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Dialogue in and through Adult Education and Learning

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Note on the order of the papers' abstracts:

Abstracts are ordered alphabetically. If the title of the paper starts with "a" or "the", the paper is ordered after the first word following the article.

Individual Papers

A

Academic, policy and practice dialogue for sustainable adult basic education: a network perspective

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Keywords: Academic, policy and practice dialogue, adult basic education, actor network theory, network analysis

Abstract:

Aim: The presentation focuses on the dialogue between the actors of adult basic education networks for the development of sustainable adult basic education offers in Germany. In the project Basic Education Pathways, ten joint networks in different regions in Germany are working on building basic educational pathways for the target population of adults with basic education needs. The aim of the presentation is to identify the role of stakeholders from academia, education policy, and practice in supporting people with low basic skills to experience greater economic and social participation and to engage in lifelong learning. This is done by empirically recording the relationships between the network partners and drawing conclusions about how their collaboration enables the sustainable establishment of adult basic education offers.

Relevance to the conference theme: Dialogue between different stakeholders is a key prerequisite for successful networking to meet local learning needs and share resources to develop common solutions. In Germany, adult basic education networks are currently being established in line with the idea of learning cities/regions to increase the participation of people with low basic skills and ensure inclusive and equitable quality adult learning and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (SDG Goal 4). They also respond to individual learning needs and adapt to regional educational structures. To achieve these ambitious goals, it is necessary to bring a variety of regional stakeholders into dialogue with each other and to create lasting cooperation.

Theoretical framework: Following Actor Network Theory (ANT) (Carroll, 2018; Laschewski, 2013; Schwarz et al., 2024), the presentation focuses on the dialogue between actors in adult basic education networks. In ANT networks are not viewed as static with fixed characteristics, but as dynamic associations between actors who built and influence the social structure with their actions (Carroll, 2018; Laschewski, 2013). Network actors include education and employment providers, companies, industry associations, employment services, communal institutions, and social institutions. According to their organizational action program, they play different roles in their network and pursue their own goals. Against this background, the coordination of their actions and communication is an important prerequisite for successful networking. A successful dialogue between academia, policy and practice is essential to reconcile individual interests and achieve the common goal of establishing basic education pathways.

Methodology: In the Basic Education Pathways project, the ten adult basic education networks are being studied using an indicator-based network analysis. This is done through standardized online surveys on the structure of the networks and the development of network work. Data will be collected in summer 2025 with the network managers. The data is subjected to quantitative network analysis to identify the density and structure of the network and the key actors. Visualization, e.g. using R's network package, also produces network maps that give an overview of the individual network structures. This way, it is possible to record the communicative relationships and thus identify central interfaces of the dialogue between the actors and gaps in the dialogue.

Outcome/expected results: Knowledge of network structures, communication interfaces and gaps between actors is a key prerequisite for successful networking. The results of the network analyses form the basis for providing actors from academia, policy, and practice with impulses for the sustainable improvement of cooperation in the networks studied and in other cooperation contexts. This can facilitate dialogue between the different network partners and encourage joint work to ensure inclusive and equitable quality adult and continuing learning opportunities for all. Moreover, the results provide indications of the conditions under which other educational networks, e.g. in the school system or in higher education, can be successful.

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Adult Education and Democratic Learning in Refugee Camp for German Citizens in Denmark after WW2

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Keywords: Refugee; education; learning; democracy

Abstract:

This paper presents a study of adult education and learning in a specific historical context, the camps for German refugees in Denmark in the years following WW2. It is based on research published in book form (Andreasen & Rasmussen, 2024) and it links especially to the theme on the history of adult education as a source of inspiration for the development of dialogue in the conference call.

During the final months of WW2, in the spring of 1945, more than 200.000 German refugees came to Denmark (Herzig, 2023). They were housed in refugee camps all over the country, some very small and some larger, but all isolated from Danish society. Most of the refugees had to stay in Denmark for at least two years, the last ones left in 1949.

The German refugees, the camps and the Danish Refugee Administration, have been the subject of interest from many sides. The presentation focuses on a specific part of the practice and everyday life of the refugee camps, namely the educational activities initiated and implemented. This included schooling for the many children in the camps and broader education and learning activities for the adults.

The experiences refugees gain in refugee camps, including those from organized education during the stay, are important when they later continue their life, either in the country they fled from or elsewhere. In many refugee camps, schooling and other organized education are absent or of poor quality (Dryden-Peterson, 2011). But the situation in the Danish camps for the German refugees differed in some ways from this general picture. Schooling and education were in fact provided and German emigrants who had migrated to Denmark before and during the war played a key role in the planning and practice of this.

Educational activities for adults as well as for children were assigned a special role in socializing and educating for democratic thinking and practice. Making German citizens familiar with democratic principles and practice was considered important for the future of Germany and for building up a peaceful democratic Europe.

Thus the plans for refugee education were quite extensive, and issues of democracy were given a high priority (Jensen, 2012; Andreasen & Rasmussen, 2024). This applied not only to the plans for the school education and broader information and learning activities, but also to the internal governance of the camps, which was partly organized as a kind of self-government based on democratic ideals. Progressive pedagogical ideas, including not least those of the Danish folk high school tradition, played an important role, and so did the ideas of democracy, based on ideas of dialogue as described by Danish professor Hal Koch (Koch, 2015). The education and learning activities were (mostly) carried out by the German refugees and immigrants.

The learning activities for adults in the camps were versatile and included study circles on the principles of democracy, presentations on the situation in Germany and Europe after the war, music and theatre activities. The activities were appreciated by the refugees, but they also sometimes raised skepticism, because it could be difficult to reconcile the ideas of democracy with being confined to guarded refugee camps.

Based on different kinds of historical documentation, including archival material, and drawing on social and cultural approaches (Agier, 2011; Fuchs, 2007), the paper discusses the ideological and political preconditions of the Danish government's approach and the ways it shaped practices and the experiences of the refugees. The presentation will analyze the plans and ideas for adult education and learning, the actors involved and how the plans were implemented and experienced in the everyday life and practice of the camps.

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Adult education and transformation after the political-historical change in East Germany. Learnings for dialogue-based support of socio-ecological transformation

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Keywords: adult education, post-socialist, East Germany, transformation, supply development

Abstract

The Lusatian structural change in East Germany is an important learning opportunity for adults in structural change. On the one hand, the mistakes of the 1990s should not be repeated: The radical structural break following German reunification led to massive deindustrialisation. Emigration and unemployment are deeply rooted in the collective memory of East Germany (Böick & Lorke, 2022). Secondly, embedded in the discourse on the harmonisation of the new federal states with the old ones, there are parallels to the socio-ecological structural change today, for which solutions are being sought (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2021). And last but not least, successful change is seen as a relevant contribution to securing democracy (as a kind of test) and economic stability (Gürtler, Luh & Staemmler, 2020). Structural change in Lusatia is therefore under enormous pressure to succeed. Distribution and participation issues play just as much a role as the struggle to master transformation processes, their definition and, time and again, the search for an associated expectation of the future. The learning of adults as job seekers, as skilled labour development, as change agents is always an important instrument for coping with change. Adults should use continuing education to respond to changes in the labor market, prove themselves in the digital space, and strengthen democracy. But how can adult education overcome this overwhelming demand and confront, accompany, and help shape change? What can we learn from the experiences of structural change already gained during the transformation after the 1990s, and how can adequate adult education offerings be developed? This lecture will take a look at the recent post-socialist past and demonstrate how this cannot be achieved and what conclusions can be drawn for successful participatory-dialogical offering development (Schäffter 2014). The lecture will provide concrete tools for this.

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Adulthood and Contemporary Solitudes. A Possible Dialogue between Political Decision Makers and Citizens

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Keywords: Adult Loneliness, Participatory Action Research, Local Policy Co-construction, Inductive Methodology

Abstract

This contribution addresses the phenomenon of adult loneliness as an educational and political issue, analyzing its individual and social implications, and proposing a participatory intervention model. Loneliness, recognized internationally as a cross-cutting emergency across ages, genders, and cultural contexts, has in recent years assumed an increasingly central role in public debate and institutional agendas (Cacioppo & Cacioppo, 2018). International research data indicate that even before the Covid-19 pandemic, three out of five adults in the United States considered themselves lonely (Cigna, 2018). In Europe, the situation was no better: in 2018, two-thirds of Germans considered loneliness a serious problem; in Sweden, in the same year, one-quarter of the population reported feeling frequently lonely; and in Switzerland, in 2017, two out of five people reported feeling lonely sometimes, often, or always (Hertz, 2021). In response to this emergency, in 2018 the United Kingdom established a Ministry for Loneliness, later followed by Japan (Campaign to End Loneliness, 2018).

Building on these considerations, this work explores the possibility of activating processes for the co-construction of local policies, promoting a structured dialogue between adult citizens, political decision makers, and the academic world. The contribution presents a participatory action research project developed within the second year of the Degree Course in Educational Sciences, course in Adult and Elderly Education.

The project is structured in two phases:

First phase: an exploratory qualitative research conducted using a phenomenological-hermeneutic approach (Castiglioni & Orsenigo, 2024; Demetrio, 2012; Formenti, 2012), based on semi-structured interviews with a convenience sample of forty adults (men and women, aged 36–65) living in the metropolitan area of Milan. Participants were voluntarily recruited by student-interviewers within their local territories (Milan and its hinterland) using snowball sampling. The aim of this phase was to explore subjective representations of loneliness, its perceived causes, the resources activated (internal and external), and emerging needs. The collected narratives were

analyzed through thematic coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006), identifying recurring cores and specific units of meaning.

Second phase: currently underway, involves the development of a participatory action research device (Elliott, 1991). Seven focus groups, each composed of six participants, have been activated. These groups are based on the same guiding questions used in the interviews, focusing on the individual-existential significance of loneliness and the role of collectivity. The groups involve citizens from Districts 1 and 7 of Milan (respectively the city center and a semi-peripheral area) and are conducted following the principles of Grounded Theory as applied to pedagogical-educational research (Mortari, 2007), with the aim of deepening the trajectories that emerged during the first phase, exploring territorial differences, and more effectively guiding public action.

One of the project's goals is to provide the Municipality of Milan – Department of Welfare (Mental Health Office) with useful data for citizen needs analysis. In parallel, a qualitative mapping of urban areas at higher risk of loneliness is being developed as a tool to support territorial planning. The final objective is not merely descriptive but transformative: to promote the creation of new social connections and forms of proximity, starting from the valorization of adult voices and their translation into political language.

The contribution fits fully into the theme of the conference, as it presents an operational model for citizen involvement in decision-making processes, reaffirming the central role of adult education as a lever for equity, justice, and social inclusion. The adopted methodology is inductive (Mortari, 2007): it gives voice to adults, listens, engages.

This study acknowledges several limitations inherent in its qualitative design. Firstly, the use of snowball sampling, while effective for reaching participants within specific communities, may introduce sample bias. Participants are likely to refer individuals with similar characteristics or experiences, potentially limiting the diversity of perspectives and affecting the representativeness of the sample. Secondly, the researchers' subjectivity is an inherent aspect of qualitative research. Their interpretations and interactions with participants can influence data collection and analysis, potentially introducing personal biases into the findings. Lastly, the study's findings are context-specific and may not be generalizable to broader populations. The insights gained are deeply rooted in the particular social and cultural context of the participants, which, while providing rich, detailed understanding, limits the applicability of the results to other settings. Despite these limitations, the research offers valuable insights into adult loneliness and provides a foundation for future studies employing diverse methodologies to further explore this phenomenon.

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Advancing Leadership for Sustainability Through Dialogical Learning

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Keywords: dialogical learning, transformative learning, Paulo Freire, Wholeness Systems Thinking (WST), sustainability leadership

Abstract:

In a world marked by deepening inequalities, democratic erosion, and the marginalization of voices, dialogue has become an urgent necessity - not just as a means of communication but as a foundation for learning, social justice, and ethical leadership. The transition to a sustainable future requires leaders who engage in meaningful exchange, critically examine systemic challenges, and co-create solutions that balance economic, social, and environmental well-being. However, the quantity and speed of communication today do not guarantee the depth of discussion necessary for just and responsive institutions, including those shaping business and sustainability education.

Addressing this gap, the Sustainability Innovation Mindset course was designed to equip future leaders with the competencies needed to navigate these challenges. Over three years, it trained 117 emerging business leaders from 14 countries, integrating 24 hours of onsite education with 12 hours of online learning. Rooted in dialogical learning inspired by Paulo Freire, Wholeness Systems Thinking (WST), and the 21st EWA (Empowering Wholeness Adaptive) Edu model (Holman & Švejdarová, 2023, 2024), the program challenges traditional knowledge-based education, which often prioritizes short-term efficiency over deep learning, collective transformation, and ethical responsibility.

