, FE and other workplaces. And indeed, that is the point. That is, the magnitude of the assemblage and the apparent durability of the connections is what makes this a particularly powerful way for knowing and organising learning. However, rather than being overwhelmed by the scale, an attempt is made in this paper to begin tracing a learning as mastery real. This learning real is understood as the assemblage of ‘people, techniques, texts, architectural arrangements and natural phenomena’ (Law, 2004, p. 56) that work to bring into effect ‘mastery’ as a prevailing mode of experience in particular workplaces.

In the first part of the paper, an overview of and justification for a sociomaterial approach for exploring learning at work is provided and the concepts of embodiment and performativity are introduced. Next, I turn to Stengers (2008) and discuss her contribution to researching workplace practices. I then introduce the Workplace Learning project, a research site for the exploration of the everyday learning of various occupational groups working in a post-compulsory educational institution. An analysis

of interview and observational data from the project is undertaken, to examine how a learning as mastery real was ‘made up’ in and through workplace practices. The effects of this way of knowing and ordering the world are also explored. Finally, the possibilities the approach opens up for examining work and education intersections, as well as for researching practice, are discussed.

Sociomaterial accounts of learning at work

The conceptual and analytic framework used in this paper draws on and contributes to an emerging body of literature providing sociomaterial accounts of learning at work (see Fenwick & Edwards, 2011, 2013; Fenwick, Nerland, & Jensen, 2012). The sociomaterial literature goes beyond a focus on the social (and a privileging of the human) by drawing attention to both the *social* and *material* relations of practice. This links with a renewed emphasis on materiality in the social sciences and provides a way of moving beyond a Cartesian cogito/material dualism. Coole and Frost (2010) argue that in the prevailing Cartesian view, only the *cogito* is understood as having agency, matter is necessarily conceived as passive.

Many theories of learning tend to take the centred subject of humanism as pre-given and the starting point for theorising learning (Harman, 2008). However, a focus on materiality ‘helps to avoid putting human actors and human meaning at the centre of practice’ (Fenwick et al., 2012, p. 6). Instead, the focus shifts to the ways ‘knowledge, knowers and known (representations, subjects and objects) emerge together with/in activity’ (Fenwick et al., 2012, p. 7).

This paper follows in close conversation with the work of Mulcahy (e.g. 2007; 2011, 2012) who has employed an assemblage analytic to examine the professional learning of teachers. Through tracing the production of teacher learning in two different spaces she concluded that: ‘What teacher professional learning is depends on how participants in it (persons, texts, technologies and bodies) performatively accomplish it as a practice’ (p. 134). The existence of multiple learning reals leads her to argue that: ‘we need different versions of teacher learning and that policy around this practice could reflect this ‘versioning’ – not mandate any one version’ (p. 134). Mulcahy’s work directs attention to the politics of learning and who and what are visible in particular accounts. She argues for a move from best practice, the approach typically driving educational policy and the professional development of teachers (Malcolm & Zukas, 2001), to a recognition of multiple practices.

Sociomaterial accounts enable a very different view of learners and learning and raise difficult questions for researchers of learning in and through practice as they draw attention to notions of embodiment and performativity. Embodiment is understood here as the ongoing realisation of subjectivity in and through practice (McNay, 2008), and performativity as the repeated performances in and through practices whereby particular reals are produced (Butler, 1999; Lloyd, 2005). If we start from the position that knowledge, knowers and known co-emerge within practice, knowing can no longer be understood as separable from practice, thus opening to question the objective, researcher-knower.

How then might we researchers approach practice without assuming the position of ‘knower’? It is here, Stengers (2008, p. 54) cautions, that we (researchers) need to act with care: ‘are we not insulting all practitioners with the kind of questions which we address to them, and which imply the claim that we know how to define a practice?’.

Furthermore: ‘...that to diagnose alienation, or identify actions as hidden resistance or subversive counter-strategies, when the people concerned do not characterize their situation in these terms, is poor, and also dangerous crafts’ (p. 53). She reminds us to consider:

Who in our modern milieu would profit from practitioners accepting an objective, demystifying interpretation of their practices? Who profits from the kind of vulnerability that defining such interpretations as normal and legitimate both exploits and induces? (p. 54)

So how then might we researchers of learning in and through practice direct attention to the enmeshing of workplace practices, knowledges, learning and relations of power? Stengers’ answer: in ways that provide the researched (both human and non human) with the opportunity to speak back. This may set alarm bells ringing for poststructuralists concerned with the structuring work performed by discourse. However, this is not a naive approach that slips back into a human-centred understanding of subjectivity and agency. Rather, it is an approach that foregrounds the realisation of subjectivity in and through practice and hence the materiality of subjectivity. Following Stengers (2011), Latour (2005, 2013) and educational researchers working within an assemblage analytic (e.g. Mulcahy, 2012; Sorensen, 2013), I propose that this is an approach that contributes to more democratic representations of learning in and through practice in terms of who and what are able to be present.

Stengers (2008) proposes that the researcher remove themselves from the position of ‘knower’, to a position of being open to connection (and other ways of being). While Stengers’ focus is on the practices of scientists, the questions she asks provide a useful guide for the study of practitioners more generally: ‘what situates them, what ‘forces’ them to think and feel and hesitate in a way that marks them as belonging to *this* practice, experimental science?’ (p. 47). In other words, what matters? She proposes a focus on subjectivity producing events and ‘the coming into existence of something that has got the power to produce agreement among competent colleagues...’(p. 47). The event is the site for connection and the production of subjective experience.

In summary, exploring the realisation of subjectivity in and through practice, is a way we (researchers) might approach practice without falling back into accounts that take the centred subject of humanism as pre-given. It is also an approach that enables the researcher, amongst other people and things, to be present in accounts of learning at work.

The workplace learning project

The paper draws on interview and observational data collected during a three year research council funded project exploring everyday learning (of employees) in a post-secondary education institution in Australia. The project was an industry-university collaboration between a large public-sector organisation, named PSE in this paper, and a metropolitan university, referred to as City University. The research team comprised workplace learning academics from a Faculty of Education and a representative from the professional development unit at PSE. We worked with four employee work groups during the project: a group of senior managers, a group of trade teachers, a group of business teachers and a group of administrators. The workgroups were selected in terms

of the variation they contributed to the research design in the areas of: workgroup occupation, location of college (although all were from a metropolitan area), and levels in the organisational hierarchy. An additional dimension was provided in terms of relations of power as the trade teachers were under the jurisdiction of the senior manager's workgroup at a particular college.

The project ran between 2001 and 2004 and while some time has elapsed since the collection of the data, the analytic approach illustrated in this paper for exploring the realisation of subjectivity in and through practice remains topical (Fenwick, 2010; Fenwick & Edwards, 2013; Fenwick et al., 2012). The project provided a site for the practices of various workgroups, including the practices of the research group, to intersect. Furthermore, these intersections were made possible through broader contextual factors. For example, our encounter with the trade teachers (and other groups participating in the project) was enabled through a government funded industry-university partnership, part of a reconfigured higher education assemblage working to produce new modes of academic/researcher subjectivity, including academics as knowledge partners and professional developers (Harman, 2014; Nicoll & Fejes, 2011).

The project was conducted in two stages. In Stage 1, interviews exploring the challenges and changes of work were conducted with individual members of the participating workgroups. The findings from Stage 1 were discussed with the participating groups in feedback sessions where a learning theme was developed for further exploration with the workgroups during Stage 2. The interviews and meetings were recorded and transcribed. In this sense, the methods of the project can be understood as following a conventional qualitative research approach where interview data is collected, analysed and then used to produce knowledge (and 'the truth') about workplace learning. However, rather than employing a representationalist approach in the analysis in this paper, where words are understood as simply reflecting reality, the focus is on the performative practices of the trade teachers (and at times the researchers) and the reals produced in and through practice.

Following Stengers (2008, p. 46), the analysis explores the 'subjective attachments that situate us' in particular practices. Questions guiding the analysis include: Who and what did the trade teachers connect with at previous worksites? Who and what did they connect with at PSE? What modes of subjectivity were produced in the connections of practice? What did these modes of subjectivity make possible and what did they exclude? What happened when the trade teachers and the researchers connected? Did the connection demand possibility or surrender?

While the guiding questions open up ways of exploring the human and non-human relations associated with practice, the analysis is still quite anthropocentric. This is largely the result of the nature of the data collected during the Workplace Learning project, that is, transcripts of interview data where the trade teachers spoke about their learning at work. And this is yet a further illustration of sociomateriality. The research tools used by the researchers were not neutral, rather they worked to cast a particular grid of visibility over the way learning and learners might be 'known'. With this in mind, I point to potentially fruitful areas of ongoing exploration in terms of human and non-human connections throughout the paper.

Moments of enactment

From my account of the Workplace Learning project

It was Melbourne Cup¹ day when I first met the trade teachers. There were crowds of hatted people on the bus making their way to the racetrack. But I was not going to the races. I was on my way to interview the head teacher from one of the workgroups that had agreed to participate in the Workplace Learning project. After months of working with the research team on developing the interview schedule and finetuning the research design I was at last going to do some real research in the field and commence the interviews.

I passed through the gates of Green Campus and followed the signs through the endless blocks of brick buildings to the trade school. I was interviewing the Head Teacher, Jim. As I entered the large building, I noticed a group of apprentices working in individual work-bays, rendering walls and applying tiles. After getting directions from a man in blue overalls, I made my way upstairs to Jim's office. He had not arrived yet, so I sat down outside and waited.

The place where I was sitting looked like a classroom. There was a whiteboard with a drawing of a plum-bob and some measurements and calculations. Table and chairs were organised in a U-shape facing toward the whiteboard. There were some grey metal cupboards which lined the walls. But the detail of the room and its furnishings were obscured under a thick layer of pale grey dust that enveloped the building, and those working within it. A strange kind of 'grey' unity was created by this shroud of dust and nothing was spared from its relentless infiltration. Have you ever tried washing cement dust out of your hair?

After waiting for Jim for some time, I decided to find another member of staff and establish if there was a problem. Perhaps Jim had phoned to say he was running late? The offices upstairs were deserted but I eventually heard voices. After locating the source, I came into a small room where two men were sitting at a table and chairs, drinking cups of tea, 'dunking' biscuits and reading a newspaper. I was in the staff lunchroom, a room we workplace learning researchers later established as a significant learning space for the trade teachers. The two men were looking at the form guide and discussing which horses they had backed in the Melbourne Cup. Each was dressed in casual but neat attire – shorts and short sleeves, one wearing knee-hi socks.

'Do you know where Jim is? I was supposed to be interviewing him this morning for a research project I'm working on'.

Neither knew where he was but both were surprised that he had not arrived for the interview: 'It's not like Jim to not turn up for appointments'. We chatted for a while and it transpired that Bruce and Tom were both teachers in the department. I described the research project to them and Bruce suggested that I might like to interview him instead. He needed to get back to his class but, if I was happy to interview him while he supervised his students, we could proceed. I gladly took up the offer as I did not want to go back to City University empty handed. I was the doctoral student on the project and demonstrating my research finesse to my supervisors, who were also the chief and co-investigators on the project, mattered. Into the grey cavern we trekked, where the apprentices were building walls, then pulling them down, putting them up again, then pulling them down, and with the constant 'chink', 'chink', 'chinking' of trowels against tiles, I turned on my audiorecorder and interviewed Bruce.

Excerpts from Bruce's account of learning at work

I started working here in 1992, teaching students wall and floor tiling. My wife saw an advertisement for a tiling teacher in the paper. And I wasn't all that keen but I came in, applied, took a test and was accepted. I wasn't particularly excited about it and I'd never done anything like that before. I'd actually retired as a tiler and I'd taken on the position as manager of a plumbing department at [name of company]. And that was a sixty hour a week type job. And the teaching was thirty hours a week. Although that's a bit of a con because when I started to teach, and I had to do teacher training, I was so busy that I didn't get to play golf for two years.

For the first couple of years I used to feel like a, not an imposter, but now I feel more like a teacher than I felt initially. I didn't know if I even wanted to stay here. It was that strenuous, stressful. It's only the fact that most of the teachers were very supportive and the students were fine and I get along fine with them. It wouldn't have taken much for me to say 'oh, this is really not me, I'm out.' But I stuck by it, and I'm quite happy I did. I had to learn a new skill. And it is a lot harder than it looks. Now that I've kind of learned a few tricks I can see how that's made me more effective as a teacher. Rather than what I tried to do initially... [pause] trying to structure. Now I know a lot more now about eliciting responses that might seem accidental but have an underlying ulterior motive... [pause] getting them to learn something painlessly...

[‘chink’, ‘chink’ – sound of a trowel tapping on a tile in the background]

There's not a lot of time to talk with other teachers at work because you're either teaching, or they're teaching if you're not teaching. It's very difficult to spend any significant amount of time with fellow teachers in the section. I think there should be probably more thought given to having a mentoring type system with new teachers where an experienced teacher could be on hand. You know, give them a bit of guidance, a bit of help, a bit of feedback. I think I got more feedback and help from teachers in teacher training. We became quite a close-knit group and whenever we had free time at university we'd discuss views on what we were doing and what problems we were having and the difficulties...

[scraping noise of shovel mixing concrete]

I was an apprentice over forty years ago. In those days we often worked for a different firm, we didn't always have the same job. There were two firms in [name of city] that employed something like about 40 apprentices. A lot of their tradesmen worked for wages and they always had at least one apprentice with them and they were big companies. They employed thirty or forty tradesmen and as I said, a large number of apprentices. It was a different culture then. It was actually a cultural thing. A bit of encouragement. There was a strong sense of unity and comradeship. It was a way of life. And it's all gone. Those people now are sub-contractors and they only employ one or two apprentices. When I got out of my time, there was a large influx of Italian migrants came in and they kind of, they were prepared to work for less than Australians, they'd work harder. And now it's the Koreans, the Korean tilers. They're actually working for less than... [pause] the Italian's forty years ago came out and worked hard for nothing, for a lot less than the Australians were prepared to work for. And they're now at the top of their trade if you like. They're well established.

...

[high pitched scratching noise of a tile cutter]

People ask me what I do and I say ‘ I’m a tiler’. Really, I haven’t been a tiler for about fifteen years. Because I’ve retired from it. I shattered my left knee in a motorcycle accident in 1980. Because my knee was so bad, tiling was really difficult and that’s one of the reasons why I got an office job. But I still tend to think of myself as a tiler. I started tiling when I was fourteen. It’s been a very good trade to me. I’m quite comfortable financially. Yeah, actually, I bought a house up at Hawks Nest a couple of years ago and I got different tradesmen in to do renovations and they’d say ‘what do you do for a living?’ and I’d say ‘tiler’. It didn’t occur to me to say ‘I teach tiling’. I still think of myself as a tiler. Even though I teach tiling...

[‘tink’, ‘tink’, ‘tink’]

Things have changed since I started here. There used be eight teachers here and four technical assistants. Now there’s six teachers and three techies. And one’s a part-time techie. One teacher just transferred to another section, voluntarily, and another teacher took a redundancy and they haven’t been replaced. One of the technical assistants retired. Another one was given a medical retirement, so we’re down to two. And we have a temporary and two permanents. So cost cutting is making a bad, not a bad situation, but the situation could be better...

[sound of a wooden trowel smoothing concrete]

As well as the downsizing there’s the changes to the curriculum. The curriculum’s been changed to accommodate the competency based training which is supposed to incorporate a lot of generic skills, which is all bullshit. In the new curriculum we’re supposed to spend lots and lots of time teaching them working on scaffolds and workplace communications and a lot of other stuff that I haven’t even looked at but I know the amount of time we’re actually supposed to be teaching them tiling is, kind of been halved. Whereas most of the stuff in the first year is all about the cross-generic type stuff: using explosive powered tools; using antiquated levering devices that are supposed to be generic with plastering and bricklaying and gyprock fixing. It’s getting to the stage where, if I was employing an apprentice, I wouldn’t send them to [PSE]. Because it’s rubbish. They’re not being taught what they need to be confident early on in the trade. Spending hours teaching them or expecting them to achieve competence in things that are either antiquated or irrelevant...

[noise of concrete being tumbled in a concrete mixer]

There have been staff development meetings where we were told what had been decided upon as curriculum content. But we said ‘this is bullshit, it’s rubbish. It’s not relevant’ and they said ‘well that’s what you have to teach’. That’s it. End of story. There’s a whole bureaucracy out there that comes up with this stuff and they all have a vested interest in making it as complicated as possible and generating as much paperwork and as many... [pause]. Yeah, they’re very busy, and they create a lot of paper with a lot of writing on it but it’s all pretty useless. We spend more time finding ways around it than actually performing with it. As long as we can give them a tick in whatever stupid skill they’re supposed to allegedly need, we’ll find ways of doing that, quickly, and spending more time on what does matter. But it’s ‘why should we have to do that?’ and entering it all into a system, back into the system, it’s time consuming. I haven’t spent a lot of time, in fact I haven’t spent any time looking at the new curriculum because I’m teaching third year, and have been for the last couple of years. They’ll be the last people to get affected. And I’m fifty six now and certainly by the time I’m sixty I’ll have retired.

'Making up' the master tradesman

Bruce's account can be examined in terms of the multidimensionality of practice as well as to the ongoing realisation of subjectivity in and through practice. Amongst other things, there are bureaucrats, trade teachers, a wife, broken bones, curricula, immigrant tilers, concrete mixers, trowels, shovels, spirit levels, trainee teachers at university, apprentices, technical assistants, sub contractors, Training Packages, tile cutters, concrete dust, administration systems, and so on represented in his account. And I propose that all of these people and things might be understood as making up 'the master tradesman', and that this way of being 'the trade teacher' mattered in this particular workgroup.

Bruce provided an account of a cohesive community of shared practice forged through participating in the tiling trade. For example, he spoke of a 'strong sense of unity and comradeship' during his apprenticeship, tiling 'was a way of life'. Indeed, Bruce still identified as a tiler, even though he had not worked as a tiler in over fifteen years. The notion of unity and homogeneity was a recurring theme in the interviews with the trade teachers. Another member of the workgroup summarised the trade teachers in the following way:

Vince. We all like each other...we go through a trade together, we do the same things, we talk about the same things, we think in the same [way] [my emphasis]

While it might not be clear as to what the 'same things' that the trade teachers do are, Vince's comment hints at the importance of the trade teachers having all practised the same trade and evokes 'the coming into existence of something that has got the power to produce agreement among competent colleagues...' (Stengers, 2008, p. 47).

Similarly to Bruce, many of the other trade teachers also identified as 'the tiler' when talking about themselves and their work. For example, when asked by one of the researchers if he thought differently about himself to when he first started working at PSE, Frank declared:

Not really I always see myself as a tiler – mind you others at home have said I had changed but I don't think so.

It seemed doing tiling (rather than theory) is what mattered for Bruce (and his colleagues) and his account suggests that this was how apprentices would achieve mastery in their trade. For example, Bruce spent some time discussing the current curriculum for the apprentice tilers and was unhappy that the amount of time that could be spent on teaching tiling had been significantly reduced. He also commented on the introduction of new, generic curricula in the Training Packages, which he succinctly described as 'bullshit'. The Training Packages formed a component of the National Training Framework, which was a set of principles and guidelines formulated at a national level in Australia during the 1990s with the aim of creating a national training system relevant to the needs of industry. While the Training Packages were meant to provide students with the skills and knowledge needed to perform effectively in the workplace, Bruce's account opens this to question.

Bruce's clear articulation of what did not matter in the new curriculum suggests that there were other things that did matter and points to the struggle over the curriculum in that particular educational site.

For Bruce and the other trade teachers, learning was the mastery of tiling skills and this was to be achieved through practising tiling. The ‘other stuff’ in the curriculum was ‘rubbish’ and doing tiling was what mattered. And it is in this sense that Bruce could be understood as embodying an apprenticeship discourse. An apprenticeship discourse is understood here as a way of thinking, talking about and organising learning that takes the notion of mastery and skills development, acquired in and through practice, as foundational. An apprenticeship discourse produces masters (experts, knowers) and apprentices (novices, learners).

Being ‘the master tradesman’ was a mode of subjectivity that the trade teachers were attempting to produce in their students as well as a mode of subjectivity (way of being) the trade teachers performed in their everyday practices at PSE. For example, the trade teachers measured themselves, and others, in terms of how many metres of tiles they had laid in their careers. At a group meeting Vince described one of his colleagues in the following way:

Brad’s a good tiler, he’s laid a lot of metres over the years. I’ve learnt a lot from working with him.

However, another of the group (jokingly) disagreed:

Tom: Brad’s pissweak. I’ve laid more metres than him.

Furthermore, when tilers were no longer able to ‘lay metres’, they needed to move on from practising their trade. It seemed construction sites needed active, supple bodies. Broken bodies needed to move to other spaces, including offices and trade schools.

While requiring further investigation, it seemed the assemblage producing ‘the master tradesman’ extended to the connections that ‘made up’ the trade teachers’ experience before working at PSE. This might include: tiles that stay stuck, straight lines, neat cuts, apprentices, water that runs away, walls that don’t fall down or leak, tile cutters, trowels ... And if one considers the practices of managing a small business, the assemblage continues to grow: quotations, telephones, tax returns, accountants, advertisements, bank statements... but perhaps that is when ‘the master tradesman’ becomes ‘the entrepreneur’?

Performing mastery

In contrast to ‘the master tradesman’, Jennifer, a part-time female teacher in the school did not have what mattered (for most of the trade teachers). According to Jim, the head teacher, many of the trade teachers had complained that: ‘...she shouldn’t be here because she hasn’t laid as many tiles as we did’. And perhaps unsurprisingly, Jennifer remained invisible throughout the project. It was by way of a chance remark in an interview with the head teacher that we (researchers) discovered that she existed. She had not been asked to participate in the project, she was rarely mentioned by her colleagues, she was never present when we visited their workplace and was thus not present in the account of learning provided in the final project report. It seemed construction sites were not for female bodies, nor were trade schools.

Nor did government bureaucrats have or do what mattered. They ‘create a lot of paper with a lot of writing on it’, but this writing was not important for Bruce and the other trade teachers, who in the main resisted adopting the new curriculum. They

considered the skills included in the new curriculum redundant and not what tilers needed to do their job well:

Frank. I used to be very proud of the fact that I had been a tiler and I was teaching tiling, now I am teaching students a whole lot of other generic subjects in the course. Students tell us that their bosses tell them that what we're teaching here is not the right stuff – you see at work they do it differently and we have to teach them all these additional subjects and employers are not happy.

Nor did the senior sections of the organisation do what mattered. For example, in referring to senior management, Vince said: 'It's like us and them...I've had no support from them'. Jim spoke metaphorically about a 'suit of armour' that he kept at the front door of the building in which he needed to dress each time he went out to do battle with 'them' (the senior managers in the college). Management was viewed as an obstacle to be sidestepped rather than a group with which to align:

Frank. We are all over fifty, and we're doing the job that we're supposed to be doing fairly well. We're disillusioned with the system...

...I do whatever I can for our section. As far as [PSE], it's just depositing on us. Our section is what's important...That's where it starts and ends for me.

The subject position of 'the master tradesman', and an associated apprenticeship discourse, enabled the trade teachers to resist both bureaucratic and managerial directives. It also provided a position to resist a more traditional teaching discourse, which privileges disciplinary knowledge produced in the academy. At times, Bruce and the other trade teachers positioned themselves in relation to 'the teacher' rather than as 'the teacher'. This was evident in Bruce's comment that: 'It didn't occur to me to say 'I teach tiling'. I still think of myself as a tiler', and was reinforced throughout the interview. For example, he claimed: 'I wasn't particularly excited about it' when he was offered the post at PSE, suggesting he had no desire to be a teacher.

Being a teacher appeared to have little appeal and taking up the position of 'the teacher' often appeared to produce tension. However, this tension was often reconciled by constituting 'the other teachers' as different from who they were. For example:

Frank. Most people consider that teachers live in a different world, because they never leave school. Whereas a [trade] teacher, or a person in a technical situation has been, quite often a large experience in the workforce, and then becomes a teacher as well and has the opportunity to see both sides of it.

The trade teachers understood the other teachers as out of touch, particularly in regard to matters of work – they lacked workplace experience. This was a recurring theme:

John. I think teachers are very... haven't got a lot of common sense, most teachers; mainly because they haven't been in the workforce...

... because they've talked to professors, they're fantastic about what they're talking about, but you give them a hammer and they can't even put a nail into butter.

Again, we hear about tools and doing. Academic practice did not appear to count as relevant experience and the trade teachers, it seemed, had an ambivalent relationship with the position of ‘the teacher’.

‘The master tradesman’, which I have suggested was intricately connected with the previous practices of working in their trade, also provided a powerful position for the trade teachers in relation to the position of ‘the apprentice’, which was available to the students. The master tradesman were ‘the knowers’ (and experts), the students were ‘the learners’ (and novices). During the Stage 2 meetings the following comment from Vince illustrates the take up of this position:

Vince: When I’ve got students around me, I don’t seem like I’m learning now, I’m the one doing the teaching. As far as I’m concerned I’m the one in control. I’m the one with the knowledge that’s being passed over. I’ve got the experience...

Vince was much younger than the rest of the trade teachers and was employed part-time at PSE. When he was not teaching he was still doing what mattered most, that is, he was ‘mixing mud’ and ‘laying metres’ (of tiles).

It seemed the practices of the trade teachers were integrally entwined with the notion of skills development acquired in and through practice, and what I refer to in this paper as a learning as mastery real. Their approach to administration, their workplace conversations, the layout of their workplace (for example, a large section of the building was dedicated to practising tiling), the concrete dust, the curriculum (they actually used), their relations with students (and others); all worked to produce ‘the master tradesman’ and make this way of being the trade teacher durable.

Moreover, the ongoing enactment of mastery by the trade teachers in the PSE workplace worked to produce (and maintain) particular divisions. As discussed, the trade teachers actively constructed themselves (and their practices) as separate from and different to other sections of the organisation (particularly management) and other PSE teachers. It enabled the ordering of particular practices and encounters in the trade teachers’ workgroup including the separation of: theory and practice, master and apprentice, knower and novice, and tradesman and teacher. And as I propose below, these modes of ordering also worked to shape the encounters with the academic researchers throughout the project.

Practice as a site for connection

While I connected with the trade teachers at various moments while preparing and reading their interview transcripts, my next face to face meeting with the trade teachers was at a feedback session at the completion of Stage 1 of the Workplace Learning project. At this event, following what might be called ‘typical’ qualitative research methods, the findings from the initial individual interviews were ‘fed back’ to the workgroup for discussion and comment. While these research practices might be understood as neutral, I have proposed elsewhere (Harman, 2014) that these interactional encounters (or events) can be understood as providing a site for examining the ongoing realisation of subjectivity in and through practice. In other words, the research project was a site for the intersection of the practices and learning reals of the trade teachers with the practices and learning reals of the research team (and a potential site for reproduction/ transformation of both trade teacher and academic subjectivity).