Rather than treating leadership as the mastery of technical skills, this approach cultivates a Purposeful Mindset, where thoughtful reflection, adaptability, and reciprocity are central to decision-making. Through dialogue, participants engage in mutual recognition and transformative learning, exploring not only how to implement sustainable approaches but also why these shifts matter in the broader socio-economic and ecological context. This fosters leaders who question dominant narratives, rethink unsustainable business models, and embrace systemic change as a collaborative effort.

The findings from this course emphasize the necessity of embedding dialogical learning in leadership education to break down organizational silos, counter polarized thinking, and bridge the divide between economic priorities and societal well-being (Holman & Švejdarová, 2024). In the face

of VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity) and BANI (brittle, anxious, non-linear, incomprehensible) conditions, leaders must learn to navigate complexity through critical engagement rather than unilateral decision-making.

This article will present key insights into how dialogical, understanding-based education fosters ethical leadership for sustainability, enabling participants to engage with diverse perspectives—whether in society, business, or the environment - through introspection, discourse, and shared meaning-making. In addition, it explores practical strategies for applying these principles in higher education and leadership training, demonstrating how they can help transform organizations into environments where sustainability, social justice, and democratic dialogue thrive.

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The Attitudes of Students of Social Pedagogy to Foreigners: a Possibility for Intercultural Education?

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Keywords: Attitudes to foreigners; university students; social pedagogy; intercultural communication

Abstract:

Social pedagogy aims to support social justice by fostering intercultural dialogue and addressing the needs of marginalized groups. Graduates of Social Pedagogy can work in various educational settings, including schools, different educational institutions, youth centres, and counselling services. They support students at risk, foster inclusive education, and facilitate social integration. Their roles include mentoring, prevention programs, and collaboration with teachers, families, and communities to enhance student well-being and development (Daněk et al., 2024). As the number of immigrant children has risen lately in Czech schools, not only as a result of the war in Ukraine, the target group which graduates in social pedagogy meet in their practice are children from diverse background. Therefore supporting their intercultural communication is essential (Öbrink Hobzová, 2014).

Numerous international studies emphasize the role of social pedagogues in the integration process: by fostering meaningful relationships with newcomers, they serve as guides and companions in children's self-development (e.g., Pietrusińska, 2020).

This study aims to explore the relationship between attitudes and self-perceived preparedness among future social pedagogues in the context of increasing cultural diversity in Czech schools. It also investigates how demographic variables and individual-level variables (gender, age, level of study, rural versus urban area where they come from) may influence this relationship, with the goal of informing improvements in intercultural training within Social Pedagogy programs.

This study approaches the concept of "attitudes" through a multidimensional lens, recognizing its cognitive, affective, and behavioural components (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993), reflecting how individuals think, feel, and act toward a particular group or issue. However, within the field of social pedagogy, attitudes are not only internal dispositions, but they are shaped by:

- broader societal narratives (e.g. intense immigration reshapes the citizens' attitudes towards immigrants as proved by Davidov et al., 2015),
- cultural encounters as peace education and social psychology have shown (e.g. in the study by Vambheim, 2023),
- and institutional practices (education is a positive factor for attitudes towards immigrants proved by Dražanová, Gonnot, Heidland, and Krüger, 2023).

This study bridges these perspectives by conceptualizing attitudes as both individual-level orientations and socially constructed phenomena, influenced by direct experience, education, and structural context. By adopting this integrated view, we try to improve our understanding of how students' attitudes relate to their perceived preparedness for working in culturally diverse educational settings. We also believe that these attitudes may reflect deeper assumptions about inclusion, difference, and professional identity.

Participants and Procedure: Data collection took place in the Czech Republic from October 2023 to May 2024 using an anonymous electronic questionnaire. Participation was voluntary, and consent was given upon completion. A purposive sampling strategy was applied, targeting Social Pedagogy students in their final semester. Program directors from universities in Olomouc, Hradec Králové, Zlín, Ostrava, Ústí nad Labem, Brno, and České Budějovice facilitated questionnaire distribution via university email. Out of 677 eligible students, 130 responded (11% male), aged 18–56, with 48% aged 21–23. Due to the 20% response rate, this study serves as a pilot, offering preliminary insights into students' preparedness for working with culturally diverse children.

Measure: A custom research tool with 15 questions assessed student attitudes toward individuals from different cultural backgrounds. The first four questions were inspired by the 2023 study Public Attitudes toward the Settlement of Foreigners in the Czech Republic (Kyselá, 2023), while questions 5–9 were based on the Sentiments, Attitudes, and Concerns about Inclusive Education Revised (SACIE-R) questionnaire (Forlin et al., 2011). Questions 10–15 were derived from Czech Public's Attitudes to the Integration of Foreigners – March 2020 (Spurný, 2020).

Four questions examined general opinions on accepting foreigners, while 11 focused on attitudes. Responses included multiple-choice and Likert scale formats. Frequencies and means were calculated for all items, with selected items recoded for analysis.

Statistical Analyses: Descriptive analyses were conducted to summarize sample characteristics and study variables. Factor analysis and linear regression models tested the stated

hypothesis. Data entry was performed in Microsoft Excel (2016), and all statistical analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS (version 29).

Results: Over half of the respondents felt unprepared, with around 52% lacking relevant coursework. Those who felt prepared tended to have more positive attitudes towards foreigners. Most students supported inclusion but acknowledged potential challenges for teachers and other personnel at schools. Gender and study level had no effect on preparedness. While students generally held positive views on diversity, their limited direct experience seems to impact their confidence, which was illustrated by the last factor: contact. The factor analysis also identified three more key dimensions: expectation, concern, and acceptance.

The study highlights the need for improved training in cultural competence to better prepare future social pedagogues for work in diverse educational settings. We agree with Dražanová, Gonnot, Heidland, and Krüger (2023) that education also plays a significant role in shaping cultural theories. In their study, they refer to Hainmueller and Hiscox (2007), who found that more-educated respondents often exhibit higher self-esteem and confidence, and are more likely to value cultural diversity. Ensuring that graduates in social pedagogy feel confident and well-prepared for their roles will ultimately benefit future clients from diverse backgrounds.

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B

Bridging the Gap: Understanding the factors which enable or disable the participation of women in adult mathematics learning in England

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Keywords: Intergenerational learning, mathematics education, disadvantaged communities, action research.

Abstract:

Introduction: Returning to formal education as a mature/adult learner is a formidable task. However, learners' apprehensions are exacerbated in the case of mathematics due to subject specific fears as well. Potential learners can be averse to mathematics due to unpleasant prior experiences of learning and may feel hostile towards educational institutions (Crossan et al., 2003). Other factors such as negative self-perception about their ability to learn mathematics, and age, race or gender related stereotyping can also hinder their engagement in adult learning (Syyeda, 2021).

Context & Aim: This paper presents some findings from an ongoing Action Research project aimed at understanding the factors that support or hinder the participation of female adult learners in education, with a particular focus on encouraging enrolment on mathematics courses. The research is based in a multicultural city in the Midlands region of England and seeks to amplify the voices of women from disadvantaged backgrounds and BAME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic) communities. The project is being conducted in partnership with an Adult Education provider and two primary schools.

Methods: The study employs an Action Research (AR) methodology, gathering data through two sets of focus group interviews involving current and prospective female adult learners. Action Research is a context-specific, problem-solving approach that involves the planning and implementation of intervention followed by an evaluation of the outcome. This research has three phases: In Phase 1, (which has been completed) we conducted 3 focus group interviews with current students in an adult education college to get insights about their lived experiences of returning to formal education. We also looked at data on student participation in the city and identified two areas where rate of enrolment is currently very low.

In Phase 2, interactive mathematics workshops are organised in primary schools in selected areas. In these workshops, children and their family members (especially mothers/grandmothers) are invited to participate in fun maths activities to promote intergenerational learning. During the

workshops, information about adult learning courses is provided and success stories of women who have previously engaged in adult learning and reaped benefits for themselves and their families, are shared. The workshops create opportunities for women to challenge their apprehensions about returning to education and encourages them to explore avenues of re-engagement. Women attending the workshops are also invited to participate in follow-up focus group interviews to understand their perspectives in greater depth. The data collected through focus groups will help identify ways to make mathematics courses more accessible for potential learners.

In Phase 3, we will evaluate the impact of our intervention. For this purpose, student enrolment data for the subsequent cycle of mathematics courses in the targeted areas will be analysed to assess any changes potentially attributable to the intervention.

Results: Initial results from phase 1 indicate that potential learners have limited access to information regarding adult learning courses. Therefore, engaging parents through primary schools in areas with low participation rates may serve as an effective means of raising their awareness about this provision. The findings of this research may offer valuable insights for regional adult education providers and could also hold relevance for other countries with similar challenges.

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Building community and fostering dialogue through arts-based learning

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Keywords: Arts-based learning, Creativity; Community; Dialogue; Transformative learning

Abstract:

This research explores the role of arts-based learning in fostering community within adult education. Arts-based learning refers to the use of artistic methods as a pedagogical tool for teaching in non-artistic subjects (Bamford, 2012). This approach to pedagogy promotes dialogue by cultivating learning environments that support relationship-building and meaningful connections (Zander, 2004; Eisner, 2002). Arts-based learning facilitates dialogue, fostering shared meaning and understanding (Collins & Ogier, 2012), this approach cultivates essential skills for navigating contemporary societal challenges in Europe.

While adult education often prioritizes workforce-oriented skill development, it is equally important to nurture students' affective learning (Krathwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1964). Arts-based learning allows adults to engage in learning emotionally as well as cognitively thus deepening reflection and fostering holistic personal development (Dewey, 1934). Arts-based learning allows adults to engage in learning on a deeper level, enabling them to 'look with new eyes and to live with new hearts.' (Greene, 1995). Greene (1995) highlights the transformative power of the arts to inspire

empathy, emotional connection, and a sense of openness, ultimately enriching the learning experience.

In an era of standardized education, adult educators are often required to define learning outcomes and assessments in advance of meeting students. However, Biesta, Filippakou, Wainwright, and Aldridge (2019) warn that an excessive focus on standardisation can devalue teachers, turning them into 'machines' to produce the desired effects in their students, disregarding the complexity of adult learners' unique and diverse experiences. Adult educators cannot control what will happen for each student within their classrooms. Biesta et al. (2019) consider teaching a 'risky business'. Teaching, as they suggest, is inherently uncertain and requires flexibility (ibid, 2019). Arts-based learning embraces this unpredictability, allowing educators to respond dynamically to students' needs while still maintaining structured learning outcomes.

This research examines the experiences of tutors in adult and further education in Ireland using arts-based learning. These tutors are involved in a community of practice for arts-based learning since June 2024. Through qualitative interviews, the study investigates how these educators integrate arts-based learning into their teaching and how this approach fosters a sense of community and deepens relationships among both educators and students.

Arts-based learning and creativity should be valued as seriously as lesson plans, schemes of work, and assessments. Creativity and the arts are fundamental to the human experience offering adult educators to forge deeper emotional connections with their students. This research investigates the potential of arts-based learning as a pedagogical tool for strengthening relationships and community within adult and further education.

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Challenging the planning table and fostering dialogue through racism-critical program planning. A case study at the German Volkshochschule.

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Keywords: racism-critical adult education, program planning, community building, German adult education center, Volkshochschule

Abstract

Amid increasing anti-democratic tendencies across Europe and intensifying societal divisions along racial lines (Aikins et al., 2021/2024), the field of adult education has gained renewed relevance. Adult education providers, such as the German Volkshochschule (adult education center) are often positioned as key actors in fostering democratic participation and creating inclusive spaces for social dialogue (Heinemann, 2023). However, the ways in which they engage with racism require closer examination.

To analytically grasp this engagement, this paper adopts a racism-critical perspective. Racism is here conceptualized as a socially constructed and historically situated system of meaning that classifies and hierarchizes people through processes of Othering (Hall, 2018; Said, 2003). Racial categories, in this view, are not biologically inherent but socially produced (Delgado et al., 2017). From this perspective, racism does not solely occur outside of adult education organizations but can shape their internal processes and routines (Ray, 2019).

Therefore, while adult education is often framed as an inherently democratizing force, its organizations – as part of the broader social order – may also contribute to the reproduction of racial exclusions and inequalities (Heinemann, 2023; Ray, 2019). At the same time, racism-critical approaches outline: if racism is socially constructed, it can also be socially challenged and re-learned – particularly through reflective and participatory organizational practices (Danquah & Egetenmeyer, 2025).