From my observations of the meeting

The feedback meeting was conducted in one of the college classrooms near the trade teachers' school. It was an uncomfortable re-union, with 'the researchers' on one side of the room and 'the researched' on the other. The trade teachers frequently drew attention to our difference during the session and at one stage one of the group (jokingly) pointed out that he had no idea what one of the research team was talking about as he could not understand the language she was using. They also referred, deferentially, to the chief investigator of the project as 'the professor' throughout the meeting. We were 'the academics' and they were 'the master tradesmen'.

I felt uncomfortable at this meeting and this was connected with my 'contaminated' past. I had been married to a tiler for a number of years and had even on a few occasions mixed mud and laid metres. The ghost of this unsuccessful union haunted my relations with the tillers and I was certainly not a pure, objective, transcendent researcher (knower) able to separate myself from lived experience. And just as the trade teachers were embodied subjects, moving through space and time and reconfiguring their subjectivity in and through the lived relations of work, so were we researchers.

One way that we academics positioned the trade teachers during the Stage 2 meetings was as 'the workplace learner'. Many of the trade teachers accepted this positioning but some vehemently resisted. For example, when Frank was asked if participating in the Stage 1 interviews had triggered any thoughts about learning, he simply replied 'no'. Another member of the group, Vince, was able to take up the position of 'the learner' in relation to his colleagues, but he was not able to think of himself in this way in the classroom, in the classroom he was 'in control' (see page 21).

The researchers sought the participation of the trade teachers in the co-production of knowledge about everyday learning at work. However, it became apparent during the feedback session that the collaborative relationship that we researchers wanted to foster was going to be more difficult to establish than anticipated. For example, toward the close of the meeting, one of the researchers asked:

What can we build upon that there is consensus about amongst the staff group that they agree that this is a problem that we can get our heads together and work on and fix? So it's driven by something that people want to fix, [rather] than some external solution. Are there some of those things sitting there at the moment?

The response from the trade teachers was..... [SILENCE]

For most of the trade teachers, a collaborative model of research about their everyday learning at work had little appeal. As far as the trade teachers were concerned, they were masters rather than learners and it could be argued that what mattered to the researchers was not necessarily in alignment with or of interest to the trade teachers.

Contradictions, ambivalence and uncertainty

The Stage 2 meetings could be read as a site of struggle, with the trade teachers attempting to renegotiate the traditional power associated with the academy and expressed through our ongoing positioning of the trade teachers as workplace learners. However, Stengers' caution of the danger of labelling actions as 'subversive counter strategies' leads me to be cautious here.

For example, it would be easy to provide an account of the trade teachers as uncomplicated, blue collar workers, acted on by the top-down power of the State, their senior managers and the academics. I (initially) desired simplicity in respect to how the exercise of power in workplaces might be understood, and the trade teachers frequently obliged by constructing themselves and the world in this way. They conveyed the impression that there was no pretentiousness in their group – no artifice – and that they were ‘authentic’ (pure) tradesmen subjects. For example:

Jim. We’re tradies, we tend to call a shovel a bloody shovel. Speak our minds, and very clear and plain, whereas some of our colleagues in management that you’ve been looking at might be more inclined to have a more academic approach to their interpersonal relationships.

However, contradictions abounded in the Workplace Learning project. Neither I, nor the trade teachers, were autonomous subjects, disconnected from networks (or assemblages) producing particular power effects. For example, rather than thinking of the trade teachers as passive and only acted on, being ‘the master tradesman’ provided a position to resist the top-down implementation of the training packages. Instead of aligning with the broader goals of the State through implementing the Training Packages, the trade teachers ticked the necessary boxes on assessment documents and then got on with doing ‘what does matter’.

Both researchers and researched might be better understood as bodies moving through time and space and at times our respective practices enabled particular connections. For example, Bruce’s account can be read for different positionings produced through his movement from working as a tradesman to working as a teacher. It exemplifies the interplay of the dual positionings as ‘the master tradesman’ and ‘the teacher’ and the tensions this created for Bruce in his post at PSE:

For the first couple of years I used to feel like a, not an imposter, but now I feel more like a teacher than I felt initially. I didn’t know if I even wanted to stay here. It was that strenuous, stressful.

While the above quote might suggest that Bruce had reconciled these tensions, with the implication that he had established a unified and cohesive identity as ‘the teacher’, Bruce’s ongoing struggle with multiple tradesman/teacher positionings and the tensions these created echo throughout the interview text. For example, at one point he claims emphatically that: ‘I still think of myself as a tiler’ and then quickly qualifies this statement with: ‘Even though I teach tiling’.

Furthermore, it became apparent during the project that the trade teachers used what might be understood as more traditional teaching techniques. At the completion of Stage 1 of the project, Jim (the head teacher) mentioned he was eager to change existing teaching practices in the trade teachers’ workgroup. He wanted to shift from ‘everybody teaching the same lesson notes’ to ‘new and innovative teaching styles’ such as ‘having small group work, have the students solve the problem’. While the trade teachers embodied a discourse of apprenticeship, which was enacted in their teaching practices (for example, in respect to their failure to take up the curriculum in the Training Packages), it seemed lesson notes, white boards and classrooms were also part of their teaching repertoire.

Moreover, the privileging of an apprenticeship discourse raises a potential paradox for the trade teachers: if learning is understood in this way, what is the role of

educational institutions such as PSE in teaching trades? What do they add to the on-the-job learning of apprentices? And was teaching in fact so strange? Was teaching tiling at the trade school different from teaching apprentices while working in their trade?

Partial connections

While the trade teachers pointed to differences between being teachers and being tilers, it is also worthwhile considering the partial connections between ‘the teacher’ and ‘the master tradesman’. Law (2004), drawing on Strathern, speaks of partial connections where “this” (whatever “this” may be) is included in “that”, but “this” cannot be reduced to “that” (p. 64). Partial connections between construction sites and PSE may work to hold ‘the master tradesman’ together and places of work and post-secondary education may not be as different as conceived by the trade teachers and others.

Mulcahy’s (2011) exploration of interstitial space is generative for ongoing research in this area. Working with the concept of partial connections, Mulcahy explores the connections between work and learning as new teachers move from (institutional) education spaces into work spaces. Rather than conceiving these spaces as necessarily different, she proposes ‘a *relational* conception of their connection’ (author’s emphasis) (p. 203). Mulcahy argues that a relational approach enables a shift from dominant notions of ‘transfer’, ‘integration’ or ‘boundary crossing’, which are common themes for conceiving work – education relationships (e.g. Berner, 2010; Vähäsantanen & Eteläpelto, 2009).

In relation to the trade teachers and their pedagogic practices (Unwin, Felstead, Fuller, Bishop, Lee, Jewson, & Butler, 2007), the concept of partial connections raises an interesting set of questions for ongoing research on learning in VET (Colley, James, Diment, & Tedder, 2003; Niemi & Rosvall, 2013) and the professional development of trade teachers in FE (e.g. Fejes & Köpsén, 2014): What pedagogical practices do tilers perform working in their trade? And what learning reals are produced in these practices? How is ‘the master tradesman’ fabricated on a construction site? And is this a different assemblage to that producing ‘the master tradesman’ in the trade school? And if so, through what mechanisms are the pedagogical practices of the workplace translated to FE?

Durability

The above account of partial connections draws attention to the materiality of subjective experience. An assemblage of people, things, concepts, architectures, technologies and texts, made up ‘the master tradesman’ at PSE including: students, lunchrooms, trowels, metres of tiles laid, senior managers, the National Training curriculum, tiling bays, other teachers, and the workplace learning researchers. And this assemblage, which connected previous workplaces and the PSE workplace, worked to hold together ‘the master tradesman’ as a way of being the trade teacher at PSE, as well as contributing to the durability of a notion of learning as skills development and mastery.

The inseparability of knowing, doing and being implied in the notion of assemblage suggests that changing the practices of trade teachers in FE may be much more complicated than ‘best practice’ accounts suggest. The top-down approach to curriculum change at PSE whereby new curriculum was introduced without

consultation overlooked the fact that the knowledge the trade teachers taught was deeply embedded in the practices of their trade. Simply introducing new curriculum in the Training Packages assumed that the trade teachers were deliverers of knowledge rather than knowledge producers. Furthermore, the trade teachers understood that mastery was developed in and through practising their trade. This was their learning real. An assemblage analytic suggests that attempts to change employee practices through the introduction of new knowledge overlook the relational aspects of practice and how particular reals are fabricated and made durable.

Taking care

In providing an account of the trade teachers' practices as intricately interconnected with their embodiment of an apprenticeship discourse and ongoing enactment of a learning as mastery real in the PSE workplace, I have attempted to heed Stengers' caution and proceed with care. The analysis directs attention to the relational aspects of practice, both human and non-human, and the ongoing realisation of subjectivity in and through practice. For example, the ongoing constitution of others by the trade teachers, which was enabled through the ongoing connections in and through their workplace practices, contributed to making the position of 'the master tradesmen' durable.

This is an account that directs attention to the materiality of experience and grounds learning in the social and material world. Rather than agency (or capacity to act) being understood as 'the property of a discrete, self-knowing subject' (Coole & Frost, 2010, p. 20) 'the master tradesman' was made up in a dense network intricately connected with practice. Through tracing the assemblages that 'make up' subjects and objects, the paper makes an important contribution to the exploration of learning in and through practice as it moves beyond an account of experience and learning at work that takes the centred subject of humanism as its starting point.

The paper also illustrates how the ongoing enactment of learning as mastery in the trade teachers' workplace had very real effects. I have argued that the ongoing performing of mastery by the trade teachers worked to produce a seemingly natural separation in their workplace of: practice/theory, master/apprentice, knower/novice, and tradesman/academic. However, the necessity of the ongoing enactment of these divisions in order for them to remain durable suggests these distinctions may not be as natural as assumed. It is in this sense that the paper opens up a different set of questions and areas for exploration than available in much of the literature on work and learning. The detail of how mastery plays out in specific 'events' (or connections) provides a rich seam to be explored by those researching work-education intersections.

While a view of subjectivity as realised in and through practice directs attention to durability, it also opens up the possibility of being 'made up' in ways other than, for example, 'the master tradesman' or 'the objective researcher'. Practices and the reals they produce are *not* necessarily fixed and can be open to reconfiguration. Each node in the assemblage and each event provides a point where renegotiation might occur. Stengers refers to this as being open to connection. Hopefully this text has drawn attention to other possibilities, particularly the possibilities for workplace learning researchers to move beyond an approach that assumes mastery. It is not easy, though, to remove oneself from the position of 'knower' when writing research.

When I began this paper, I proposed tracing assemblages that work to produce a learning real of mastery and skills development. I was interested in examining the

effects of the ongoing enactment of this learning real in various sites and practices, and this was connected with my concern about who and what are excluded from accounts of workplace learning if learning can only be understood in this way. I traced assemblages making up a learning as mastery real in a group of trade teachers and in so doing have suggested that learning as mastery spans both workplaces and educational institutions. While further empirical exploration is required I propose that this way of understanding and performing learning is also present in higher education institutions and academic practices. As Latour argues (1993), the separation of theory and practice may never have been as pure as some academics and practitioners may think. And while remaining critical of a notion of learning as mastery, there may be times when mastery is appreciated. After all, I like that the tiles stay stuck on my shower walls.

Notes

¹ The Melbourne Cup is a nationally celebrated horse race in Australia. Many people attend Melbourne Cup parties and most people stop work to watch the race on television.

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Adult education and reflexive activation: prioritising recognition, respect, dignity and capital accumulation

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Abstract

The economic crisis that emerged in 2008 put great stress on the so-called European project. The economic downturn put additional pressure on economically and educationally marginalised populations, who continue to experience high levels of unemployment and lower levels of access to societal goods. Activation is seen as one of the main strategies to combat unemployment. The EU also recognises a systemic shift in the nature of work, such that individuals will have several transitions between work and education during their careers. This is a significant societal level challenge that will likely pose greater stress on groups and individuals that are marginalised socially, educationally and economically. To deliver better long-term outcome it is necessary to adopt reflexive activation approaches. Reflexive activation is one in which unemployed people actively co-design the proposed resolutions. It is also embedded in a societal context. It is cognisant of citizenship, autonomy and human rights and leans towards traditional adult education values. The model of reflexive activation explored here is infused with understandings emerging from Schuller's three types of capital and theories of recognition, respect and dignity developed by Honneth and others.

Keywords: reflexive activation; respect; human capital; social capital; identity capital

Introduction

Europe went into a deep economic crisis in 2008. That crisis challenged the viability of the European Union, the Euro currency and went to the very heart of the meaning of Europe. It challenged the fundamental principles of the political community, which evolved from the French Revolution. It also challenged notions of solidarity, which were expressed in the welfare state models of the 20th century and sat at the heart of the *raison d'être* of the EU itself. It presented both the EU as an entity and the European way of life with an existential dilemma. Labour force activation is still seen as a key strategic response to this crisis. Activation policies have both individual and collective impacts and intersect with traditional views of adult education. Warner Weil, Wildemeersch and Jansen (2005) in developing their model of reflexive activation

present an alternative paradigm in which the individual is more concretely engaged in identifying activation strategies. This has the potential of delivering better outcomes for the individual and meeting policy outcomes of increased employment in a more sustainable way. It also endorses the foundational principles of the European way of life, which is premised on citizenship, a citizen being a member of a political community endowed with rights and responsibilities and not a ‘beneficiary’ or indeed a customer. Two additional theoretical frameworks can help expand the reflexive activation model: Honneth’s theory of recognition, expanding the concept of citizenship and Schuller’s dynamic concept of three capitals. This latter model captures both the personal accumulation of types of capital that improve the quality of life and the capacity of individual actors, but also indicates the wider societal good of such accumulation. Reference to social networking theory will bring out some additional insights vis-à-vis socio-economically disadvantaged communities.