Against this background, the paper examines how racism-critical practices unfold within the German Volkshochschule to dismantle racism, focusing on the program level as a central site of andragogical and organizational decision-making (Cervero & Wilson, 2001). To analyze this question, the paper draws on a theoretical framework combining democratic and interactive program planning models (Cervero & Wilson, 2001; Daffron & Caffarella, 2021; Hippel & Käßlinger, 2017) with racism-critical pedagogy (Mecheril, 2004).

Empirically, the paper is based on a qualitative case study conducted at one German Volkshochschule. From a broader dataset of 18 semi-structured interviews with educational and administrative staff, for this contribution three interviews with program planners were selected for in-depth analysis using qualitative content analysis (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2022).

The findings highlight two interrelated dimensions through which racism-critical practices in program planning become visible: (1) The development of reflective awareness regarding racialized assumptions embedded in organizational routines, which enables program planners to identify and interrogate exclusionary dynamics; (2) The intentional reconfiguration of planning processes to

create spaces for dialogical engagement with racialized communities, positioning them as cocreators of their own learning pathways responsive to their lived experiences.

A community-driven approach challenges the program table (Cervero & Wilson, 2001) by reframing the role of program planners, shifting them from being primarily the ones designing the program to becoming moderators who facilitate the necessary framework conditions for communities to dialogically shape their own learning experiences.

This paper contributes to international discourses on the democratic role of adult education providers by offering an empirically grounded perspective on racism-critical program planning in the German context. It highlights the potential of dialogical co-creation in adult education to foster social cohesion.

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Citizen of what? Citizen how? Learning in and for lived citizenship from the perspectives of adult education participants with migratory experience

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Keywords: lived citizenship, adult learning, adult education, migration

Abstract:

What happens if we engage in conversations on citizen experience, acknowledging migration and migratory experience as the norm rather than an anomaly? What insights may emerge if we recognise a person settling in a new national context not primarily as a migrant struggling to adapt or gain acceptance as a newcomer, but as someone actively and continuously living and exercising citizenship in her own right?

This conference presentation introduces a doctoral research project in its initial stage and discusses its relevance in an international research context. The purpose of the study is to explore lived citizenship and its intersections with learning through the diverse perspectives of adults with migratory experience, with a particular interest in adult education as a potential catalyst for citizen engagement, participation, and influence. Furthermore, it aims to contribute to the theorisation within the fields of citizenship, adult education, and adult learning. The following research questions are guiding the study:

1. How do adult education participants with migratory experience express and reflect on their lived citizenship?
 - a. What aspects of the participants' lives contribute to a sense of community and belonging?
 - b. Where and how do the participants experience engagement, participation, and influence in society?
2. How do the participants reflect on the role of learning in and for lived citizenship?
 - a. Where and how does learning relevant for belonging, engagement, participation, and influence in society take place?
 - b. Where is adult education situated on the broader map of learning in and for lived citizenship?
3. How can the study's findings contribute to theorisation within the fields of citizenship, adult education, and adult learning?

Sweden's long history of adult education, largely rooted in popular education and ideas of citizenship cultivation, along with its contemporary heterogeneous landscape in terms of regulatory differences, exposure to market forces, and pedagogical autonomy, constitutes an interesting context for the study. While recognising the important contributions of research concerning newly arrived immigrants and those in the early stages of settlement (e.g. Abdulla, 2017; Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2020; Carlson, 2021; Duggan, 2022; Asghari, 2025), this investigation instead centres on participants who have resided longer in Sweden. Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews with adults who migrated to Sweden at age 16 or later and have current or recent experience in upper secondary programs administered by Municipal Adult Education (MAE) and folk high schools. The analysis will be guided by multidimensional perspectives drawn from contemporary citizenship theories (Ekman & Amnå, 2012; Banks, 2017; Moraes et al., 2021; Salonen et al., 2024), with particular attention to

spatial, intersubjective, affective, and manifest aspects of lived citizenship (Kallio et al., 2020) and their interconnectedness with learning.

The study aligns with the growing body of qualitative, critical research in adult education, citizenship, and migration studies (e.g. Zani & Barrett, 2012; Hoggan & Hoggan-Kloubert, 2021). The post-migrant approach – viewing migratory experiences in all their heterogeneity as the norm – adopts a critical stance toward traditional notions of citizen formation and inclusion, regarding the country of current residence as just one among many citizen domains.

Findings may reveal community imaginaries and types of citizen agency not typically highlighted in research on citizenship but potentially important to co-creating pathways towards a socially and ecologically sustainable future. Furthermore, it may provide insights into perceived enablers and barriers to civic and political participation from the perspectives of individuals with migratory experience, and shed light on the role – actual and potential – of adult education and learning on the broader map of belonging, engagement, and influence in society (Laginder et al., 2013; Mussi, 2023). The analysis may also contribute to theoretical discussions on how structural and regulatory variations within the landscape of adult education impact processes of citizen empowerment and learning in today's hyperdiverse, migratory societies.

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Class and Education - Working-class voice and story in research

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Keywords: Working-class, voice, education, collaborative, dialogue

Abstract

The information we have about working-class experiences of Higher Education (HE) is often limited and based on what can be readily measured, which can result in it lacking depth about lived experiences of class. Working-class voices on their experience of HE are often missing from conversations about us and spaces to share these experiences are difficult to find. This paper will draw on my doctoral research, a Collaborative Inquiry (CI) which explored the experiences of working class women in higher education in Ireland.

The purpose of the research was to explore the experiences of working-class women in higher education in Ireland. There is limited research on this topic from a qualitative perspective which centres voice and story, and which promotes dialogue on this topic. Lynch & O'Neill (1994) describe the educational structures and ways of researching which can co-opt stories, which are then presented from an outsiders perspective. Working-classness is interpreted by

outsiders who “interpret your world and [to] speak on your behalf” (Lynch and O'Neill, 1994, p. 309). Couldry (2010) describes the process of mediating difficult and emotional experiences to make research more acceptable in the academic world.

Collaborative Inquiry is a process which involves the use of democratic processes and deep listening in order to co-create new knowledge on a given topic (Heron, 1996). It also involves a reflection on both individual stories and on the social structures which impact trajectories. Using CI allowed us to co-construct knowledge based in our classed experiences and to explore the deficit in the educational structures which impacted our ‘choice’ or ‘constraint’ (Reay, 2004). Eight meetings, across eight months gave time and space to build relationship, deepen our understanding and to work in a democratic, collective and reflective way to explore experiences of class and education.

The research produced rich and meaningful accounts of working-class women’s experiences of the Irish education system and the barriers which impacted trajectories and experiences.

Bourdieu's (1984) concepts of habitus, habitus clivé and capitals, particularly cultural capital were key theoretical concepts which are core to understanding working-class experiences of education.

Key themes from the research related to how having the 'right' habitus and cultural capital is key to a smoother transition through the education system (Bourdieu, 1984). An education system built on middle-class ways of being and knowing can lead to a disconnect for working-class students. Habitus, capitals and values and the embodied experience of class had a significant impact on a sense of belonging, or lack of, in the education system and led to untypical trajectories to higher education (Walkerdine, 2023). The enduring nature of working-class habitus can lead to a 'habitus clivé', feeling caught between worlds (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) which was a finding in relation to our trajectories through the education system and beyond it.

Working-class experiences, voices and stories, can challenge taken for granted perspectives, which describe a meritocratic system where those who do not succeed are deficient (Skeggs, 1997; Finnegan & Merrill, 2017; Reay, 2017; Crew, 2020). Challenging this perspective and discussing barriers for working-class students inherent in the system, involves critiquing the status quo. It also brings to light a different way of seeing the systems and how they advantage those with the 'right' habitus and capitals and disadvantage those who are then viewed as deficient.

This paper aims to highlight the importance of recognising and understanding class and classed experiences, and inequality in the middle-class educational structures, and to add to the conversation about including often unheard voices and stories in a meaningful and reciprocal way (Lynch and O'Neill, 1994). It is a way to extend the dialogue that we began in the research process, and to continue it in educational spaces, where inequalities remain significant for working class students (and educators).

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Co-Designing a Jewellery Curriculum: Conversations and remembrances about teaching adult students craft skills

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Keywords: Vocational Adult Education, Jewellery design curricula, vocational

Abstract:

Two educational researchers whose work is located in the creative arts have come together in a dialogic encounter to explore the educational legacy of Ann O'Donnell (1933-2019). O'Donnell was a jewellery designer and maker, but also an important educator in Leeds, UK during the 1960s-1990s.

Frances-Ann Norton's own teaching practice has focused on developing critical thinking skills with arts students, encouraging free thinking, reflexivity and curious questioning. Working with adult learners she has used teaching interventions in the curricula such as the Poetry Group (Norton and Gregson, 2020) and Critical Thinking Club (Norton, 2022). She is also O'Donnell's daughter. Samantha Broadhead's research considers when and how learners return to arts education as adults. In her research and videos called *Learning Returns* she explores stories as a means of capturing experience (Broadhead & Hooper, 2024). Both researchers have a passion for jewellery, inclusive education and both are neurodivergent.

The two researchers were aware that women played an important role in Post-war art and design education through their connections with Norton's mother, Ann O'Donnell and educators such as Pam Rex and Lucy Rie. However, the dominate story that is told refers to male educators, such as Harry Thubron, Roy Ascot and Patrick Oliver amongst others. One reason for this is because women often taught part-time. Although O'Donnell's expertise was recognised through her work as an external moderator, it was not always valued by her institution (Broadhead, 2022).

Art school archives did not collect the papers, curriculum or resources made by these women educators, so their contribution to the field is made invisible. In order to preserve O'Donnell's legacy, conversations between the two researchers were employed to capture the pedagogic knowledge created by her experience and practice in creating a jewellery curriculum with her students.

Context: Rajili et al., (2015) outline that designing a jewellery curriculum entails understanding the use of tools including computer aided design, rapid prototyping and other design technology. Designing and making jewellery can be understood as an intuitive practice with an artistically driven standpoint and experimental-based approach, focusing on resolving design challenges related to the object itself. Abdel et al. (2021) comments that the curriculum should include how to develop design thinking. This is how jewellery students solve complex problems by producing cyclical making, testing and feedback for creative solutions that consider the user/ client the centre of design.

Conversation as method: Bojesen (2019) has written about conversation as method, the researchers consider this works in tandem with memory as method (Keightley, 2010; Radstone, 2000). This approach is the basis of this study. The two researchers planned the project which was to have a conversation about the work of Ann O'Donnell. Both researchers had memories of talking and working with O'Donnell, however, Norton's was more in depth and rich due to being her daughter. Norton had heard O'Donnell's stories many times over the years creating a longitudinal series of memories. Although this paper focuses on one conversation, it must be pointed out that Norton and Broadhead have also shared many stories about O'Donnell's jewellery and teaching over the past twenty years.

O'Donnell's educational legacy arising from the conversation: O'Donnell first was a student in the 1950s and then taught at the art institute after graduating from the Royal College of Art in London, until she retired in 1993. She also raised a family while running a jewellery design gallery and being an educator giving her a unique insight into both the personal, educational and business needs of her students. During the 1980s she focused on teaching Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) qualifications and working with day release students from local jewellery studios and shops.

Through the conversation it was discovered that historically, the BTEC cohorts O'Donnell mostly worked with were young adult men from non-traditional educational backgrounds. Fisher (2003) writes that the structure of the BTEC qualification aimed to develop vocational specialist work-related skills and qualifications. He believes BTEC, enacted a vocational progressivism, successfully transforming pedagogic practices during the 1980s.

The findings of this project show how O'Donnell contributed towards this progressivism in her methods. For example, she co-constructed her curriculum with her students in a pragmatic way.

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Community Education – A Model for Fostering Dialogue? An Analysis of Selected Third Sector Initiatives

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Keywords: Community Education (CE), Dialogic Pedagogy, Dialogue, Inclusion of Marginalized Groups, Adult Education

Abstract:

In contemporary societies, developing effective tools to support dialogue and social cohesion is essential, particularly in adult education, where communication extends beyond the teacher-learner dynamic and encompasses broader social and institutional contexts. Given the increasing complexity of societal changes, exploring models that facilitate meaningful dialogue across different communities is crucial. One such model is Community Education (CE), which fosters dialogue through education and local community activation. However, further research is still needed to examine how CE can be optimised to address evolving social needs to enhance its effectiveness and adaptability

This study aims to determine how much CE contributes to fostering dialogue among diverse social groups, particularly in enhancing social engagement and intercultural integration. The study will investigate how CE is applied in the analysed initiatives, identifying the tools and strategies used within this framework and assessing which aspects of CE are most relevant to supporting dialogue, as well as the key conclusions that can be drawn from these findings.