Adult education covers a diverse landscape, while labour force activation is a small part of the spectrum; it exhibits a strong utilitarian orientation that runs against a more holistic sense of lifelong learning that benefits both the individual and society. Activation policies are developed in the ideological shift towards neo-liberalism since the 1980s, including the so-called ‘Third Way’. The policies often conflict with traditional adult education values like autonomy and self-direction, as they can be conceptually restrictive and include compulsion and sanction. Reflexive activation attempts to balance the educational, social and economic needs of the individual and the wider community.

Those most likely to encounter activation policies are younger adults (because of the persistence of high levels of unemployment in that cohort) and those from marginalised communities that continue to experience high levels of unemployment and lower levels of access to societal goods. The discussion here is contextualised against European wide metrics on educational attainment, participation and targets set for 2020 and a dramatic changes in working-life cycles. European policy advocates what is termed flexicurity (flexibility and security) in which individuals enter and leave both work and education several times in their lives. Such a model will be under its most significant challenge when dealing with those that are already socially and educationally disadvantaged, the people that currently disproportionately encounter activation policies. A reflexive model of activation can directly benefit these groups and deliver positive social, economic and political dividends.

The contemporary labour market

Arjona Perez, Garrouste, & Kozovska (2010) identify a complex cocktail of factors at play in the contemporary labour market one feature of which is ‘temporality,’ which makes ‘multiple transitions a very common situation’ (p. 22). These transitions can be within employment, from employment to unemployment, from employment to education, from unemployment to education, from education to employment and so on. The indications are that these will become more rather than less challenging for individuals, for the maintenance of cohesive citizen based societies and for social, economic and environmental sustainability. In this climate certain populations (e.g., recent immigrants), people in low skill employment and women are particularly vulnerable. Arjona Perez, Garrouste, & Kozovska (2010) claim this requires ‘flexible learning pathways so that people can transit from employment to education and vice

versa' (p. 22). The need for the capacity to make these transitions is also a view echoed by the OECD (2013a): 'programmes for adults with poor literacy and numeracy skills and limited familiarity with ICTs may provide considerable economic and social returns for individuals and society as a whole' (p. 224).

The Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training ('ET 2020') has set a Europe wide target of 15% participation in adult learning by 25-64 year olds by 2020. Achieving these targets is not just about education and skill acquisition, it is also about participation in the good life, however that may be conceptualised. Attempting to pin down a single definition of the good life is futile. Brennan (2009) says '[a] discursively redeemable concept of the good life is incompatible with late modernity... given far reaching differences in values, worldviews and forms of life' (p.33f). The task is not to define, but to recognise that each individual has a right to pursue a good life, within the context of wider societal imperatives. It sits at the heart of the later discussion on the distinction between restrictive and reflexive activation. One offers an imposed version of the good life the other offers a communicative process for its pursuit. What can be said with greater certainty is that proficiency in literacy, numeracy and problem solving in technology-rich environments is positively associated with other aspects of wellbeing. In all countries, individuals who score at lower levels of proficiency on the literacy scale are more likely than those with higher levels of proficiency to report poor health, believe that they have little impact on the political process, and are less likely to participate in associative or volunteer activities. In most countries, individuals with lower proficiency are also more likely than those with higher proficiency to have low levels of trust in others (OECD 2013a) The evidence suggests that many adults have lower levels of proficiency in key educational areas that inhibit their full participation in society and militate against their prospects in the jobs market.

Denmark, Sweden and Finland stood out from the other EU-27 Member States¹ as they reported considerably higher proportions of their respective populations participating in lifelong learning, ranging between one fifth and one third; the Netherlands, Slovenia and the United Kingdom were the only other Member States where the participation rate in 2011 already exceeded the 15 % target (EUROSTAT, 2013).

Activation and flexicurity

Arjona Perez, Garrouste, & Kozovska (2010) list the following challenges as being critical for an individual's prospects of securing a place in the workforce: Socio-economic factors, demographic factors, personal attributes, human capital, qualitative matching, quantitative matching and search process. Qualitative matching refers to the individual's fit for a specific job, while quantitative matching is about the number of jobs vis-à-vis the number of those seeking those jobs. They cite the value of education and training systems in helping people navigate through this list of challenges. The European Union and its member states have been grappling with these sorts of realities as they strive to bring Europe into a new era of 'flexicurity,' a framework that attempts to balance the need to make 'labour markets, employment and work organisation more flexible' (Wilthagen 2004, p.166), while at the same time retaining the European way of life, which is bedeviled by citizenship, social cohesion and solidarity. This is especially challenging when it comes to the more vulnerable citizens who are likely to experience greater periods of unemployment, poorer contractual conditions, less

security and greater barriers to re-entry to both paid employment and indeed education. Labour force activation policies have been designed and implemented to help address these challenges, however these policies are not necessarily positive nor even neutral, which is a key challenge that this paper addresses.

McGuinness, O'Connell, Kelly, & Walsh (2011) give a list of good reasons for labour force activation, among which are to keep people active in the labour force, increase employability, reduce long-term unemployment and to reduce the burden on the economy. They also point to the negative impacts of unemployment, the barriers incurred through long-term unemployment and some of the root causes of unemployment. These include a well-articulated set of factors like social exclusion, poorer health profiles, difficulties of getting back into work even in times of high employment due to poor, eroded or out dated skills and education. There is nothing new in this, so it's really a matter of what activation might look like and whether this is a full and complete picture from a sociological perspective. Warner Weil, Wildemeerch & Jansen (2010) address the potential objectives of activation, which could be plotted on a continuum, edging from being 'predominantly connected to labour market participation...[to] a broader orientation towards different kinds of participation in society' (p.196). In their research they found a number of activation approaches, which at one end contained pressures to 'discipline the participants' and at the other end ones that encapsulated 'informing and helping' strategies. They categorise these two poles as 'duties of the beneficiaries'. The other focuses on the 'right of the beneficiary'. Their assessment of the activation models they encountered is somewhat negative 'we fear that activation as currently understood and practiced will have mainly disciplining rather than empowering effects' (p. 208).

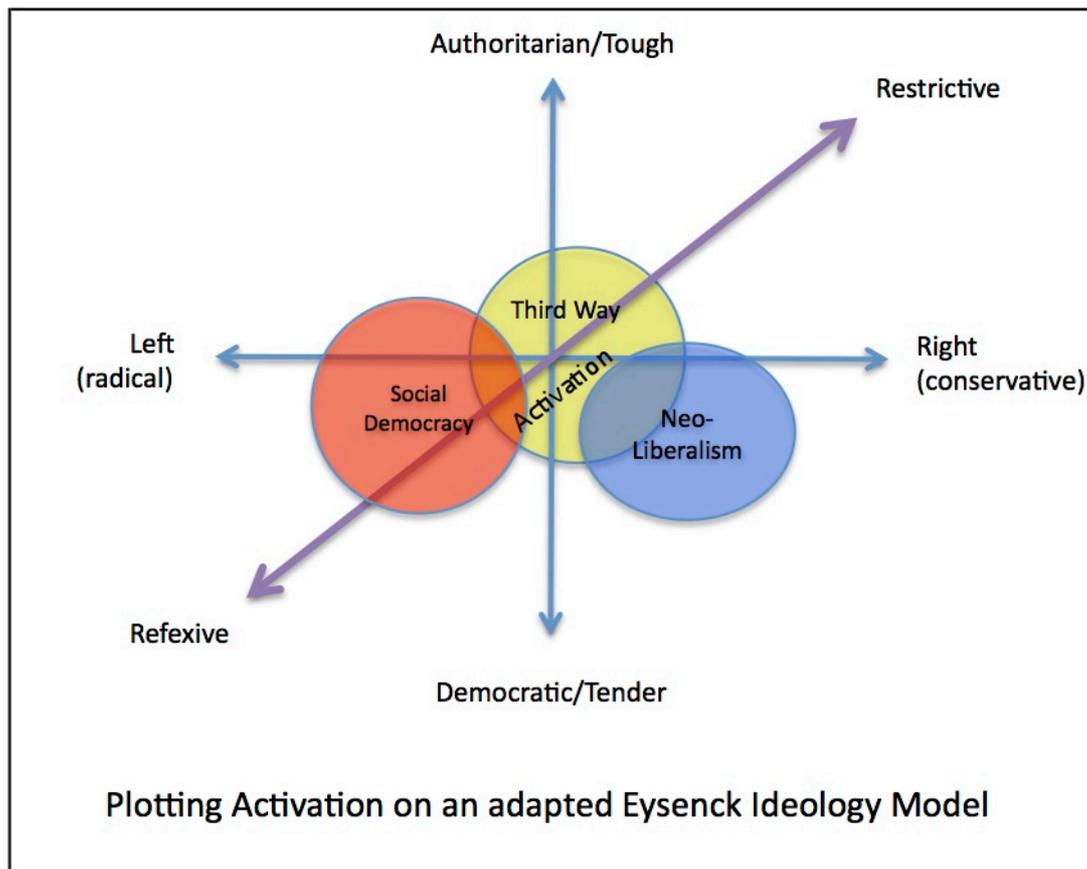
McGuinness, O'Connell, Kelly, & Walsh (2011) tend towards endorsing the views expressed in the OECD report *Activation Policies in Ireland* by Grubb, Singh, & Tergeist (2009). *Activation Policies in Ireland* makes recommendations that 'activation requirements for the unemployed should be greatly intensified' (p.129), and move from a quasi-compulsory model to 'a more *coercive* approach', and adopt measures like making unemployment benefit 'conditional on participation', in job seeking programmes and 'more concrete checks on willingness to apply for and accept jobs that the employment service is able to propose' (p.134). Grubb, Singh, & Tergeist (2009) place heavy emphasis on a paternalistic and 'restrictive activation' approach: 'Even if this training provision is not particularly successful... it is probably successful in terms of using unemployment spells productively' (p.136). It also commends the outsourcing of delivery of these sorts of approaches in which contractors are incentivised quantitatively for placing people in work rather than qualitatively in terms of the successful match and sustainability of the placement. The proposals seem pragmatic at face value, but they also hollow out the concepts of citizenship on which most western democracies are founded and on which flexicurity relies.

Three activation approaches

The potential for an activation policy to impart positive long-term benefits in line with the objectives of flexicurity depends to a major extent on its underlying rationale and objectives. In broad terms activation could be classified as 'restrictive activation', 'neutral activation', or 'reflexive activation'. This paper advocates 'reflexive activation' as it has much greater potential to deliver positive outcomes for individuals in terms of their capacity to participate in the labour force, but more importantly to live full lives as

active citizens and members of vibrant communities. The European Training Foundation (ETF) puts forward a definition of activation, which could be classified as neutral activation. This definition sees activation as ‘mutually supporting policies formulated to increase the capabilities and motivation of unemployed people... to participate in active labour market measures and to search actively for a job’ (ETF 2011). It also extends its understanding of the policy as one aimed at enhancing inclusion and reducing poverty, which is very much in line with the objectives of flexicurity. By contrast, restrictive activation is a broad mix of policies that shift the emphasis away from mutuality and towards a more coercive approach to activation. Models, tends to be top-down, they normally include sanctions for non-compliance such as loss of benefits. They are oriented to direct the citizen towards courses. They are not well attuned to recognising the person’s specific context, qualifications and the suitability, terms and conditions of the work proposed. They reduce personal autonomy and assume that unemployment is primarily caused by lack of motivation on the part of the unemployed person.

Activation is an exemplar of the classic dilemma for proponent of the ‘Third Way’, fitting between the ideological orientation of liberalism which emphasises autonomy and the free market and social democracy which emphasises social solidarity and a more collectivist understanding of the political community. The discussion by Warner Weil, Wildemeersch and Jansen (2010) really brings this to the fore in the almost competing pulls of social and labour activation. While liberalism is oriented towards autonomy of the individual, it is weak on social solidarity, by contrast social democracy, is strong on solidarity and relatively weaker on autonomy. Reflexive activation challenges both ideologies and in fact reverses the traditional orientation of both by emphasising both autonomy and social solidarity. If we map this onto Eysenck’s (1964) typology of ideology we get a sense of how it challenges, what might be seen as the competing ideological pulls on the ‘Third Way’, which attempts to meet the demands of liberal self-determination through the requirement for recipients of welfare to prove their rights, which contradicts the universalistic social democratic approach. On the other side the idea of welfare contradicts the model of autonomous actors in free-markets espoused by neo-liberalism. In many ways activation represents the core contradiction inherent to the ‘Third Way’, it seeks to secure both strong social solidarity and a free-market ethos, the competing interests we could say of socialism and free-market capitalism and at the same time the two ends of Eysenck’s vertical axis, being authoritarian in terms of compulsion to adhere to a strict regime which includes sanctions for non-compliance and simultaneously attempts to promote an entrepreneurial ethic that depends of high levels of autonomy (Eysenck, 1964, figure 6 and Figure 10, pp. 281-303).



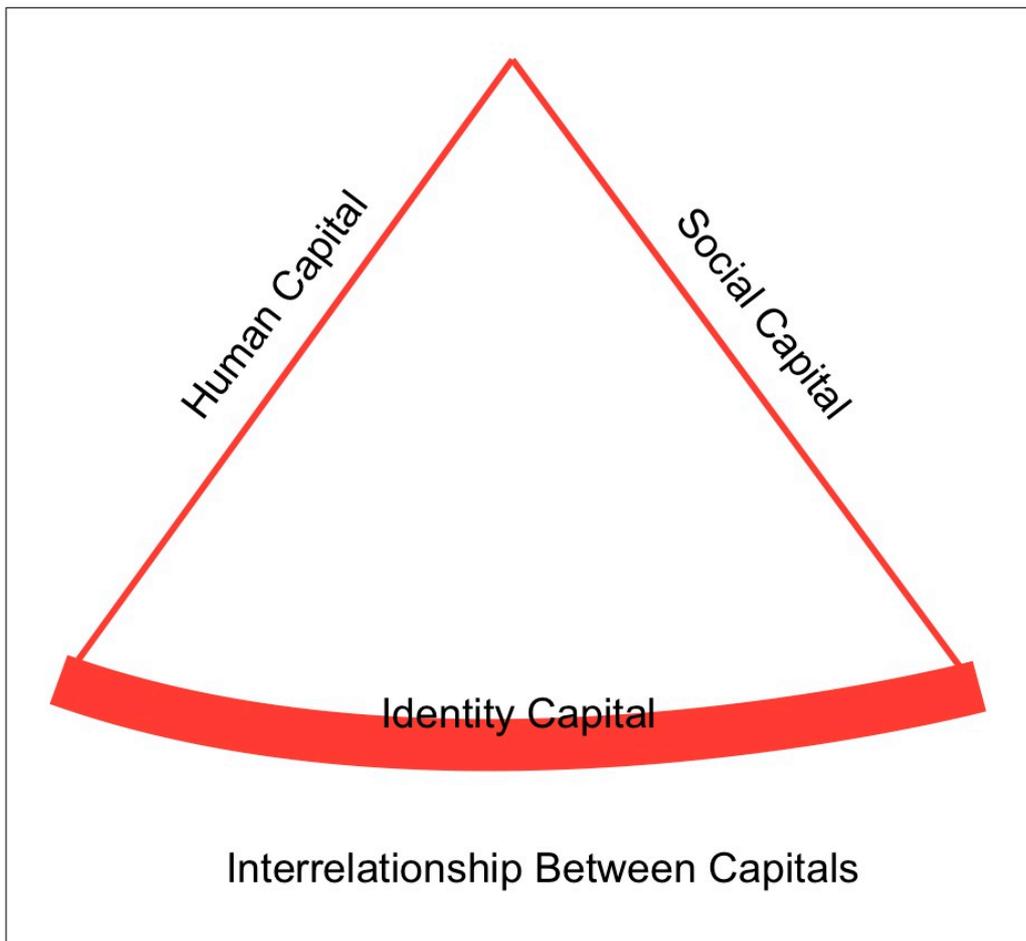
The model of reflexive activation that is proposed here draws on a model developed by Warner Weil, Wildemeerch & Jansen (2010). It is about the providers of social services, unemployed people and (community) educators setting goals together on the basis of mutual trust, dignity and equality. This model would lead to positive overall results, including gains in employability and stable employment. This model calls on individual's inventiveness, perseverance and courage to open up new forms of dialogue and practice relating to educational, social and economic participation (c.f. O'Sullivan, Ó Tuama & Denayer, 2015). Schuller's model of capital accumulation projects a very different perspective on activation, though ostensibly using very similar components. Warner Weil, Wildemeerch & Jansen (2010) refer to the extent to which 'identity issues' (which is connected to identity capital) and 'employment issues' (which relates to human capital) are part of the discourse around activation, though in a problematizing way, while they found little reference to social capital (p. 204f). Reflexive activation needs to address all three spheres of capital. Additionally theories of recognition and respect (developed by Honneth and others) are also critical as they underpin civil society and make possible the accumulation and maintenance of all three capitals.

Three types of capital

Schuller (2010), in the report *Learning Through Life: Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning*, highlights the intrinsic value of education for individuals using a concept of three capitals: '... forms of assets which have value for individuals and for society: human capital, social capital and identity capital' (p. 110). Human capital refers to the sorts of skills, knowledge and learning that individuals can use in the job market,

but of course they can also deploy them in their personal and community lives. Social capital is about the networks in which an individual participates.

Schuller's (2010) model is a sort of triangle in which the sides are both mutually dependent and mutually supportive. An effective actor needs the social networks generated through social capital to maximise access to a whole range of social goods including jobs. Actors need the types of social skills at the nexus of social and identity capital that enable them to be effective in society. They need the skills and qualifications that are part of their human capital, to perform in the contexts enabled by social and identity capital. They need the identity capital that not only gives them the self-esteem necessary to build the other two capitals, but equally derives from the accumulation of capital in the other two spheres (p. 110f).



While social capital is generated in all aspects of life, it can be enhanced through education, thus bringing direct benefit to the individual as a social actor and to the wider community in which she or he participates. Although an individual may have strong social capital within her or his existing circle, education both expands those networks and allows the person to play enhanced roles within existing ones. Key aspects of social capital like mutual trust, the confidence to take risks, to develop new links and overcome real and perceived barriers are also enhanced through the accumulation of identity capital.

There are many and perhaps somewhat conflicting definitions of social capital. In the educational sphere Stanton-Salazar (2011) defines it 'as consisting of resources and

key forms of social support embedded in one's network or associations, and accessible through direct or indirect ties with institutional agents' (p. 1067). He places significant emphasis on an *institutional agent* as a key factor in how social capital works to benefit someone in a disadvantaged community or context. An institutional agent is a person 'who occupies one or more hierarchical positions of relatively high-status and authority' (Ibid.). Stanton-Salazar is primarily addressing the context of marginalised youth. However it is very often the failures of the educational system that young people encounter that in turn presents generations of adults whose educational attainments are deficient for full participation in the economic, social and cultural life of the wider society. In order to overcome the barriers that exist both through socialization and structural factors he contends that individuals need to leverage 'instrumental relationships with high-status, non-kin, *institutional agents* who occupy relatively high positions in the multiple dimensional stratification system, and who are well positioned to provide key forms of social and institutional support' (p.1075f). This theme is equally applicable to adult learners as it is to young people in high school.

In cohort contexts the engagement between adult learners can be a catalyst that helps make the social networks of each individual more positively oriented to the positive potential of education. This can have significant worth for the individual in terms of building confidence and motivation to stick with education and to envisage its potential to open doors to a better quality of life. It also expands to their kin networks, for instance influencing their adolescent children to stay in education and to perceive it in a more positive light, which is echoed by the experiences of the women interviewed for *Breaking the Barriers* (O'Sullivan, Ó Tuama & Denayer; 2016). In addition it gives them access to the types of institutional agents envisaged by Stanton-Salazar (2011).

Lin (1999) suggested that the simple premise of social capital is 'investment in social relations with expected returns' (p.30). Not all social networking has this high level of utilitarian intent, though some is clearly intentional, instrumental and pragmatic. Some accumulation of social capital is purely circumstantial. Lin identifies three social capital gains that emerge from investing in social networks. The first is a better flow of information that could lead to 'useful information about opportunities and choices otherwise not available' (p. 31); secondly it opens the possibility to leverage the support of a well-placed institutional actor in some important transaction like seeking a job; the third is a sort of validation of a person's social credentials or a reinforcement of identity and recognition (identity capital).

Granovetter (1983) offers a good pointer to one root cause of the social, educational and economic factors that militate against people who live in disadvantaged communities enjoying mobility opportunities by focusing on social networks and specifically strong and weak social networks. Many disadvantaged communities have vibrant clusters of strong social networks and contrary to many assumptions about such deprived areas, the weak social networks are often quite robust too. What is critical from Granovetter's analysis is that they are to some extent isolated from wider networks.

For people within a neighbourhood to accumulate the sort of social capital they need to be better positioned to avail of their human capital they need an extension of their weak social networks past the neighbourhood boundaries. Adult education can help achieve this by gestating new weak social networks, leading to new links inside the neighbourhood, but also building bridges to external social networks. Granovetter (1983) argues that developing weak social networks forces the individual to think about the wider world in a different way, in a sense to break down the provinciality of thinking that exists within any tightly networked group. This process leads to greater

potential for creativity and flexibility. At a second level he sees the wider reach of weak networks as giving rise to social capital that can lead to tangible opportunities like job opportunities for the simple reason that those closest to us share a great deal in common with us, while those at a further remove have access to different information and contacts (205). This trajectory is a critical positive benefit of adult education and a necessary ingredient of a reflexive activation approach as it not only brings students in contact with new knowledge, skills and perceptions, but it also widens their social networks and especially brings them past the neighbourhood boundary. Resilient communities need active, but weak, internal social networks, but they also need linkages to wider social networks, otherwise they end up creating inward looking, insecure communities and individuals who lack the confidence to take risks and opportunities in unfamiliar domains.

Identity capital is about the individual's self-esteem and dignity as a member of a community. This type of capital can be greatly enhanced through adult education, making the individual both a more self-aware and active contributor to the community. For the accumulation of identity capital recognition is absolutely essential. In turn identity capital is critical for an individual's capacity to build both social capital and human capital. While Schuller points out that they are interdependent, identity capital is an essential foundation on which the other two can be built, and in turn identity capital is reliant on recognition.

For all educators, no matter what the context, an understanding of the key roles recognition, respect and dignity play in the shaping of our identity and our capacity to fully participate as members of society is crucial. It may be even more critical in the field of adult education as very many people who engage with education as adults have had previously bad experiences. So rather than being second chance education, it could also be a last chance. Identity capital is a sort of lingua franca, without which it is futile to begin to talk about both social capital and human capital in a meaningful transformative way. This is essential to understanding the importance of reflexive labour force activation. Many of the factors that inhibit people entering the workforce, progressing in education and acquiring the competencies required to deal with flexicurity are embedded in low levels of identity capital.

The context in which labour force activation is being implemented is one where identity has become a central project in each individual's world. In their research Warner Weil, Wildemeersch & Jansen (2005) found that identity was a significant aspect of activation in practice. However, this was being shaped by what they term 'economicization' and the 'discourse of deficiency' (p.200f). The macro context is well described by Honneth (2004):

[...], within the space of only two decades a marked individualisation of ways of life took place: members of Western societies were compelled, urged, or encouraged, for the sake of their own future, to place their very selves at the centre of their own life-planning and practice. (p. 469)

Driving the change described by Honneth were new educational opportunities, the breakdown of old career trajectories, the loosening of social mores, new opportunities for leisure, increases in wealth and mobility. These changes place much greater emphasis on the individual to succeed according to a personally plotted roadmap, but also each person is in constant comparison with other individuals' achievements. For those who are currently unemployed and for whom the formal education system has failed, then the new autonomies present opportunities but also elevated challenges as

they are very much at the centre of the process of rebuilding their identities and their lives. These challenges may be even steeper in a context of lower levels of societal solidarity and the absences of the sort of traditional makers which previous generations were able to call upon. Heaped on this is Warner Weil, Wildemeerch & Jansen's 'discourse of deficiency', which labels certain groups with an identity of failure.

A reflexive model that allows both individuals and marginalized groups generate a positive identity project is a strong counter weight to a discourse of deficiency that assumes inter-generational failure and invokes the need for sanctions as a corrective measure. Additionally a clear understanding of recognition (in Honneth's terms) is necessary in order to create the conditions for an alternative perspective of identity and identity capital.

There are many thousands of Europeans who are currently unemployed who do not have the self-confidence, the education and skills to find sustainable careers. A society in which some have a high level of autonomy to plot their destinies, while others have less autonomy are much more vulnerable economically, socially and psychologically does not add up to a fair and free society. It is therefore important that we re-examine the paradigm of labour activation. Some unemployed people need investment in their human capital through training and education; others need not only help with their human capital, but also with their social capital in order to leverage their education and training; others still need investment in their identity capital so that they can begin to accumulate the social and human capital they need to create new opportunities.

While work is not the answer to everything it can play a key role in terms of achieving human fulfilment and happiness. Hinchliffe (2004) offers a really useful discussion on the broader role of work in human flourishing. He claims that by understanding that work, however we define it, can have 'an ethical dimension as well as a technical one' (p. 536) that takes the individual beyond personal satisfaction then it can be a real part in human flourishing. There is little question that on a number of fronts work can enhance an individual's experience of life, it can bring income, personal satisfaction, the expression of technique and in Hinchliffe's terms contribute to human flourishing.

It is only through the establishment of an identity that we can know ourselves as individuals. The development of identity is not a single moment, but a lifelong project; neither does it take a single upward trajectory. All human beings at some time suffer shocks to their sense of self. They come to doubt their own identity and perhaps even lose central parts of their identities through the breakup of relationships, physical and mental changes, losing a career or indeed their national identity. When we speak about people who are long-term unemployed, they very often have a low self-perception, which may have been reinforced over their entire lives through lack of opportunities and indeed poor experiences of education. Not only is it unrealistic to expect people in these circumstances to simply transition to work through enhancing their human capital, it is unjust. Society depends for its existence on human beings mutually recognising each other, when mutual recognition breaks down so do solidarity and in extreme cases this can lead to total breakdown of mutual trust and the emergence of extreme violence, which we have unfortunately seen too often. Recognition in that sense is both an individual and social good. For an individual recognition is about being valued by others as a full and equal member of society and being acknowledged for who she or he is.