The analysis will focus on identifying CE-aligned initiatives undertaken by various non-governmental groups and organisations (NGOs) within the third sector, particularly within informal and non-formal adult education.

Furthermore, it will assess their effectiveness in creating genuine conditions for dialogue among individuals, groups, and communities, while also examining key factors influencing these

processes. The study will encompass both Poland and selected European contexts, allowing for a comparative perspective.

The research will address several key questions, including the extent to which CE supports dialogue-building between different, and at times antagonised, social groups. The study will also present illustrative examples of CE initiatives that align most closely with the principles of fostering dialogue, identifying both best practices and potential limitations in their implementation. Moreover, the study will engage with the current academic discourse on CE, exploring how different national and international perspectives frame its role and what future directions and potential developments can be identified. A key focus will be on whether and to what extent the examined cases and findings can inform a replicable model for further initiatives in dialogue-based community education.

This research contributes to the broader discussion on dialogue in adult education, with particular emphasis on the relationships between educators and learners, interactions within and between communities, and intercultural dialogue. Another crucial dimension will also be to illustrate how, within the analysed third-sector initiatives, efforts are made to include marginalised groups and communities in joint activities.

The theoretical framework draws on various conceptualisations of CE as a model that supports local community activation, creates spaces for dialogue, and fosters participatory processes, with a focus on different approaches in this context. For instance, L. Lassnigg defines it as low-threshold education, promoting social inclusion and civic engagement through learning in action, while B. Skrzypczak and M. Alke emphasise the crucial role of community activation and participation, drawing attention to CE's connection with network-building and strengthening social ties within communities.

The study's methodology is based on a collective (multiple) case study approach. Data analysis will be grounded in the theoretical framework of the Community Education (CE) model, which also informs the study's priorities, objectives, and design, particularly the description of contextual and exploratory conditions. The analytical technique employed is cross-case synthesis, wherein sets of categories within each case will be analyzed and compared across cases.

Individual cases have been selected based on the following criteria: declared activities aligned with CE objectives, including the activation of local communities, fostering relationships between educators and learners, promoting dialogue, and the inclusion of marginalized groups; diversity of socio-cultural contexts, encompassing various environments and target groups and availability of data, such as documentation, reports, promotional materials, and the feasibility of conducting interviews with staff.

The study will analyze activities undertaken by organizations, as well as informal groups, over the past five years. These activities are implemented in north-eastern Poland and have either regional, national or international scopes.

Data collection methods include document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and a systematic literature review.

The limitations of this research approach include the inherent challenges in generalizing findings due to the study's nature and the necessity of analyzing contextually diverse cases. Nevertheless, it is anticipated that, beyond their cognitive value, the findings obtained will facilitate more effective planning and design of future research in this area.

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Connecting educational worlds into dialogue: stories of transition between higher education and work

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Keywords: Higher education, Labour market, Educational professions, Stakeholder's dialogue

Abstract:

The research explores the dialogue between individual and organizational levels of narration regarding transitions from university to work in education. Bringing into dialogue different voices, perspectives and expectations, a heterogeneous group of researchers explored biographical and professional reasons. The researchers are a diverse group engaged in various capacities in the pedagogical field: three experienced academics, five Master students in Pedagogy who also work in education, a contracted researcher with a master degree in pedagogy and an independent researcher with a PhD in education.

The transition to work for graduates in pedagogy is an open question in Italy that intercepts auto/biographies (West, 1996), as well as social, cultural, and political dimensions. A new law (L. 55/24), still being implemented and with uncertain outcomes, has reformed the status of “pedagogists” creating a professional register. However, research on this topic both in terms of employability studies (Fedeli et al. 2019; Formenti et al., 2024), and on the analysis of the literature referring to the figure of the pedagogist (Del Gobbo, Federighi, 2021), which counts a great variety of professional figures. In this complex scenario the objective of the research is to relate the different actors involved in the transition process, through actions of reflexivity and comparison. Moving within a systemic framework (Galimberti, 2024), the qualitative research develops on three dialogic levels:

- Micro, dialogue inside the heterogeneous group of researchers involved.

- Meso, dialogue between stakeholders involved: the stakeholders involved in the employability development process are students, university lecturers, employers, politicians.
- Macro, dialogue between the organisations involved: universities, third sector bodies, companies, political institutions.

We use two different methodologies: twenty semi-structured interviews (Merrill & West, 2009) with employers, academics and politicians; two rounds of three cooperative inquiry meetings (Heron, 1996; Formenti & Luraschi, 2020) among first or second-year students or recent graduates. The method of the knowledge spiral (Formenti, 2018) and transformative dialogue (Formenti & West, 2018; Formenti & Luraschi, 2022; Luraschi & Finnegan, 2022), which moves from personal experience to the theorisation of the concept examined, was used to elaborate the interview outline and to structure the meetings.

The results show that transition is not a linear process, but is influenced by different factors such as competence, experience, social and cultural capital. The perceptions of the various stakeholders can be very different, and they agree with the variables highlighted in the critical literature on the topic of employability: the focus moves between the possession of competences and the understanding of the process (Bennett, 2019; Divan et al. 2019), little recognition is given to the social dimension (Kalfa & Taska, 2017; Sin & Tavares, 2017), there are important variables related to the peculiarities of the professional and geographical context (Cáceres-Reche et al, 2022; Menendez Alvarez-Hevia, & Naylor, 2019), and the issue of employability accountability is an issue raised from one subject to another (Cheng et al., 2022; Sin et al., 2019).

Dialogue seems not implemented in an organic and structured way but it is perceived as important to improve the transition process. The new Law 55/24 appears as a possible avenue for improvement, but there are many doubts regarding future applications. The various actors suggest different possible actions to foster greater awareness (not necessarily linearity), both in training initiatives and in professional organisation. On the other hand, as far as our auto/biographical stories are concerned, participating in research allows us to cross individual dilemmas (Formenti & West, 2016) in order to generate new connections between the stories heard.

This study is built on the specificity of the Italian context of educational professions; we believe that a model for international contexts is the systemic methodological approach, based on various qualitative tools used to bring different stakeholders into dialogue.

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Contesting Vocational Education in the Historical Capitalist World-System: Denmark and Ireland, 1840-1973.

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Keywords: Class Struggle; Democratic Development; Vocational Education and Training; Denmark; Ireland.

Abstract:

Drawing on the insights of comparative adult education and learning (Slowey, 2016) and anti-systemic movements in the historical capitalist world-system (Arrighi, Hopkins, and Wallerstein,

2012), this paper compares the historical fortunes of ‘collective skill formation’ institutions in two countries (Busemeyer and Trampusch, 2012). Its particular focus concerns the relationship between class struggle, democratic development, and institutional arrangements for Vocational Education and Training in Denmark and Ireland. In the period between 1840 and 1973, Denmark succeeded in creating a ‘virtuous circle’ of agro-industrial development characterised by robust innovation and learning. The folk high school movement of the 1840s onwards played a critical role in supporting these developments. In contrast, Ireland reproduced a ‘vicious cycle’ of pastoralisation characterised by sparse innovation and learning (Mjoset, 1992). While diverse and complex factors underpinned these dynamics, critically, a class coalition of middle-class farming, commercial and financial interests united to oppose and suppress cooperative models of development and adult education.

The paper aims to demonstrate how these divergent trajectories had important implications for both countries’ social and democratic development long into the 20th century. In Denmark, an emergent coalition of rural and urban labourers, workers and artisans provided cross-class support for advancing universal or solidaristic forms of welfare state provision and inclusive forms of adult education (See Kuusipalo, Toiviainen, and Pitkänen, 2021). In Ireland, class fragmentation prohibited the institutionalisation of solidaristic forms of welfare and educational provision. Vocational Education and Training remained broadly neglected, an unloved Cinderella of the Irish education system (O’Sullivan and Rami, 2022). In the years prior to joining the European Economic Community in 1973, such educational reform as did occur in Ireland was state led, driven in response to international developments and justified technocratically as serving economic productivity rather than social equality. Nevertheless, in both cases, the discontented and dispossessed persistently emerged to assert alternative, popular educational forms and more solidaristic development pathways (Fitzsimons, 2017; Larson and Cort, 2019). Recovering these deep historical struggles empowers us to rethink our education systems ‘from below’ and to advocate for transformative Vocational Education and Training today.

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Continuing Educational Counseling for Low-Literate and Low-Qualified Individuals: How Much Room Is There for Dialogue?

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Keywords: Continuing Educational Counseling; Dialogical Practices in Counseling; Low-literate and Low-skilled Individuals; Adult Education Centres

Abstract:

Aim: Lifelong continuing educational counseling is becoming increasingly important in the context of a constantly changing labor market – in Europe as well as on the German national level (EU, 2021). In this context, the group of low-literate and low-skilled adults is particularly focused by German politics (BMAS & BMBF, 2022).

The responsibilities for educational matters are anchored at federal, state and local levels leading to variation in educational counseling providers (e.g. Schiersmann, 2021) with both inter- and intra-level variation in counseling (OECD, 2022). For example, in addition to the counseling service of the federal employment agency, schools and universities, chambers of industry and commerce (IHK), local chambers of crafts, professional associations and trade unions, adult education centres (Volkshochschulen) also provide continuing educational counseling (ibid.).

The contribution focuses on continuing educational counselors at adult education centres, as the largest publicly funded type of institution for adult education and continuing education in Germany. Eight hundred and twenty two of these organizations offered 85,605 instances of continuing educational counseling and learning guidance in 2023, which is about 20% of the total counseling services at adult education centres (Ortmanns et al., 2024).

Relevance to the conference theme: Dialogue is an established, though not undisputed, interaction practice in continuing education counseling (Ludwig, 2016). It is seen as part of a consultative attitude and as a methodological element in various counseling approaches (Schiersmann, 2021; Savickas, 2015; Lent & Brown, 1996). Theoretically, dialogical perspectives and methods in counseling either refer directly or show parallels with the Socratic dialogue in Plato's works (Schmidt-Lellek, 2001), Martin Buber's dialogical principle (2009) and the work of David Bohm (2000). Against this background, the presentation explores whether and to what extent dialogical principles can be applied in continuing educational counseling, particularly for target groups with low literacy levels and qualifications.

Theoretical framework and Methodology: The study is based on selected empirical findings from a qualitative, guided expert interview study (n=6-8). Using structured, qualitative content analysis according to Kuckartz & Rädiker (2023) with MAXQDA, we seek to understand the importance, value and potential limitations of a dialogical approach in counseling with low-literate and low-qualified individuals from the perspective of counselors.

Core elements of a dialogically oriented counseling approach include:

- authentic, mindful, and truthful communication (Benesch, 2020; Savickas, 2015; Lent & Brown, 1996) while maintaining professional distance on the part of the counselor (Martens-Schmidt, 2011);
- recognition of the counselee as an equal, i.e., “equally rational, regardless of the respective ‘intellectual’ level” (Schmidt-Lellek, 2001);
- radical respect for the ‘Other’ in the person being counseled (Benesch, 2020; ;
- patience, perseverance, and trust in the (self-)discovery processes of the person being counseled (Schmidt-Lellek, 2001; Savickas, 2015; Lent & Brown, 1996);
- an open, questioning, and explorative learning attitude on the part of the counselor (Benesch, 2020; Schmidt-Lellek, 2001);
- confrontation of the counselee in case of obvious misunderstandings (Schmidt-Lellek, 2001).

From an educational science perspective, dialogical practices in the counseling process are “activities for relationship-building” and “activities for expanding the communicative action radius of the counselee” (Gieseke & Stimm, 2015; see also Savickas, 2015; Brown & Lent, 1996).

Outcome/expected results: We expect deeper insights into counseling principles in continuing educational counseling for this target group, as well as an exploration of the significance of a dialogic perspective from the counselors' point of view. Additional

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Contributions of a dialogue-based ALE approach to community empowerment in Jordan

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Keywords: Dialogic skills, adult learning and education, community development, critical consciousness

Abstract:

The dialogue-based adult learning and education (ALE) approach “Tafakur” (meaning: contemplation and reflection) developed by DVV International Jordan cultivates critical thinking skills among adults, focusing on their daily urgent needs. It enables learners to analyse and question their reality and develop coping mechanisms based on the reading and new understanding of the reality.

Tafakur is embedded in a project model for community empowerment and development which DVV International is implementing since 2013, mainly in (but not limited to) marginalised communities throughout Jordan. These communities are often unaware of their marginalisation, the causes of it, and how to overcome their isolation. Through the Tafakur approach, adults shift from a passive to an active mindset.

This approach also requires special facilitation skills of adult educators as dialogue-based learning cannot follow predefined guides or curricula. Adult educators need to know how to use dialogue as a mode of learning and method of education with adults, creating the spaces and processes for learners to engage in reflexivity and self-reflexivity. To this end, DVV International Jordan has been developing capacities of facilitators as well as organisations, including the ability to conduct participatory rapid appraisals.

Aim: The aim of the paper is to present the dialogue-based ALE conceptual framework, project model and “Tafakur” approach developed by DVV International Jordan. The authors intend to share their experiences from Jordan as a model that could be shared with others and learn from international peers who work in a similar scientific or practical context. Participation in the conference would also allow to network and connect with experts and peers to jointly work towards a widened understanding of the importance of dialogue-based ALE.

Relevance to the conference theme: The Tafakur approach is a practical example of a dialogue-based ALE approach to empower marginalised communities. The proposed paper will reflect on the contribution of the approach to ALE in relation to dialogue in the spheres of identity, community, and adult educators as well as the specific features and needs of marginalised groups in Jordan. The paper will tackle the topics of:

- Dialogue in the relationship between adult educators and adult learners

- Dialogue within communities
- Involving excluded and marginal groups in dialogic education
- Dialogic skills in the framework and development of skills / competences, including informal and organisational context to develop dialogical skills

Theoretical framework: The Tafakur approach draws upon the foundational theories of Paulo Freire's popular and emancipatory education, alongside the adult learning principles developed by Malcolm S. Knowles. However, the full application of these theories within the context of adult education in Jordan is only possible to a limited extent. This paper will examine the necessary adaptations of these theories, establishing a tailored framework for the Tafakur approach. In this process, Robert Chambers' participatory rural appraisal (PRA) emerges as a crucial instrument in facilitating the contextualization and integration of these theories within the specific socio-cultural landscape of Jordan.

Methodology: The paper will present the experiences of the practical implementation of the Tafakur approach in Jordan, focusing on the role and skills of adult educators and adult education organisations in engaging marginalised communities in dialogic sessions. The recently published case study by the European Training Foundation on the positive learning effects of the approach will serve as evidence-based support.

Outcome/Expected results: Presenting the Tafakur approach will give insights to conference participants how a dialogue-based ALE approach can empower individuals and their communities. By exchanging and interacting with and learning from peers, DVV International is also eager to develop its approach further. In addition, DVV International intends to establish connections between the conference's experts and peers with the community of adult education practitioners it has built in Jordan to enrich their experience internationally.

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A Competency Model to Promote the Dialogue between Counsellors and Counsees in Continuing/Adult Education

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Keywords: Continuing Education, Career Guidance, Decision-Making Competence, Qualitative research

Abstract:

For more than 50 years, lifelong learning has been seen as a response to the accelerating pace of technological and social change (Faure et al., 1972, p. 87). However, participation in (non-)formal, continuing education is voluntary in most sectors, which leads to a high degree of selectivity in participation in further training programmes (Desjardins, 2020; Hovdhaugen & Opheim, 2018; Rammstedt et al., 2024). Adult education research has been devoted to analysing the factors influencing this selectivity for about 40 years, using a variety of methodological approaches (Boeren, 2016; Siebert, 2004). Two research approaches are particularly dominant: (1) studies that analyse socio-structural factors, such as socio-demographic factors, such as the Adult Education Survey or PIAAC (BMBF, 2024; Desjardins, 2020), as well as the effects of social class using a milieu-oriented approach (Barz & Tippelt, 2007; Finnegan & Merrill, 2024), and (2) studies that analyse psychological-subject-oriented factors, such as motivation-oriented approaches (Deci & Ryan, 2013; Gorges & Kandler, 2012; Hubackova & Semradova, 2014; Kalenda & Kočvarová, 2022), decision-theoretical approaches (Behringer, 2003; Courtney, 1992), emotion-theoretical approaches (Boekaerts, 2010; Dirkx, 2008; Oleet & Yu, 2024), and biography-oriented approaches (Alheit, 1994; Christensen, 2012). The field is enriched by studies that draw on both approaches, such as interest theory approaches (Grotlüschen, 2010) or parts of the classism discourse that identify an intersectional entanglement of the different factors (hooks, 2020; Zacharakis et al., 2020), as well as studies that analyse social space (Mania, 2018; Nugel, 2014).

In all of these approaches, however, the knowledge of the possibilities and potentials of continuing education is a prerequisite for making a decision. This is where career guidance, guidance in continuing education and training comes in, where a dialogue at eye level is crucial. Because of the strong need for subject-oriented dialogue, Enoch also speaks of counselling as cultural work (Enoch, 2011, p. 318). The counsellor must understand the individual life situation and the existing and missing competence facets of the counselee in order to be able to address the issues that prevent the counselee from making a decision about continuing education.

This is where our expert study comes in. It addresses the following research question: What competencies do individuals need to make personal decisions about (non-)participation in adult education courses? We conducted a qualitative expert survey with 20 guidance counsellors from continuing education and training services in Germany. The counsellors are considered experts because they work on a daily basis with individuals who need help in finding the right adult education course and in making their decisions. In problem-centred interviews (Witzel & Reiter, 2012) they were asked about the types of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that people need in order to make decisions about their participation in the (non-)formal continuing- and adult education system. The transcribed interviews were then analysed using structured content analysis (Krippendorff, 2013).

Based on the interviews, we developed the model for Decision-Making Competency in Continuing and Adult Education (DMCCAE-Model), which we would like to put up for discussion. From the perspective of the experts, in addition to motivation for continuing education and knowledge of the system, knowledge of one's own continuing education-related self-concept and continuing education-related self-efficacy expectations are also relevant facets. Such a competence-theoretical approach could not only provide a supplementary explanation in further studies as to why people do or do not participate in continuing education. DMCCAE and its sub-facets could also help the counsellors by supporting their dialogue-based practice with a model, which helps identify nee-den issues.

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Cooperation and networking in adult basic education as a dialogue within and between different communities

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Keywords: Participant recruitment, Cooperation and networking, adult basic education

Abstract:

Institutionalised and organised adult education has always been characterised by cooperation and networking, which also results from its specific lifeworld anchoring (Alke & Jütte, 2018). Programme planners need to be constantly responsive to evolving social needs and therefore play a central role in the ongoing dialogue between social needs, target groups, and educational mission (von Hippel et al., 2008). It can thus be posited that programme planning is a complex professional field of action in adult education, characterised by a variety of actors, interests and relationships within the community (Cervero & Wilson, 1994; Gieseke, 2015). Programme planners must therefore actively engage in a dialogic space, fostering cooperation with various actors within and beyond their institutions (Alke, 2023; Gieseke, 2008). The development of programmes does not therefore take place in isolation in the social space, but is a dialogue process consisting of the joint development, implementation, and promotion of services (Jütte, 2002; Kemner et al., 2021). Cooperation and networking within and between communities is also part of the concepts of dialogue-based learning and community education, which have a long tradition in adult basic education (Goto et al., 2009; Hussain, 2009; Kasworm et al., 2010).

Participation in adult education is highly selective, often reinforcing existing inequalities (Boeren, 2016; Ilieva-Trichkova et al., 2022; Lee, 2018; Rubenson, 1998). Participant recruitment emerges as a central challenge for programme planners (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013; Käßlinger et al., 2017). In the field of literacy and basic education, this task is particularly urgent: Studies show a significant gap between the need for literacy programmes and actual participation rates, highlighting the necessity of fostering dialogue to address this discrepancy (Grotlüschen & Heilmann, 2021; OECD,

2021). In light of the target group's specific challenges in reading and writing, networking and cooperation have been identified as pivotal strategies for effective outreach (Clymer et al., 2020; Mania et al., 2022).

In our contribution, we examine how programme planners in adult basic education proceed to recruit participants. We identify the inter- and intra-organisational actors involved and the content and objectives of these cooperative efforts within the community.

A network analytical theoretical perspective (Albrecht, 2010) will be adopted in response to the research questions. The qualitative network analysis is employed as the prevailing research paradigm (Hollstein & Straus, 2006; Stegbauer, 2010). Thus, the focus is on the examination of relations between actors (Gruber et al., 2016). Theoretical reference is made to Granovetter's (1973) theory of strong and weak ties.

Empirical data collection includes 13 expert interviews (Gläser & Laudel, 2010) with programme leaders in adult basic education. The interviews were expanded to include the use of egocentric network maps as a technique of visualisation and as a medium for joint reflection (Gamper & Schönhuth, 2020; Straus, 2010). The data were examined using qualitative content analysis (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2024).

By analysing the dialogical interactions between programme planners and institutional actors, the study aims to deepen our understanding of cooperation and networking in the recruitment of participants. We explored the material with a focus on the relational perspective, the strong and weak relationships within the egocentric network. This involves aspects such as closeness, proximity, frequency or duration of contact (Marsden & Campbell, 1984). Finally, we present findings on number and types of cooperation partners and how the cooperation is characterised in terms of content and objectives.

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Critical adult education, emancipatory politics and the idea of dialogue: A once and future project?

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Keywords: Critical theory, critical adult education, emancipation, social movements

Abstract:

In the first half of the paper, which is theoretical, I will briefly outline how I understand critical adult education (CAE) historically and conceptually. Historically, it will be argued, this is best understood, in the first instance, in relation to the activity of emancipatory political movements within a capitalist world system (Arrighi et al, 2011; see also Cox & Nilsen, 2014; Eyerman & Jamison, 1991; Touraine, 1981; Tarrow, 1989; Tilly, 1995; Zibechi, 2013). CAE as we know it now (Brookfield, 2018), consolidated itself between the 1950s and the early 1990s and its emergence and leading ideas can be directly traced to workers, students, feminist, peasant, racial justice, anti-colonial and other progressive and emancipatory movements. Of course, this occurred within, against, a dynamic world system riven by internal contradictions encountering its own social/ natural limits, subject from pressures from 'above and 'below' which went through two distinct periods in the past two generations -state-managed capitalism followed by neoliberal, financialized capitalism (Harvey, 2015; Fraser & Jaeggi, 2018). While critical adult education is rooted in emancipatory movements in a world system it should be treated as a mere epiphenomenon of these processes. It has its own developmental history, which of course is, in part, related to critical theory (Jay, 1996). The paper will make a case that critical theory needs scope- that is a comprehensive power analysis of social relations as a totality (Lefebvre, 1991; Kluge & Negt, 2018) - and explanatory depth (Bhaskar, 2011). Explanatory depth does not just denote being able to analyse systemic logic and identifying social harms, it also requires and historically informed theory of change, a conception of human flourishing and justice, and a commitment to reflexivity (Bourdieu, 2000). CAE is more than a 'branch' of critical theory though: it amended and extended critical theory by reflecting on educational values and practices and praxis which advanced the democratisation of education and knowledge (Freire, 1978; Mezirow, 1991; Rappaport, 2020; Hall & Tandon, 2021, Novelli et al., 2024 inter alia). The concept of dialogue is central to this and connects theory, methodology and political values in CAE. I will argue that this contribution is not acknowledged widely enough in critical theory outside of adult education (e.g. Keucheyan, 2013).

One of the key arguments of the paper is that we need to offer accounts that allow us to grasp patterns of secular continuity and change linked to a theory of power, history from 'above' and from 'below', in order to make sense of CAE in the present conjuncture. We are currently going through another major transition in the world system marked by heightened instability, profound social and ecological crises and the growing power of reactionary forces (Fraser & Jaeggi, 2018; Mudde, 2019; Seymour, 2024). In these circumstances, I want to reflect on the salience of CAE as a theoretical and practical project built around a multidimensional conception of dialogue. The second half of the paper will do so from a particular angle. It will draw on mixed-method inquiry conducted with other colleagues between 2021- 2023 on the educational needs of progressive activists and what constitutes good pedagogy according to popular educators. This involved multiple surveys, 18 focus groups, 9 interviews with diverse groups of activists and activist educators from twenty-five different

European countries and a small number of participants from Africa, Latin America and North America. The dataset includes the views of nearly 2000 people and we also conducted literature review (c. 375 articles/books and curricula and training manuals of organisations working in popular education). Based on this I will outline three of our main findings related to the salience of CAE. They are: 1) the pedagogical values and principles named as key to good practice by activists and movement educators align very closely to those of CAE, including the centrality of dialogue; 2) nonetheless, there is a disconnection between CAE and contemporary progressive and emancipatory social movements which: a) contributes to significant theoretical and pedagogical gaps in movement education especially in terms of sustaining critical dialogue over an extended time period; which also b) contributes to a scholastic and weakly politicised interpretation of CAE amongst many adult education researchers; 3) the need for CAE that connects directly to progressive and emancipatory social movements to address the following issues; a) the enhancement of transversal organising capacity through, in part, education (Adams et al, 2024; Bevins, 2023; Finnegan & Cox, 2023); b) the further refinement of critical pedagogy as a dialogue in, and through, diversity (Taiwo, 2020; Yuval-Davis, 1999); and c) develop a more effective response to the reconfiguration of the public sphere and counterpublics caused by the increased influence privately owned, corporate digital media platforms (Gerbaudo, 2012; Seymour, 2019). The paper will conclude with comments on how these findings link to the propositional account of critical theory in relation to CAE offered in the first half of the paper.