Honneth (2002) uses the young Hegel's 'three modes of recognition—love, rights and solidarity' to articulate its consequences both socially and individually (p. 501). Recognition practically underpins how we operate as social beings, right from our

everyday interactions with each other to the foundations of civil society itself including the origins of human rights and citizenship. In Honneth's words individuals are only free 'in the full sense of the word' when they are recognised in accordance with how they rationally understand themselves (p. 509).

Conclusion

The model of reflexive activation proposed here draws on Schuller's three capitals. It acknowledges that education and training are key catalysts for capacity building to engage positively in the labour market. For very many people the path back to work is about a journey that ends with rather than starts with human capital. The journey can be seen as starting with identity capital, progressing through social capital in order to leverage human capital in the labour market. Reflexive activation can be a long-term project, especially for those with low levels of Schuller's capitals. In the unfolding world of flexicurity it is also likely to be a lifelong project as people have several changes of job, periods of unemployment, career changes, and erosion and obsolescence of human capital. Reflexive activation acknowledges that a person has one life, but potentially many jobs and indeed for some never a real job. The priority then is to address the individual's lifetime needs, rather than a short-term response in an ever-changing employment landscape.

By giving individuals the tools, supports, advice and skills to navigate this environment and also providing them with life skills, interests and wider horizons we are equipping them to make the sorts of choices that will motivate and energise them, help them contribute positively to society, live healthier and more rewarding lives.

Lifelong learning is not an activity outside of the overall goals for a good society. It should and must be part of a project to not just help individuals improve their education, but to contribute to the overall educational enhancement of the wider society. Schuller's model of three capitals is useful in helping us see how adult education can help both the individual and society achieve its goals. Very many people today feel that the 'system' has failed them and the empirical evidence supports this view. Many of those people have extremely low levels of self-esteem and deflated senses of their own identities. For those people to reach their potential and contribute to their own futures and the future of society they need to interact with policies and practices that accord them with recognition of their human dignity. Reflexive activation is such a model of engagement. The adult learners is at the centre of things both in terms of identifying their own needs and aspirations and being able to contribute to the design of appropriate responses to help them engage positively with their lifelong learning and their role as citizens and participants in the labour force. Reflexive activation can also contribute to capacity building for the type of sustainable employment framework envisaged through flexicurity.

Notes

¹ Croatia became the 28th and most recent member of the European Union in 2013.

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Book review: Writing for peer reviewed journals—strategies for getting published

By Pat Thomson and Barbara Kamler. (Eds.). (London and New York: Routledge, 2013). 190 pp., ISBN 978-0415809313

Based on their long history of publishing, reviewing, editing and facilitating workshops, Pat Thomson and Barbara Kamler have written a very helpful book for anyone who wants to publish in international academic journals. The authors address a wide audience ranging from researchers in the beginning of their career to even experienced scholars for whom this book can be very helpful in their role as supervisors of research work. Thomson and Kamler organise their book on the basis of nine chapters that systematically describe the steps and considerations to be made when preparing, writing and improving journal articles, but also on how to collaborate with others, on how to engage with reviewers, editors and peer academics. The authors themselves, in their introductory chapter, present a useful overview of the nine chapters. This is helpful for the readers who don't want to go through the entire text from beginning to end, but who prefer to focus on one or other aspect of the publishing task.

They start with some relevant reflections on the necessity of publishing internationally, for researchers throughout their entire career (chapter 1). Writing and publishing is a core feature of an academic identity. And of course, when one writes it is very important to reflect on the discourse community one wants to engage in, or in other words, what reader will be addressed (chapter 2). Today, for whatever discipline, there are innumerable journals available, ranging from general to specialised, and from high to low ranked publication channels. To make a good selection, when one wants to have a paper published, is not an easy task. It can be helpful to screen various journals in one's own discipline, and furthermore, to look what kind of publications appear in particular journals. It is also very important to consider the mission statement of the journal and have a look at who the editors are and how the editorial board is composed. This reveals information about the general orientation of the journal, its preferences for qualitative or quantitative, or for theoretical or empirical contributions. A next step is to make clear for oneself and for the potential discourse community what the contribution will be about (chapter 3). Here, Thomson and Kamler present a very relevant and practical tool for writing abstracts that they call 'the tiny text'. The suggestion is not to wait with the writing of the abstract until the paper is finished, but to consider both the title of the paper and the abstract already from the beginning of the work. This is very helpful for the writer to clarify the focus of the contribution. The authors suggest, when preparing the abstract, to consider four moves: first the author locates the paper in the chosen discourse community; in the second place, the focus of the paper is delineated; in the third place the report is clarified, which means outlining the research, sample, method of analysis; the final move is the argument, which summarizes the point of view of the author regarding the findings to be presented in the paper. In the next chapter 'So What', the authors reflect on the five challenges that early career writers often struggle with (chapter 4). These are: drowning in details; trying to say it all; writing without a reader in mind; struggling to find the angle and the worries about being 'out there' in the international research community. In connection with these challenges more concrete suggestions are given to compose the abstract and to

‘crunch’ the title. The first four chapters are all about the preparation of the writing. Chapter five is about how the real work, the writing, is taking shape. Here the reader again learns how important the initial abstract is as a planning tool. It helps to decide about the length of the article, including the weight of every single section. It enables the author to plan how much time s/he wants to spend on every separate part. And it keeps the writer on track, while moving forward. Furthermore, in chapter 5, Thomson and Kamler suggest the researcher to create a research space (CARS) for him/herself, or to delineate a specific niche for the contribution-in-progress. This means that the author has to make clear what the specific added value of the contribution will be, against the backdrop of other papers that have dealt with similar issues. All these actions result into the writing of the first draft, and then into the refining of this draft (chapter 6). In that chapter we learn about the use of (sub-)headings, the development of a meta-commentary and finally about the importance of writing a clear conclusion that makes a claim about the value of the contribution. Now the final version can be made ready and sent to the journal. The author may expect in most cases minor or major revisions or even a rejection of the paper (chapter 7). When working on the revisions, the author is expected to carefully deal with all comments of the reviewers, even when s/he does not agree with some of them. In a response letter the disagreement is then clarified. Chapter 8 presents the benefits and complexities of collaboration when writing a paper together with colleagues. It also discusses the delicate issue of asymmetrical collaborations. And, in the final chapter some ideas are elaborated about how a dissertation can be the basis for a long term planning of several articles in diverse publication channels.

The authors have been organising writing workshops around the world for many years. The book reflects that vast experience. Their disciplinary background is education. Many of the examples come from that domain. However, the examples and suggestions are valuable for a wide range of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. The blurb of this publication says that ‘this lively book uses a combination of personal stories, student texts, published journal abstracts and excerpts from interviews with journal editors and publishers’. It furthermore suggests that ‘it is written in an accessible style and that it offers a collegial approach to a task which is difficult for most scholars, regardless of their years of experience’. Not one single word of this text is incorrect. I have read the book, which is indeed about one of the most difficult tasks of academic life, with lots of interest and recognition. I’ve also been able to use it as the basis for a workshop with PhD students. Also at that occasion, the book has shown its usefulness. So, I can advice it to anyone in academia who struggles with the hard work of writing and publishing. That is: to everyone.

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Book review: Adult education policy and the European Union—theoretical and methodological perspectives

By Marcella Milana and John Holford. (Eds.). (Rotterdam: Sense Publisher, 2014). 194 pp., ISBN (open access e-book): 9789462095489

This book is a timely response to the increasing influence of the European Union (EU) in shaping adult education policy in the member countries. This collection is premised on the assumption that nation states still make policy, but they do so within a system where the EU plays an important part. It is therefore no longer sufficient to rely on “methodological nationalism” when researching policy of adult education at the national level but these policies will have to be examined within a system of transnational governance.

The aim of this book, which is organized in four parts, is not to describe adult education policy in Europe, but to explore key issues in how research can be carried out. However, in order to provide the reader with a solid background of what has happened at the EU level Part I, *The evolution of European union policies*, looks at the progression of EU policies which have had a direct effect on adult education practice. It raises questions such as: How have these policies evolved? Who were, and who are, the political and other actors involved? Who has been included, and who has been excluded, from this process? And most importantly, what effect are these policies likely to have in shaping the future of adult education in Europe? The two chapters in this section are very informative and provide a rich and most useful insight into the adult education policy evolution within the EU. Palle Rasmussen traces how adult learning policy has developed as an element in EU education and training policy. The work highlights the European Commission’s contribution to constructing a transnational dimension in European adult education policy. As a follow up Vida Mohorčič Špolar & John Holford explore the wider intellectual and policy background to EU’s work in the area of adult education and examine how it has moved from a relative marginal position to being a central issue in the language of the EU.

The rest of the book focuses primarily on discussing theoretical and methodological frameworks that could inform research on the relationship between the EU and member states which come to govern the policy and practice of adult education. In *Part II, Political theories and their potential*, the two contributors Malgorzata Klatt and Marcella Milana develop their arguments by drawing on a body of political science literature emerging mostly – but not only – from the field of European studies. They examine such questions as how different institutions within the EU work, what the power relations among them are, and how these relations have changed over time. Which ‘hard-’ and ‘soft-law’ mechanisms are utilised? In doing so they identify and comment, from a perspective that assumes transnationalism and close interdependence amongst administrative and governance systems at national and European levels. The two chapters are informative and provide the reader with a good general understanding on how the EU operates and provide a fruitful framework for future research on lifelong learning and transnational governance.

The contributors to Part III: *Governmentality perspectives and their potential*, use sociological perspectives to explore, theoretically and analytically, the emergence of a

new kind of governance and its impact on European lifelong learning politics and practice. They discuss such questions as: What kind of arrangements and actions define the common good at a European level? What principles of justice feed into the construction of a new moral self? And no less important, what identity do these create for the adult learner in Europe? Both chapters take a point of departure in Michel Foucault's conceptions of power, governmentality and the technologies of the self. Romuald Normand & Ramón Pacheco look at the new challenges the new political configurations of the common good where individuals are expected to focus their actions towards a complex lifelong universe. In the second chapter Andreas Fejes argues for the usefulness of Michael Foucault in research on lifelong learning. Both chapters provide a rich theoretical frame for approaching research on lifelong learning. However, at times one can detect a tendency to focus more on theory as such than on its application to the exploration of lifelong learning.

In the final section Part I: *Developing methodological perspectives*, the focus shifts from theory to methodology and addresses how adult education scholarship can productively borrow methodologies from other disciplines, and how this can contribute to methodological advancement in the field. The two chapters draw on the sociology of law, policy sociology and critical policy analysis to challenge disciplinary boundaries in an attempt to provide new methodological approaches calling for the triangulation of methods of data gathering and the combination of analytical strategies. These include, but are not limited to, discourse analysis, quantitative content analysis and qualitative content analysis of policy documents, interviews and other narrative data. Pia Cort presents a proposal on how to research the unpredictable pathways of EU lifelong learning policies. Borrowing the concept of 'policy trails' she argues that the methodology of policy trailing and the use of the mixed methods of discourse analysis and narrative inquiry are a means of overcoming 'methodological nationalism' and of linking structure and agency in research on the 'European educational space'. The second chapter in this section is by Evengelia Koutidou who presents a methodological framework from the sociology of law, and explores its relevance for adult education research on the implementation of statutory frameworks regarding certain ethnically and culturally diverse social groups. She does this comparatively at both the EU and national levels. The two texts help the reader to learn about less well known but most useful frameworks that can assist in the analysis of transnational policy making in the field of adult education. What is particularly helpful is the way the authors have managed to illustrate how the theoretical perspectives can be applied by looking at actual policies.

Overall the book successfully delivers on what it has promised and after having worked through the different sections the reader will have developed a good understanding of the shift towards transnational governance and the rule of the EU in this process. The book also provides the reader with a useful set of theories and methods that will assist those who intend to examine national and supranational policies on adult education. I therefore strongly recommend that this book be used in adult education graduate courses, not only in the area of policy studies but as well in foundation courses.

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Book review: Private world(s)–gender and informal learning of adults

By Joanna Ostrouch-Kamińska and Christina, C. Vieira (Eds.) (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2015). 194 pp., ISBN 978-94-6209-969-2

The issues of gender and informal learning pose challenges in many social contexts. Therefore, they have become an interest of many researchers, activists and educators around the world. The rapid development of research on gender and education had its beginnings in the 1960s and 1970s (Bank et al., 2007). Nevertheless, there are still some “missing points” in both, social reality where “gender stereotypes have not been changed very much in recent decades” (Ostrouch-Kamińska, Vieira, 2015, p. 1) as well in gender discourse where – to some extent – feminists or “womanism” perspectives (Walker, 1983) still dominate, at least in some countries. Therefore, the book *Private World(s). Gender and Informal Learning of Adults* (2015) is of great value in terms of both, informal and (non)formal learning as well gender issues analyses.

The book consists of 13 chapters (plus Introduction) written by researchers from various countries and classified into three main parts: 1) Private Spheres, 2) Minorities and Activism and 3) (Non)Formal Contexts of Informal Learning. It is worth noting that such book structure reflects the dimensions and spheres where gender has an impact on learning and biographies. It also reflects some continuity from “private” to “public” and “politic” and their interrelations (“there is nothing more public than privacy” as K. Popovic et al suggest in their chapter). As a result, there is a space for various gender aspects analyses: the personal beliefs, values and learning paths; gender role in shaping family life, social activity and commitment; the relationship between gender and health and well-being behaviours; social perceptions of gender and woman and men’s roles in society; gender stereotypes, gender impact on education and career etc. This plurality of aspects covered by the book makes up the book’s good quality – the reader can realize cross-sectional gender impact on individuals and societies.