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D

Dance Pedagogy for Adults: A Pilot Study on Cognition and Social Aesthetics

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Keywords: dance pedagogy, adults, adult education, social aesthetics, cognitive flexibility

Abstract:

Dance pedagogy, as a learner-centered approach, offers unique opportunities for adults to engage with social aesthetics—how individuals perceive and interpret aesthetic experiences within social contexts (Berleant, 2023). Building on frameworks of dance pedagogy for adults (Mainwaring et al., 2010; Williams, 2013; Serrano & Martínez, 2017), social aesthetics (Berleant, 2023; McMahon, 2020; Cross, 2023; Nielsen, 2001; Martin & Merriman, 2015), and adult education (Knowles, 1980; Boateng, 2022; Weinberg, 1999), this pilot study investigates the impact of dance pedagogy on adults' social aesthetic perception. It explores dance as an art form that deepens participants' aesthetic awareness as they adapt to new challenges and social environments, both within dance settings and in everyday life.

To capture these shifts, the newly created Social Aesthetics Perception Scale (SAPS) was piloted during the study. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining reflexive interviews with the SAPS to measure participants' subjective aesthetic experiences in social contexts. A central aim is to evaluate the validity and reliability of the SAPS in capturing participants' social aesthetic perceptions, both within the dance pedagogy framework and as applied to broader social contexts. The scale also subtly considers self-perceived cognitive flexibility, reflecting the idea that adults can continue to learn and engage with new experiences throughout life, particularly through embodied practices such as dance.

Preliminary analysis suggests a potential effect of dance pedagogy on adult participants' adaptation to social aesthetic experiences in the dance classroom. Early feedback from participants indicates a growing recognition of the relationship between social interactions and aesthetic judgments during dance learning. It is anticipated that improvements in social aesthetics perception, through the lens of dance as an art form, will foster individual and social transformation by strengthening social bonds, communication, and cooperative behaviors. These initial findings may inform future refinements of the SAPS and guide further exploration into how dance pedagogy influences social dynamics in adult learners.

This study seeks to address (1) the effect of dance pedagogy on self-perceived cognitive flexibility in adult learners without prior dance training, (2) the effect of dance pedagogy on social aesthetic perception in adult learners, and (3) the validity and reliability of the SAPS.

The sample consists of 10 adult beginners enrolled in structured dance courses over a six-month period. Data collection includes the SAPS and qualitative insights from structured participant interviews. The findings from this ongoing study aim to inform future research on the role of dance pedagogy in social development, particularly regarding its impact on social aesthetic perception and engagement with diverse social dynamics. Additionally, the study seeks to refine the SAPS as a tool for evaluating aesthetic perception in communal artistic practices, positioning dance not only as a physical activity but as an art form that fosters intellectual and social openness. By integrating social aesthetic theory, adult education principles, and embodied learning concepts, this research aspires to bridge the gap between dance pedagogy and its broader social implications, promoting both individual growth and collective transformation.

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Deep Dialogue for Sustainable Peace

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Keywords: Ideology, Dialogue, Silence, Communities, Transformation

Abstract:

The rise of political conflict has posed significant challenges for democratic societies and for the academy. Political ideologies often emphasise a division between 'the people' and 'the elite', pushing narratives that thrive on polarisation. In such contexts dialogue between social and community groups and populist movements is crucial for the health of democracy. However, within the academy, and specifically within adult and community education in formal, informal, and non-formal spaces, political populism and ideology tends to undermine the practice of dialogue by promoting exclusionary practices, rejecting, and indeed silencing the legitimacy of opposing views. This paper explores the theoretical foundations of dialogue and silence as critical components of communicative discourse. It posits the theories of Freire (1970, 1996, 1998, 2010), Greene (1973, 1978, 1995), Brookfield (1995, 2009), Lederach (2003), Bar-on (1989, 2007), and Giroux (2005) as a means of scaffolding a collaborative theoretical framework for conducting meaningful dialogue amongst and between communities in contention. In doing so it aims to offer practitioners of adult and community education a conceptual framework to support participatory dialogue that engages with contentious and complex narratives. This paper offers the concept of silence as a societal response to conflict, the construct of dialogue as one means to deconstruct the silence, the acknowledgement of truth being multifaceted, and the complexity that arises in dealing with identity in communities in conflict, where the practice of dialogue is challenging, elusive, and subdued. In concluding, it suggests where arts-based methodologies form the backdrop, there is hope for shared understanding to emerge organically.

Deep dialogue is a methodology of engaging in dialogue that goes beyond surface level, one-dimensional thinking and response patterns. It aims for participants to engage in conversations that reach into emotional contexts and explore entrenched rationality. It is dialogue that is honest. It is dialogue that exposes insecure ontologies. It is risky business. Where dialogue, deep or otherwise, is muted, the silence is deafening. In responding to cultural silence, the task of developing positive encounter dialogue between groups of 'others' is critical. According to Bar-On, Litvak-Hirsh, and Othman (2007), 'dialogue can be understood as learning how another group feels and thinks differently from one's own group' (52). On the other hand, acknowledging the asymmetrical power relations in constructing dialogue is not without its challenges.

Freire (1998) suggested maintaining 'epistemological curiosity' so that 'authoritarianism and the epistemological difference can be circumvented and outmaneuvered' (32). This helps to prevent a 'simple passive pretense at dialogue' (81). He highlighted the importance of listening: 'only the person who listens patiently and critically is able to speak with the other' (110). Hawes (2006) acknowledged, 'with dialogue, the outcome (consensus, conversion, victory), doesn't drive the process. The process is the outcome' (263). She asserted that 'the turn to dialogue has come about in order to help people, who cannot talk to one another without arguing, dominating, withdrawing into silence or fighting, begin a process of mutual understanding' (236). Lederach concurs 'processes designed to explore these deeper issues will need to have a goal of creating spaces for exchange and

dialogue, rather than the goal of creating an immediate negotiated solution' (57). He elaborated, 'the most critical parts of the processes are the cultivation of internal or intra-group spaces where safe and deep reflection about the nature of the situation, responsibility, hopes, and fears can be pursued' (57).

Within protracted inter-community political conflicts like those in Northern Ireland, Israel, Palestine, South Africa, to name but a few, political ideology often frames and disrupts the attempts and experiences of meaningful dialogue within such communities. Dialogue becomes fraught with challenges, but, skillfully managed, dialogue also hosts the potential for transformation.

Aim: to explore the role of silence and dialogue within societies experiencing protracted intergroup conflict, in building sustainable peace.

Relevance to the conference theme: The paper responds to the following conference themes

1. Dialogue within and between different communities
2. Dialogic pedagogies and the macro-, meso- and micro-conditions for successful dialogue-oriented adult education

The paper presents a conceptual framework to support the deepening of dialogue at intra group level that may or may not lead to inter group engagement. It offers deep dialogue as a methodology, supported by a theoretical framework, that draws on research in adult education and draws upon the experiences of communities in conflict and those working towards sustainable peace.

The outcome/expected results of the paper are as follows: to dialogue within adult education spaces in academies at international level about the potential of deep dialogue; to explore the processes engaged in developing deep dialogue as a methodological approach to build greater understanding amongst groups of Others; the paper presents a conceptual framework that draws upon doctoral research in adult and community education; it explores communities transitioning from conflict to peace, and in doing so, a sustainable development context is supported.

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Democracy as Practice: A Principle-centered Approach to Dialogue and other Forms of Democratic Life

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Keywords: human dignity, civic life, civic agency, living democracy

Abstract:

This paper explores the role of adult civic learning in cultivating democratic engagement as an active, lived experience. Drawing from the theoretical framework presented in *Learning for Democracy* (Hoggan-Kloubert & Hoggan, in press), it argues that democracy is not merely a system of governance but a mode of collective living that requires continuous participation, reflection, and action. The discussion will highlight how democratic principles—autonomy, solidarity, rationality, and pluralism—serve as the foundation for civic living, and therefore also for lifelong civic learning.

In a time of anti-democratic tendencies, misinformation, and social fragmentation, we see a particular urgency for the field of adult education to examine how adults learn to enact democracy daily. This presentation critically engages with existing traditions of civic learning and offers a principle-centered approach that fosters meaningful participation and civic agency.

The theoretical framework of this presentation is grounded in the argument that human dignity is both the justification for and the goal of democracy. This perspective underpins the four core principles necessary for democratic engagement: autonomy, understood as the capacity for independent and informed civic decision-making; solidarity, as a recognition of shared responsibilities and the need for inclusive collaboration; rationality, which entails critical reflection and engagement based on reason and evidence; and pluralism, which underscores the value of diverse perspectives while maintaining a commitment to democratic norms.

These principles are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. The framework explores the tensions and synergies between them, highlighting how they can be cultivated through targeted civic learning initiatives. The theoretical framework builds on the work of scholars such as Peter Levine ("A theory of civic life"), Jürgen Habermas and Nancy Fraser (public sphere), Elinor Ostrom (collective action), Isaiah Berlin (value pluralism) and others. It connects to the rich history of civic education, as seen in the works of John Dewey, Paulo Freire, Oscar Negt and Klaus-Peter Hufer.

The discussion will also offer examples of how these principles manifest in real-world civic initiatives, such as grassroots movements, community-led decision-making, and institutional mechanisms for civic participation.

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Democratic Professionalism: Dialogue, Participation, and Justice in Elderly Care and Education

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Keywords: Democratic Professionalism, Dialogue, Participation, Elderly Care, Education

Abstract:

In contemporary contexts where institutional structures often prioritize efficiency over empathy, education and care for older adults call for renewed attention to dialogue, mutual recognition, and relational professionalism. This paper explores the transformative potential of dialogue in the fields of adult education and elderly care, focusing on the concept of democratic professionalism grounded in participation, social justice, and relational practices (Formenti, West, & Horsdal, 2014; Bainbridge, Formenti, & West, 2021).

The theoretical framework integrates adult learning theories with systemic and complexity-informed perspectives (von Foerster, 1973), emphasizing dialogical practices as tools for inclusive and co-constructed knowledge. Rather than relying on top-down approaches, the research highlights the importance of listening to the lived experiences of older adults, whose voices are often silenced or overlooked in policy-making and institutional discourses.

The ongoing research employs a qualitative design, combining narrative inquiry and thematic analysis to investigate the educational and relational needs of older adults and caregivers living in mountainous areas, which are often characterized by geographical isolation and limited access to services. Data collection is based on semi-structured interviews analyzed with NVivo software. The codebook, inspired by adult education frameworks, includes thematic categories such as learning, agency, memory, expectations, care, emotion, identity, and transitions. These categories are not treated as isolated variables but as interwoven narrative strands that reflect the complex and multilayered experiences of aging.

The analytic process, currently underway, adopts a reflective and participatory stance aimed at reconstructing fragmented biographical narratives and highlighting both the tensions and transformative possibilities embedded in the aging process. Listening is understood not only as a methodological tool but as an educational and political act, one that restores dignity and acknowledges the knowledge and contributions of individuals who continue to shape their communities.

This study contributes to the debate on democratic professionalism by advocating for the role of educators and care professionals as facilitators of dialogic and transformative processes. It argues that professionals working with older adults must foster environments where autonomy, dignity, and mutual recognition are prioritized, thus enabling more inclusive, responsive, and humane educational and care practices.

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Developing rhythmic intelligence to foster dialogue and transformation in adult education

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Keywords: time, temporality, rhythm, rhythmic intelligence, transformative learning

Abstract:

In adult education, dialogue is often considered as a key component of the learning process, however not every dialogical situation triggers significant insights or changes (Burbules, 1993). The aim of this communication is to discuss, from a theoretical perspective, the temporalities involved in dialogues that may carry transformative effects. This contribution is grounded in the assumption that independently of the content of a dialogue, what may explain its transformative effects relies on its temporal features. Indeed, to carry formative or even transformative effects (Mezirow, 1991), dialogical situations require situations of interlocution that unfold through specific rhythms at specific time. Based on current research around the temporal dimensions of education and the development of rhythmic intelligence (e.g., Alhadeff-Jones, 2017, 2023), three dimensions are introduced and discussed to envision the development of a critical understanding of the relations between time, rhythms, dialogical situations, and their (trans)formative effects.

First, conceiving dialogue as a rhythmic phenomenon suggests that it involves people interacting verbally and non-verbally according to their own specific rhythms (e.g., flow of thought, discursive pace, body movement) and the temporal constraints imposed by the context (e.g., schedule,

setting). Following research conducted in psychology and anthropology (Hall, 1989), such interactions reveal unconscious dynamics that determine the perceived quality of the exchange. More fundamentally, the rhythms that characterize dyad or group discussions reveal power dynamics, imposed from within and from outside, that may influence their individual and collective effects. From this perspective, interpreting the impact of dialogue requires one to analyze the temporal constraints involved (Alhadeff-Jones, 2017), i.e., the rhythms that are determining the flow of exchange and the way they contribute to synchronize or not people involved in it (Pineau, 2000).

Following Lefebvre's contribution (1961, 2009), dialogical situations can also be conceived as constitutive of a specific 'moment' of existence. According to Lefebvre, a moment refers to some form of constancy within the course of time. It constitutes a common element, shared by a series of instants, events, circumstances, and dialectical movements (Lefebvre, 2009, p.640). Considering dialogue as a moment of existence with its own history, constitutes a second entry to conceive both, the continuity and the discontinuity characterizing dialogical situations throughout the lifespan. From this perspective, interpreting the (trans)formative effects of dialogue requires one to interpret, among others, their inscription and the meaning they take in the learner's life history.

A third perspective leads one to conceive transformative dialogue as the one that occurs at the 'right' time. The notion of *kairos* (Galvani, 2011) is introduced in order to suggest that the good encounter is a matter of opportunity, and of opportune time. The *kairos* refers indeed to the capacity to identify the right time in order to act properly. Such opportune time can be conceived from the perspective of the learner, it questions then when does a person appears as the most 'receptive' for a comment or an interpretation. It can also be envisioned from a collective perspective, questioning when does someone's intervention carry the potential to trigger or reinforce a collective change.

Finally, this contribution argues that by paying attention to these three temporal dimensions shaping dialogical situations, learners and practitioners may develop their rhythmic intelligence and reinforce the (trans)formative effects of their praxis.

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Dialogic Fragility and Educational Relationships: Reclaiming Agency and Inclusion for Individuals Experiencing Homelessness

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Keywords: Homelessness, Systemic Approach, Dialogic Competence, Educational Relationship, Agency

Abstract:

This paper examines the significant communication fragility experienced by individuals facing homelessness, exacerbating their marginalization. It explores how this fragility compromises dialogue — fundamental for fostering care, proximity and inclusion — and examines the role of the educational relationship in recovering intentionality, reflexivity, self-narration skills, and dialogic competence conducive to social inclusion.

Drawing from a systemic perspective, this analysis posits that homelessness is not solely an individual predicament, but a relational and systemic issue characterized by disrupted communication ecosystems. We argue that dialogic competence — encompassing the ability to articulate experiences, give them a meaning, reflect on and thus to learn, to engage in self-reflection and reciprocal listening, and to navigate social interactions — is essential for individuals to direct pathways out of homelessness and combat stigma. The educational relationship, understood as a space for reciprocal learning and empowerment, becomes crucial in fostering dialogic skills and restoring agency.

For persons experiencing homelessness, the relationship with reality and the intentional activity of consciousness often manifest significant complexities, marked by a loss or distortion of intentionality. This is characterised by an inability to recognise the relational structure of reality and assign meaning to experiences. The educational relationship with these individuals is characterised by resistance, withdrawal behaviours, and at times extreme disengagement. Confronting these “narratives of depletion”, educational responsibility first necessitates a continuous effort of “vigilant presence” on the part of the educator. This commitment persists until the individual shows a modest opening to the possibility of relational connection, dialogue, and the reweaving of their personal narrative to discover existential meaning. The process aims to re-establish the capacity for self-narration and reinterpretation in new valuable perspectives, achieved through cognitive and affective reprocessing of past experiences and unresolved fractures.

Transformative pedagogy also underlines how educational interventions can adopt critical reflexivity and empower individuals to challenge oppressive narratives.

This paper presents a conceptual analysis informed by a review of interdisciplinary literature spanning education, social work, and communication studies. Key search terms included “homelessness”, “systemic approach”, “dialogic competence” and “educational relationship”. The analysis identifies recurring themes and patterns in the literature related to dialogic fragility and the potential of educational interventions to promote inclusion.

Indeed, findings suggest that people experiencing homelessness often face multiple barriers to effective communication, including trauma, mental health challenges, and societal stigma. These barriers can lead to a sense of voicelessness and disempowerment, hindering ability to access resources, build relationships, and advocate for their needs. The educational relationship, when

grounded in empathy, respect, and shared power, can provide a supportive context for individuals to regain intentionality, self-awareness, meaning, voice, thus to develop their dialogic skills, and cultivate a sense of belonging.

In conclusion, addressing the dialogic fragility of individuals experiencing homelessness requires a systemic approach that recognizes the interplay between individual, relational, and structural factors. Consequently, in an ecosystemic perspective, we contend that interventions must target not only individual skills but also the broader communication patterns within social systems. By prioritizing the educational relationship and fostering dialogic competence, operators and policymakers can contribute to creating more inclusive and equitable communities where all voices are heard and valued.

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Dialogic Principle in Adult Learning and Education: A Phenomenographic Approach

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Key words: dialogic principle, adult learning, phenomenography, adult educator

Abstract:

This paper explores the way dialogic principle is understood and practiced by adult educators in their actual professional practice. For this purpose, phenomenography is used, as a methodological

approach with the potential of uncovering the qualitatively different ways in which individuals experience or understand certain phenomena. Furthermore, phenomenographic research is closely tied to the learning process, which lead to giving the rise of a theory of learning and awareness (Marton and Booth, 1999). The dialogic principle in learning is realized through sustained stretches of talk that enable speakers and listeners to explore and build on their own and others' ideas (Alexander, 2017). Dialogue creates possibilities for learning by highlighting its emancipatory potential and encouraging problem-posing approaches that position learners as active participants. However, people practice and experience dialogue in distinct ways with different outcomes.

Phenomenographic analysis enables bringing order to conceptualizing differences experienced in practice. The main results of phenomenographic research are seen in the development of a structured set of interrelated categories that capture the diverse ways individuals perceive or make sense of a particular phenomenon. These categories are typically arranged in a hierarchical way, ranging from simpler to more complex interpretations. Beyond identifying the categories themselves, the phenomenographic analysis also reveals critical dimensions that set them apart, highlighting the qualitative distinctions between conceptions. Each category should reflect a unique mode of experiencing the phenomenon, demonstrate a coherent hierarchical connection with the others, and collectively represent a concise yet comprehensive set of variations.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with adult educators teaching various types of courses, including those oriented toward professional development and those supporting personal growth. The analysis revealed three distinct categories of understanding and practicing dialogue in adult education. The first conceptualizes dialogue as a means of transmitting knowledge, focused on clarifying concepts and facilitating comprehension. The second views dialogue as a collaborative process, emphasizing the co-construction of knowledge and active learner engagement. The third aligns with a critical and transformative perspective, treating dialogue as a vehicle for challenging assumptions, fostering critical consciousness, and promoting social change.

By integrating the theoretical foundations of phenomenography with empirical insights, this paper highlights the value of the approach in uncovering the diversity of conceptions held by adult educators and in supporting the development of more interactive, reflective, and transformative learning environments.

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Dialogic Teaching in AI-Enhanced Learning Environments: Insights from an International Survey

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Keywords: Artificial intelligence, digital transformation, dialogical pedagogies, teaching strategies

Abstract:

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into adult education presents transformative opportunities for advancing dialogical pedagogies and enhancing the learning experiences of diverse adult learners (Cacicio & Riggs, 2023). On the one hand, AI promises benefits such as automating routine tasks and personalising learning, potentially freeing educators' time for higher-value activities. On the other hand, challenges related to skills, attitudes, institutional support, and ethical considerations influence the extent to which educators adopt these tools. This study examines how educators in higher and adult education perceive and utilise AI tools, with particular focus on how these technologies support educator-learner dialogue. This research is part of the International survey on artificial intelligence in higher education, training, and adult learning, led by the Institute for Adult Learning Singapore, and includes collaboration from over 20 countries, with 1,947 educators participating in the online survey. Our analysis reveals that AI is frequently used to enhance problem-solving, streamline decision-making, and foster new levels of creative thinking. Furthermore, AI optimises teaching strategies and personalises learning, contributing to a more efficient, adaptive, and outcomes-oriented education. Despite AI's clear potential, significant adoption barriers persist, particularly in institutions with limited AI exposure. Concerns primarily centre on diminished human interaction, excessive AI dependence, and challenges in preserving authentic teacher-student relationships. Critics worry that AI implementation might contribute to miscommunication, inhibit critical thinking development, or disrupt the balance of responsibilities between educators and learners. These findings align with existing research emphasising the need for dialogic pedagogies that balance technological mediation with human-centred approaches (Alfredo et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2021). Our study concludes that fostering meaningful educator-learner dialogue in AI-mediated environments requires targeted professional development programs that enhance teachers' AI literacy and dialogic skills, while addressing ethical considerations. Future research should explore how AI can support learning by enhancing reciprocal communication in adult education, building on historical developments and future directions in educational AI (Williamson & Eynon, 2020).

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Dialogical Metacognitive Training 'Through the Glass': A Psychological Approach to Adult Education through the Performing Arts

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Keywords: Dialogical Pedagogy, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Metacognitive Training Through The Glass, Adult Education, Psychology of Education

Abstract:

This paper presents the metacognitive training *Through the Glass* (MTTG), specifically designed for adult learners. Its purpose is to explore and evaluate the effectiveness of MTTG within the context of adult education and transformative learning, particularly in Higher Education settings. The primary aim of MTTG is to facilitate transformative learning by integrating psychological theories with a dialogical framework. Drawing on the work of Pier Paolo Pasolini, Jack Mezirow, and Aaron and Judith Beck, the method adopts a multidisciplinary approach to foster both cognitive and emotional growth, offering a transformative educational experience that emphasizes dialogue as a central pedagogical tool. This framework is applied in educational workshops that use performing arts and dialogical practices to address contemporary challenges in adult learning—a context essential for understanding the rationale and structure of MTTG.

During an empirical phase, the effectiveness of MTTG was assessed using a mixed-methods approach (Gianceselli & Bosco 2024) with young students (N=237) in Higher Education. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were applied, with pre- and post-training questionnaire (Bosco 2003) measuring perceived competence, metacognitive self-efficacy, behavioural changes, and engagement with cinema and theatre as mediators. This research design provides valuable insights into the training's impact on cognitive flexibility, emotional intelligence (Salovey & Mayer 1990), and the development of soft skills.

Pasolini's *Manifesto for a New Theatre* (1968) advocates for the “linguistic re-education of society” positioning theatre as a *medium* for individual and collective transformation. This philosophical underpinning forms the foundation for the dialogical methods employed in *MTTG*, emphasizing cultural and linguistic critique as pathways for transformation. Complementing this perspective, Mezirow's *Transformative Learning Theory* (1997; 2000; 2004) highlights the

importance of critical self-reflection and the restructuring of meaning perspectives. By outlining ten phases of transformative learning, Mezirow (1997; 2000) provides a crucial pedagogical framework that supports the reflective practices central to *MTTG*, reinforcing the need for learners to critically engage with their beliefs and assumptions. In addition, Aaron Beck's *Cognitive Behavioural Therapy* (CBT), introduced in the 1960s and further developed by his daughter Judith Beck (2021), offers a psychological lens for understanding how cognitive restructuring can facilitate emotional regulation and behavioural change. This psychological framework is integrated into *MTTG*, enabling learners to not only reflect on their assumptions but also work toward practical changes in thinking processes and behaviours.

MTTG thus functions as a dynamic workshop for resolving relational conflicts and encouraging both personal and social transformation. With performing arts as mediating tools for learning, *MTTG* fosters cognitive restructuring and emotional regulation. Participants engage in *Socratic-Pasolinian dialogue* to critically examine their assumptions, core beliefs, and behaviours. They identify and analyse “disorienting dilemmas” present within cultural discourses, such as those found in cinema and theatre.