In general, the book can be characterized by:

1. It is an up-to date book in terms of gender discourse timeliness – while introducing the men’s perspective the book is a part of gender discourse that occurred after the “boy problem” or “boy-turn” shift (Bank et al., 2007 p. 719 -722). The authors of chapters devoted to the men’s perspective (chapters: 2, 4, 8) analyse the social construction of men’s role. As a result, the Editors have avoided introducing (only) the pro-feminist perspective. Highlighting the differences between gender studies and pro-feministic approaches (chapter 13) itself contributes to overcoming social biases and stereotypes accrued around this kinds of research in some countries (sometimes, in some more traditionally-oriented societies, gender studies are wrongly reduced to the feminist approaches not only within particular social groups but also researchers who do not deal with gender analyses). Most of the chapters also refer to the modern and liquid modernity characterized by the crisis-times, uncertainty, migrations etc. As a result, the book reflects the reality in which creating and choosing identity have become a task for individuals (Bauman, 1993) even though this can be a

painful process requiring taking a difficult decision as it is presented in chapters 2 and 7.

2. The value of the book also lies in the fact that it introduces perspectives from the countries that are less visible in the gender discourse (still) dominated mostly by the countries such as United States, United Kingdom etc. The authors have demonstrated that gender shapes biographies regardless of sex and types of societies. As a result, they presented a very interesting picture of some individual and social issues related to learning and gender around the world. Another issue related to the “locality” is associated with the fact that because gender is constructed locally, authors have presented various cultures, even though it was unintentional effect. Thanks to that, the book contributes to overcoming many social stereotypes, e.g. what is “female” and “male” (the great example is presented in the chapter 2).
3. In the book, the chapters are constructed on the basis of research conducted with various methodologies – both, qualitative and quantitative ones. There is also a space given to conceptual-theoretic frameworks and discursive analyses. Therefore, in the book, there are not only the particular perspectives but also the differences and similarities between woman and men’s learning presented. This also demonstrates that the issues raised in the book can be analysed at different levels and from various theoretical and methodological perspectives.
4. Each chapter of the book is of great theoretical and methodological quality. Authors analyse critically the current concepts of informal learning. Therefore, informal learning is presented as a complex issue made up of many dimensions, including the “hidden” ones. Therefore, the book is of great value in adult education research field – it is an analysis of informal learning in many social contexts. What is also worth noting is that gender is presented in the book not only as a “obstacle” for learning but also has its own potential for learning. It can be a trigger for social activity and involvement, as it was presented especially in chapters 3, 6, 8 and others.
5. The book has its own contribution to the practices (of working and education) as well. One of the biggest statements is that gender should be considered in the (formal) education (chapters 9, 10) and working-life (chapters 11, 12). While considering gender practitioners can understand better the individuals and their social capital. Knowing their own gender stereotypes learners can create a new space for learning as it is stressed in the chapter 10 and others.

To sum it up, the book is a great analysis of both, informal learning as well gender issues constantly involved in this learning. Editors invite the readers to analyse informal learning in the context of work, social activity, migrations, family life, health problems etc. Learning analysed in the book is anchored in personal and socio-historical contexts. This is another example of ESREA’s books of good quality and interesting (and relevant) issues being raised.

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Book review: Learning across generations in Europe

By Bernhard Schmidt-Hertha, Sabina Jelenc Krasovec, and Marvin Formosa (Eds.) (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2015). 215 pp. ISBN 978-94-6209-900-5

Learning in later life is one of the fastest growing subfields within adult education. However, the focus on the elderly is a rather recent phenomenon. At first, learning and development of older people became a central theme within gerontology, termed as educational gerontology from the 1970s. Keith Percy (2012) now sees educational gerontology to be synonymous with education of older adults and learning in later life. Older peoples' learning is accordingly an overlapping area between adult education and gerontology. The first handbook on older adult learning has been published (Findsen & Formosa, 2011) and it has become a separate topic in other handbooks, encyclopaedias and review literature of adult learning. In 2010 ESREA established a new network on education and learning of older adults (ELOA), and so far it has organized six international conferences. *Learning across Generations in Europe* (2014) is one of its results.

Several researchers have suggested specific terms for this new field, for instance, eldergogy, gerontagogy or gerogogy. In one of the articles, Dominique Kern discusses the conceptual basis and frameworks for older adult learning. To date, however, there is no general agreement of separating a new field or discipline based on age and adding geragogy as a third element to the pedagogy-andragogy division. Currently a strong research emphasis on the life course perspective is working against separate thinking and so does the recent interest of intergenerational learning.

The book is divided into three sections: 1) Theory and policy issues, 2) Participation and programmes, and 3) Intergenerational learning. It consists of 17 chapters including introduction and conclusion. Only two of the contributors (Marvin Formosa and Dominique Kern) come from institutions of gerontology. This book is first and foremost the contribution of adult educators in Europe who have older peoples' learning and education as their main or partial interest. Does this mean that educational gerontology and older learning, although being synonymous, have not succeeded to establish a common area and meeting place for research and inquiry? The book demonstrates, however, that older learning is studied across Europe and comprises a diversity of themes. What is older learning, according to this book, and what does it bring to our understanding of learning in later life?

Firstly, learning in later life is about informal learning and is part of community learning. What is needed, António Frago claims (article 6), is to provide spaces for elderly to socialize, learn and live. Barry Golding gives in his article an extraordinary example of possibilities for such spaces. He writes about the men's shed movement, which has spread from Australia to New Zealand and United Kingdom. A shed is, according to an English observer, a "meeting place ... where men of all ages can go to talk, interact, learn and further their general wellbeing in any number of ways ... akin to guerrilla gardening in its 'bottom up' spontaneity" (Golding, p. 28). The shed is a form of intergenerational practise, Golding explains, and in line with the ideas of Ivan Illich it serves to bring about a de-institutionalized society for conviviality defined as a dynamic replacement for the control of human activity by institutions, professionals and

managers. Other meeting places –and real gardens – are discussed by Barry Hake, i.e. the urban allotments, community gardens and open spaces for recreation, exercise and education. What grows in these gardens, according to Hake, are more than fruit and vegetables, even intergenerational learning, healthy ageing and the practice of democracy.

Secondly, later life is a time for learning by volunteering. Malgorzata Malec-Rawinski presents voluntary work in Poland as a space for seniors' learning. Volunteering is a way of retirement and by retirement the active worker takes on a new role as an active volunteer to benefit the society as well as finding a personal meaning in life. In the Polish context, however, volunteering seems to attract the active and well-educated women, but why are not men visible as volunteers, she asks.

Thirdly, we find third agers as participants and learners in voluntary associations, universities of the third age, lifelong learning institutes, elder hostels and a vast number of private and community centres and institutions all over the world. Here the elderly learn by studying together, travelling, participating in cultural activities and by taking active part in running the activities. Irena Zemaitaitė adds some insight to these kinds of third age activities from a Lithuanian perspective.

Fourthly, later life may be a renewed opportunity for further and higher education. Some few elder are ordinary students, and some few universities in Spain, England, USA and other countries offer special programmes for older adults. In his article, Alfredo Alfageme suggests temporary exit from employment to be used for lifelong learning. An extended recurrent education into old age would especially be relevant if we postpone the age of retirement and consider the years 50-75 – as suggested by Tom Schuller and David Watson (2009) - to be a flexible phase of working and retirement.

Fifthly, the needs for skills and competence development prevail in later life. Tarja Tikkanen discusses this in her article, but the ageing workers are – in line with the available data used from EU and OECD – those aged 40-65 years. This is a serious delimitation in international research and statistics as we enter a new age shift (Biggs et al., 2006). Characteristics of the new shift is a changed working life in which people will postpone retirement, have encore careers and portfolio life of balancing work, leisure, volunteering, family life etc. (Kidahashi, 2010). Hence, the needs for work-related learning beyond the age of 65 will be increasing.

Sixthly, an important learning field is e-learning for elderly. Veronika Thalhammer explores in her article the e-learning programmes in Germany that are offered by universities, church-related institutions, senior citizens' associations, clubs, and self-help groups. These are not exclusively targeting older people and the programmes recruit a heterogeneous group of people.

A running theme in a number of the articles in the book is intergenerational learning which was the focused topic on the third ELOA-conference in 2012. The concept is especially discussed by Bernhard Schmidt-Hertha who analysis its meaning, use and forms as well as state of research. Ann-Kristin Boström relates in her article this concept to the creation of social capital exemplified by a Swedish granddad project and the Malmö longitudinal Study. Sonja Kump and Sabina Jelenc Krasovec discuss the meaning and rationales of intergenerational learning in the Slovenian context. They claim that a new paradigm of intergenerational learning is connected with the concept of community education and it should primarily aim to increase the quality of community life. The concept of empowerment also appears in several articles. Esmeralda Veloso and Paula Guimarães from Portugal point to empowerment as one of the rationales for learning in later life. The aim of empowering people is one of the key aspects of critical educational gerontology as advocated by Marvin Formosa (2011). In this book,

however, Formosa writes about policies and practices of lifelong learning in later life and concludes his article by some future policy directions. Finally, Georgios Zarifs brings into focus an often neglected group within the field of older learning, namely the disadvantaged who have neither the external or internal resources, abilities and possibilities nor the motivation to participate in the learning provisions. In times of crisis, this article is a most essential reminder that much outreaching and social work is needed in order to give the vulnerable, disadvantaged and care-dependent elderly real access and possibilities for taking part in social life and learning.

In conclusion, this book gives a valuable contribution to the research knowledge of intergenerational and older learning and I look forward to more publications from the ESREA network on education and learning of older adults.

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Book review: Working and learning in times of uncertainty—challenges to adult, professional and vocational education

By Sandra Bohlinger, Ulrika Haake, Christian Helms Jørgensen, Hanna Toiviainen and Andreas Wallo. (Eds.) (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2015). 244 pp. ISBN open access e-book: 9789463002448

Over the past few years, the relationship between working and learning has been one of the most-discussed topics in policy and practice, both in literature and in research. To shed light on this complex phenomenon, the editors chose “times of uncertainty” as their point of departure. They see the causes of this uncertainty as globalisation with its aggressive competition, and the international scale of the ways in which business is done, along with the creation of network-based work practices and co-configurative production. All of this also goes hand-in-hand - in times of economic crisis - with ever-faster technological developments, processes of digitalisation, specialisation, flexibilisation, privatisation and with demographic change in the workforce and the (longer) working careers. These trends raise the editors’ concerns about the consequences for adult, professional and vocational education. They are under pressure to focus on the individual responsibilities of the workforce and their self-governing or learning in order to acquire the necessary skills and adapt to the demands of the capitalist or free market respectively. As a result, learning and education are veering ever further away from collective service provision and accountability, and this is moreover being reinforced by the current underdevelopment and embedding of HRM practices that can create a working organisation as a powerful learning environment and by the lack of suitable leadership.

Taking these observations and critical considerations as their springboard, the editors have brought together fifteen articles by researchers from predominantly the Nordic countries, but also from Germany and Spain, to delve deeper into the “Challenges to Adult, Professional and Vocational Education” conceptually, empirically and in critical-discursive form. What is striking is that this subtitle only addresses the issue of the relationship between working and learning from one perspective. Most of the contributions primarily illuminate the matching in professional and vocational education between supply and demand, i.e. linking educational profiles and qualifications with labour market needs and positions. The five editors and 16 authors explore why most types of work, as a result of globalisation, are being reconfigured in new ways, which not only requires learning, but also provides opportunities for learning. In the contributions this explains why scant attention is paid to the (re-)design of jobs and job crafting that ultimately purpose to promote the learning potential of the jobs, the labour organisation and the careers, and not just to suffer the consequences of any induced changes brought about as a result of other reasons and interests. Nevertheless, the two overarching questions raised do offer room for a dual approach: “How is working and learning affected by uncertainty and globalisation? And, in what ways do individuals, organisations, political actors and education systems respond to challenges that arise from globalisation and uncertainty?” These are pertinent questions, to which most of the contributions deliver relevant information and answers. This is not the case, or is less the case for a few articles that while certainly interesting in and of

their own right, do not deal very explicitly with or link to the issue of globalisation and uncertainty. (see Art 5, 7, 10 and 15)

One added value of this publication is without a doubt formed by the diversity and in part also the complementarity of the shared research. Both quantitatively empirical and qualitatively designed research are present, and there is also room given to conceptual-theoretic frameworks and discursive analyses of policy documents. Eight articles report on case studies from a variety of sectors (to include the police, elderly care, automation engineering in forestry, public administration, university colleges and training centres among others), zooming in on concrete and recognisable practices. Sometimes there is a lack of explanation of the case's relevance to the problematic nature of globalisation and uncertainty and/or an indication of the particular or universal scope of the findings. In this way the editors fail to justify their choice of the spectrum of the - otherwise praiseworthy - authors, the majority of whom are active in Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Norway. ESREA - the sponsor of this book - does after all form a large (or in any case larger) European potential of researchers or authors who can more richly document the theme of the effects of globalisation on working and learning, and in so doing could bring both the particular and universal character of the findings to the fore.

The editors have created structure from the contributions' diversity by ordering the articles in three parts. Part 1 of the book focuses on the micro level of working and learning, i.e. on understanding the learning process and the learners, leaders and trainers from an individual point of view. In Part 2 the meso level sheds light on organisations, professions and institutions, where work has shifted from being a site of carrying out standardised tasks to an environment for learning and shared generation of new knowledge and innovations. Part three of the book addresses the macro level by analysing how vocational, professional and adult education are governed, structured and organised. In a detailed "Introduction: Working and Learning in Times of Uncertainty" and an extensive "Conclusion: The Contested Field of Working and Learning", they have also clearly and critically highlighted the issue's line of thinking, the positioning of the contributions as well as the answers, and (five) focal themes for further consideration and research.

To indicate the meaning of this book for practitioners, policy makers and researchers alike, there now follow a handful of key conclusions with a few remarks in the margins.

The analysis of learning *in* and *for* work in this volume deals exclusively with paid labour. As the editors state in their concluding remarks, further research should take a broader view, in order to encompass collective productive activities, including civic activity and voluntary work.

Although adult education is mentioned in the subtitle of the book, the general or liberal adult education and its significance for the learners' personal and professional development, his/her empowerment and active citizenship in work and society, remains unexplored.

That said, a nuanced picture *is* painted of the actual-empirical configurations of learning in and for work. Four configurations are discerned: orientations towards behaviouristic control, a cognitivist emphasis on meaningfulness, a socio-cultural participation approach, and technology-mediated distributed learning.

Rather than observing large groups of low skilled workers in poor working conditions at the bottom of the global supplier chains benefit from rich learning environments provided, some articles offer evidence that new experiences in the workplace are what can transform an employee into an engaged learner. Nevertheless,

the editors raise the question of whether we are moving towards a new polarisation between higher-ranking autonomous professionals with autonomy, challenging jobs and learning opportunities, and the lower ranking workers with routine jobs and little autonomy.

An interesting perspective regarding lower ranking workers focusses on their learner identity. An analytical framework of the “learner identity” presented in one of the articles, embraces knowledge that emerges from people’s historical life experiences and their bodily and practical engagement in work. These elements evoke concerns and emotions about feelings of competence, and responsibility for the quality of work. It also shines a spotlight on people’s perceptions of their need and opportunities to participate in job-related adult education and training.

In work’s fluid globalized context, one of the complicated transition patterns from education to employment is the young graduate’s tendency to evade (traditional) vocational paths in order to keep his/her options open to the opportunity of higher education. This observation of “academic drift” and the fact that apprenticeship - which is called the archetypal form of learning a craft - has been replaced in most countries discussed in the articles, by school-based forms of learning is associated with a shift in the structuring of modern societies. In modern societies formal education and credentials have become more decisive for the attainment of social positions. As a consequence learning of standardised, codified and abstract knowledge *for work* in educational institutions has displaced the learning of situated, specific and embodied knowledge *in work*. At the same time, it must be clearly recognized that the large cohorts of graduates from higher education encounter problems gaining access to stable employment at an adequate qualification level. This observation provokes an inquest into the value of academic education, and a problematisation of the credentials’ inflation, over-qualification, under-employment, as well as the precarious employment situation of graduates.

A counterbalance to the domination of formal education and diplomas is - or could be - the recognition of prior learning. This represents a formal approach to identifying, assessing, and documenting knowledge that people have gained through experience and personal learning history, which needs further implementation in HRM practices. Research reported in this volume demonstrates the added value of this awareness by showing how a prior learning assessment process simultaneously produces new knowledge and initiates new learning processes, particularly when facilitated by discussion as the training method.

Another well-known problematic aspect of learning for work in academic settings and in off the job training, is the transfer of what has been learned. This transfer is, in many cases, inadequate, insufficient or completely absent. Not only do the collected data and data-analyses in some articles confirm this problem and challenge, but an interesting conceptual framework is also provided to better describe and understand the transfer issue. The framework is a re-conceptualisation of the notion of transfer, featuring an integrative model that approaches transfer through both process and outcome data and that links transfer and transformation. The model highlights how learning transfer in continuing vocational training should be understood as a context-related transformation of knowledge, where both the training and the work environment constitute learning resources for each other. Complementary to this model is the concept of “deferred transfer” as it has been conceived and tested in Spanish research.

To conclude, the editors highlight that the organisation of learning in and for work takes place in a field of tensions between power relations and opposing interests. Interesting

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contributions in this respect are the analysis of the influence of EU-policies on promoting and funding work related learning, and also the article revealing how in Spain - and probably also in other countries - the funding system for training programs can result in the satisfaction of powerful financial interests of large employer organisations, to the detriment of supporting participative worker training.

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Book review: Researching and transforming adult learning and communities—the local/global context

By Rob Evans, Ewa Kurantowicz and Emilio Lucio-Villegas (Eds.). (Rotterdam, the Netherlands: Sense Publishers, 2016). 197 pp., ISBN 978-946300-357-5.

At national and international educational policy levels the focus has been on the training and vocational education of adults. In contrast academics and practitioners in adult education have stressed, over the last decades, the importance of existential, substantial learning, based on the everyday life of adults and intertwined with the environment and social milieu they live in. The book 'Researching and Transforming Adult Learning and Communities' is one of the examples, in which authors (from structural as well as interpretative social theories positions) emphasize learning interrelated with the struggles of adults to deal with life's challenges, with endeavours to tackle social inequalities, injustices, efforts to enhance quality of life and well-being on individual and social level. They underscore relations between adult education and change, between learning and community. The idea of community is understood as crucial for the discussions concerning the possibilities for social changes rising from the power of people. Biesta and Cowell (2012) highlight, on the one hand, the need for social cohesion and integration (a cohesive society needs 'strong' communities), but on the other hand citizenship and democracy. In this sense the authors of the book emphasize the bottom-up approach in community changes, where activity and participation of all members of the community matter; what is left for adult educators is the rethinking on how to foster constructive community change. For this reason participatory action research is favoured; the question, should adult educators be mainly organic intellectuals (as defined by Gramsci), public pedagogues (as defined by Biesta) or maybe public sociologist (as defined by Burawoy) in this process, remains present and gives many possible variations to choose from. The message of this book is however optimistic: adult learning and education in the community has a potential for the future, when it is connected to social movements and struggles for human rights and equality.

Communities exist 'in and through a complex combination of subjective, intersubjective and objective elements, experiential, temporal and spatial dimensions, and the ways in which such elements and dimensions are experienced and enacted' (Biesta & Cowell, 2012, p. 48). In this situation, adult learning becomes very important, because it paves the way from consensus to plurality and difference, from individual to social strength; intersubjectivity is crucial. An individual is initially involved in interpersonal relations, forming an inner space where people follow their interests ('inter-est') (Arendt, 1996) and space 'where freedom can appear'; this provides learning experiences, forcing us to move beyond the self and consider the plight of the other. Learning in community can therefore provide mutual cooperation, exchange of ideas and knowledge and could be a forum for social and personal change, a 'transitional space' (Wildemersch, 2012). Learning is a weapon against manipulation, lying and abuse. Adult learning in communities allow people to fight for recognition, social justice, solidarity, individual and collective well-being; it defends the principle of citizenship education and learning instead of the principle of consumerism, as ascertained by Torres (2013).

The book is a work of 20 authors from 11 countries, which offers a variety of insights to community learning practices and examples. It is divided into three sections. The first one is devoted to general and more theoretical discussions on the importance of learning activities at local level, the second stresses the examples of adult learning in communities and the third section emphasises learning through and within social movements. Rob Evans, Ewa Kurantowicz and Emilio Lucio-Villegas have written the introduction to the book. As editors, they point to the importance of social change at the level of community as an intersection of global and local, where learning is the result of people's daily life. Learning is central to different processes of change, whether being individual, social, cultural, political or interpersonal, and whether being connected to training, community projects or social movements. As for the importance of adult education in this process, they emphasise participation, dialogue and collectiveness as an opposition to growing individualism and competitiveness.

The first section, offers 'the bigger picture' of the topic, and is formed by four chapters. The authors are dealing with possibilities to face social reality and diminish inequalities by empowerment through learning and (popular) education. They stress the role of communities (NGO, services and institutions within) in relation to the role of the state and the performance of educators as mediators of social change. Rethinking in this section is based on heterogeneous cultural, social and historical contexts of authors, which open diverse questions and perspectives on challenges with similar roots—how to understand and foster community/local development and create new learning spaces.

The second section has six chapters, offering challenging and informative examples of adult learning in communities. Community literacy practices from Switzerland, Belgium and Turkey are accentuated as examples with various dimensions and perspectives; they are gender, age and ethnically marked, but throughout they deal with power and inequalities and stress learning for freedom, resistance and escape from deprivation and educational disadvantages. In this section, neoliberal understanding of citizenship is confronted with the concept of citizenship, based on collective needs and interests. Research shows that despite the fact, that the demands of young people are more instrumental and 'oriented towards struggles in the labour market rather than towards struggles in community and society' (p. 64), learning citizenship through activism remains of interest for young people. In one of the chapters the transformative power of education is outplayed through words that 'learning is both at the heart of social conformity and also at the heart of social change' (p. 103); through research it becomes clear that without critical standpoint in analysing structures of power and governance, evaluation of learning outcomes can be misunderstood and misleading. Analyses of adult educators' perceptions of dichotomies between different lifelong education practices (for example pragmatic and functional education on one side and critical, radical approaches on another) show that ambiguity may be inherent to the activities of adult educators. The question remains whether there is an awareness of consequences of certain choices among practitioners, but it is suggested that a more critical position of adult educators would be desirable.

In the third section learning is positioned in different social movements and social endeavours, which is presented through learning practices in five chapters. Learning practices are by no means ambiguous—in one of the chapters it is stated that 'no forms of education are cushioned from social and economic struggles for power' (p. 155). The author warns that discriminatory practices may also be reinforced through participatory practices, which means that we have to be aware of exercising 'power-over', 'power-with' and 'power-within' when being in the adult educator's role. Two chapters deal with the situation in the Algarve region, Portugal. The first presents the project

RADIAL and the involvement of women in training, local community development and entrepreneurship, which calls for collective spirit among women and confrontation with community reactions. Learning involves dealing with re-organisation of life and community, networking and finding a new position in community and society. The other chapter deals with literacy course, which have initiated wider cultural and social revival of discriminated areas—initiated through social tourism, festivals, social-education courses, social learning. The last two chapters analyse learning through and within two different social movements—Zapatistas movement in Mexico and Kaz Mountains Environmental Social Movement in Turkey. In both cases learning processes are the result of interconnectedness of individual and collective social movement processes and are defined: by social involvement; by a strong process of change (personal and interpersonal; social, cultural and political change); by individual development processes, which provoked changes in surroundings; by development of social and organizing skills; by high level of transformation and mobilisation, etcetera. Both texts show that social movements are learning sites, where learning processes are becoming stronger with the increase of active participation in the movement.

Throughout the book it is confirmed that the idea of community is crucial in contemporary discussions about the fabric of society, where civic activity and participation matter. Social movements have prospects to become the future arena for ‘civic battles’, based on learning and transformation (Klein, 2015). Learning processes at the community level have for decades been argued to be important, but have acquired new power in the time of crises due to alienation and feelings of hopelessness. Arguments stand for bottom-up strategies, for the power of social involvement of all those living in the communities, regardless of age, gender, socio-economic status, level of education, etcetera.

The book offers a very informative and stimulating reading on importance of further critical work of practitioners and theoreticians in the adult education field and their common struggle to connect rethinking with action.

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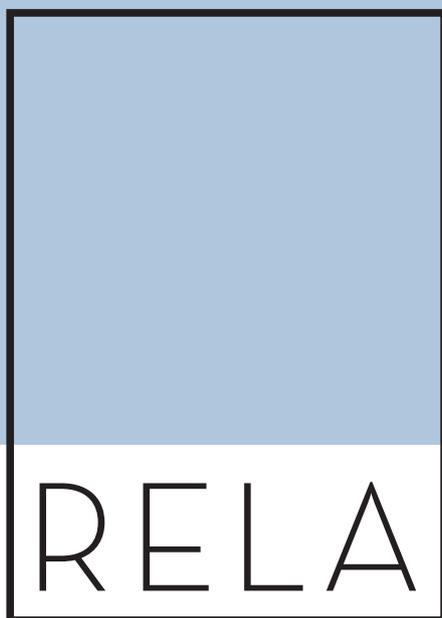
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Aims & Scope

The European journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults (RELA) is a refereed academic journal creating a forum for the publication of critical research on adult education and learning. It has a particular focus on issues at stake for adult education and learning in Europe, as these emerge in connection with wider international and transnational dynamics and trends. Such a forum is important at a time when local and regional explorations of issues are often difficult to foreground across language barriers. As academic and policy debate is increasingly carried out in the English language, this masks the richness of research knowledge, responses and trends from diverse traditions and foci. The journal thus attempts to be linguistically 'open access'. Whilst creating a forum for international and transnational debate, contributions are particularly welcome from authors in Europe and other locations where English is not the first language.

RELA invites original, scholarly articles that discuss the education and learning of adults from different academic disciplines, perspectives and traditions. It encourages diversity in theoretical and methodological approach and submissions from non-English speakers. All published contributions in RELA are subjected to a rigorous peer review process based on two moments of selection: an initial editorial screening and a double-blind review by at least two anonymous referees. Clarity and conciseness of thought are crucial requirements for publication.

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