These dilemmas are explored through group workshop sessions, inspired by the principles of the 5th-century *Ancient Athenian Theatre*, creating an interactive and democratic learning environment. In this space, participants challenge their existing assumptions, engage in deep self-reflection, and undergo both personal and collective transformation. At its core, the pedagogical tool of *MTTG* is dialogue. This central element addresses disorienting dilemmas, fosters critical thinking, and enhances the development of *Theory of Mind* (Job 2025). *MTTG* also cultivates metacognitive skills essential for adult learners' personal and professional development. In conclusion, this paper underscores the potential of integrating dialogical pedagogies with psychological theories to create an innovative framework for adult education through performing arts. *Through the Glass* represents a novel approach to adult learning, emphasizing deep, transformative engagement with both the self and society through dialogue and reflection. The training addresses current educational challenges and opportunities by fostering individual and collective growth and promoting the development of essential competencies in both personal and professional contexts.

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Dialogical teaching, deep understanding and older adults' learning: Do they make a marriage?

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Keywords: dialogical learning, dialogical teaching, older learners, teaching for understanding

Abstract:

Learning in late life allows people continued personal and professional growth, and is key to active aging and involvement in the workforce. These can be important to ensuring healthy, financially stable, and personally satisfying longevity (Horowitz & Stevens, 2021; World Health Organization, 2002; Zhang et al., 2022). Despite over 50 years of studies addressing older adult learning, researchers agree that there is still a relative lack of comprehensive theories related to instructional design for older learners (Callahan and colleagues, 2003; Formosa and Malta, 2023; Ko, 2020), pointing to a need for additional theoretical inquiries that relate to practice in this field.

Learning for deep understanding is characterized by the ability to make connections among various concepts, and to make active use of newly acquired knowledge in new contexts (Bransford et al., 2000). Deep understanding is one of the cornerstones of older adults' independent learning. It is expressed by the fact that the knowledge they acquire is rich with connections to their prior conceptual framework and is often useable and can be applied to new tasks in the real world (Zohar, 2023). Dialogical learning - learning that is rich in meaningful conversations between teachers and students and among students- is a core feature of collaborative learning (Chinn & al., 2000; Alexander, 2008; Resnick & al., 2018). Engaging in collaborative dialogue has a potential for deepening understanding by linking new concepts with prior knowledge (Resnick, Asterhan, & Clarke, 2015). However, not all dialogical learning in effect realizes this potential and deep understanding is often not highlighted in older adults' teaching (Zohar, 2023).

The goal of this presentation is to explore theory and practice of dialogical teaching and learning (DT&L) of older adults from the perspective of its potential for deepening their understanding. The research questions are: 1. Whether and how do core elements of dialogical teaching match older adults' tendency of learning for deep understanding? 2. To what extent and how do studies about DT&L for older adults highlight deep understanding?

The methodology for addressing question 1 will consist of a conceptual analysis of relevant aspects of DT&L with relation to older learners' characteristics. For example, according to Socioemotional Selectivity Theory older adults typically prioritize emotionally meaningful experiences involving a sense of mattering Lang, & Carstensen, 2002) This supports learner-centered

instruction involving deep conversations and collaboration. The methodology of Part 2 will consist of reviewing 40 recent articles about DTL for older adults published within the last 5 years in leading journals in the field of geragogy (instructional practices for older learners). The review will examine whether and how considerations related to teaching and learning with deep understanding actually take place in that literature about DT&L.

Preliminary outcomes show that: 1. There is a strong match between dialogical teaching and older adults' characteristics, and particularly with their strive for learning with deep understanding. 2. The literature review indicates that the issue of teaching for deep understanding does not have a central role in studies about DT&L for older adults. These findings indicate a disparity between the potential significance of DT&L for older adults' learning - and particularly for their deep understanding - and current prevailing research and teaching practices. The main implication of these findings is that looking for ways to emphasize teaching practices highlighting deep understanding within dialogical thinking may be a fruitful way of improving both research and programs for older learners' education.

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Dialogue and remaking society: the experience of social mediation

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Keywords: social mediation; diversity; learning biography; dialogue

Abstract:

The central theme of the conference concerns adult education and learning in relation to dialogue in the spheres of culture, identity, citizenship, community, migration, work, vocational education, adult educators, and the specific features, needs, and resources of different groups and contexts.

Social Mediation and the culture associated with it (for comparative studies of practice around the EU and in projects, see for example Almeida, 2016; Almeida et al., 2015; Silva et al., 2016), characterized by the respect towards the other, focusing on dialogue, the enhancement of citizenship, the importance given to individuals and to the development of their skills in the process of change, constitute an important factor in any process of piecing together social ties which are under threat of rupture or loss. Originally starting in the framework of a European project (Silva et al., 2017) involving social mediators from seven countries, biographical-narrative interviews with participants in the former project have been continued. The detail of the interview talk documents significantly how professional trajectories are defined, and how this is affected by group belonging, ethnic or cultural discourses, as well as gender, age, professional and educational relationships, and so on.

Research interview respondents participating in diverse life worlds, such as the mediators interviewed in Barcelona, Paris, Magdeburg and latterly in online conversations, provide insight in their talk into the significance of critical change processes for their individual and collective learning. In so doing, they can be heard building own discourses of learning, in which acceptance of, and resistance to, the dominant discourses of institutions and civil society is laid down in the interdiscursive layering of interaction with (a) the own told narrative, (b) with the researcher agenda and (c) in the all-important dialogue with those significant others whose voices and narratives give expression to the complexity and transacted meanings of individual and group learning contexts. The mediator brings to their work and to their talk a personal history, a family history, a history of learning and a history of life-choices, to name but a handful of the critical steps in the development of individual practice.

Thus, the biographical narratives which will be discussed in this paper will try to show that they can offer insight into the learning processes that move individuals to work in vulnerable communities, and that the creation of a common space of experience – a space of dialogue and learning in diversity - can be heard as it emerges in talk. The work of social mediators is seen as an important example of the contribution of dialogical processes to the making and remaking of solidarity and inclusivity in communities.

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Dialogue as a Force for Change: Learning, Identity, and Self-Organization in Grassroots Communities

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Keywords: Dialogue, Grassroots communities, Radical education, Transformative learning

Abstract:

This research is grounded in the concepts of radical education, where dialogue serves as a transformative practice that reshapes relationships, identity, and processes of knowledge creation in grassroots communities situated in urban autonomous spaces. By challenging hierarchical structures, dialogue fosters egalitarian, community knowledge production and plays a crucial role in advancing the radical potential of grassroots communities as sites for social change. In contrast to hegemonic education, where knowledge is often imposed rather than co-created, dialogue creates an open, reciprocal exchange that empowers members of grassroots communities and strengthens collective identity. It shapes self-organizing practices and brings together diverse and often marginalized individuals who seek alternative approaches to living, creating, and organizing. Through dialogue, community members share experiences, express collective concerns, and co-create strategies for action focused on social change. The transformative potential of dialogue lies in its ability to empower community members as active agents of change. By dismantling traditional power structures, dialogical education enables individuals to develop critical awareness, contest dominant narratives, and actively participate in shaping their community's direction while resisting neoliberal urban policies. Rather than reinforcing hierarchies, dialogue cultivates a horizontal learning environment, where all participants contribute to decision-making and community development. This study contributes to ongoing discussions on dialogue within theories of adult education, particularly in relation to critical pedagogy, transformative learning, and dialogic pedagogies in non-formal educational settings. Its added value lies in highlighting the role of dialogue in grassroots communities within contemporary urban environments and exploring how it can serve as a tool for collective agency focused on social change. However, genuine dialogue in grassroots communities is not without challenges. Differences in age, gender, social class, and previous experiences can create power imbalances, allowing certain members to have greater influence over discussions. The risk of

superficial or patronizing conversations, in which dominant voices shape discourse without meaningful engagement, can hinder its radical potential. True dialogue requires mutual recognition, active listening, and shared responsibility for knowledge creation. This paper explores how non-formal educational methods, forms, and practices such as discussions, assemblies, and working groups facilitate dialogue-driven learning within urban grassroots communities. By analyzing community interactions, the study seeks to understand how dialogue helps establish the principles and identity of a grassroots community and what transformative effects it has on its members. Using a qualitative research approach, this study focuses on a grassroots community based in Ljubljana. Data collection includes semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and analysis of secondary sources such as social media posts and photographs. Since the research is still in progress, the paper will present preliminary findings at the conference. Early interviews indicate that dialogue plays a crucial role in fostering trust, collective learning, and community engagement. It not only contributes to the development of shared principles and identity but also transforms relationships, shapes individual perspectives, and deepens the understanding of community belonging and self-organization. These findings will contribute to broader discussions on dialogue as a foundation for democratic, participatory, and transformative learning processes in adult education research, highlighting its role in shaping grassroots self-organization and social change in contemporary urban contexts.

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Dialogue as a Path to Inclusion: Recognising and Valuing Competences Developed in the Experience of Homelessness

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Keywords: adult education, homelessness, experiential learning, social inclusion, competences recognition

Abstract:

The phenomenon of homelessness represents a crucial challenge for democratic societies, questioning their ability to promote inclusion and social justice. Traditional approaches, particularly those rooted in sociology, often overlook the learning experiences that individuals develop in extreme social conditions. This study aims to investigate the competences acquired by homeless people and how they can be recognised and valued to improve social and educational inclusion in policies and services. The research aligns with the theme "Dialogue in Adult Education and Learning" by emphasising the importance of participatory and reflective approaches in identifying and legitimising the knowledge and skills developed outside formal educational settings.

Theoretical Framework: The study is based on four key areas of research: 1) the multidimensional nature of homelessness (Amore, Baker, & Howden-Chapman, 2011); 2) survival strategies in extreme social contexts (Bender et al., 2007; Barnao, 2004); 3) experiential learning theories (Dewey, 1938; Jarvis, 1987; Mezirow, 1991); and 4) methodologies for recognising informal and non-formal learning (Di Rienzo, 2012; Aleandri, 2017; CEDEFOP, 2015). A central assumption is that life on the streets, despite its difficulties, fosters the development of strategic competences in areas such as problem-solving, emotional regulation, and relational competences. By integrating perspectives from experiential and transformative learning theories, the study seeks to challenge dominant narratives that portray homeless people solely as deprived subjects.

Methodology: This research adopts a mixed-methods approach (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018), combining quantitative and qualitative strategies. The first phase involved a national survey of 244 social workers affiliated with fio.PSD, the main Italian network for homeless services. The questionnaire explored their perceptions of homeless people's competencies and their role in social inclusion pathways. The second phase consisted of structured interviews with 50 homeless individuals in Rome, focusing on their self-assessment of competences developed through street life. Data collection was conducted in a soup kitchen for homeless people and included both closed-ended questions and open-ended reflections on lived experiences. The third phase employed biographical-narrative and personalised approaches to develop a competences recognition support system tailored to the specific characteristics of homeless individuals.

Outcomes and Contributions: Previous studies (Serra, 2024) had indicated that homeless individuals develop competences in three areas: survival, relationships, and personal development. The present research leads to a reclassification of street competences into four domains: maintaining life and ensuring safety; acquiring resources from the environment; managing interpersonal relationships; and attending to one's inner well-being. Within this framework, the specific tasks that homeless individuals perceive themselves to perform most effectively relate to maintaining personal hygiene, fostering good relationships with people who do not live on the streets, obtaining food, and quickly understanding others' intentions. These competences are primarily learned in street life.

Furthermore, the testing of the competences recognition support system with nine homeless individuals revealed that many experiences of homelessness foster the development of competences aligned with the European LifeComp framework of the key competence "Personal, Social and Learning to Learn".

However, these competences are rarely recognised by institutional services, which tend to frame social inclusion primarily in terms of access to housing and employment rather than the valorisation of individual capabilities. The study argues that integrating a dialogical approach into social services – one that values and legitimises these competences – can enhance both policy effectiveness and individual empowerment. Contributing to the field of adult education, this research advocates for a shift towards a more inclusive and participatory framework, where dialogical practices based on a reflective and biographical approach – including competences recognition – foster broader inclusion of homeless individuals in social and educational contexts through transformative tools for learning and change.

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Dialogue as a Transformative Practice in Adult Didactics: Rethinking the Training of the Adult Educator

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Keywords: Adult Education Didactics, Adult Educators' Professional Training, Dialogic Competence, Pedagogical Practice, Artificial Intelligence and Adult Education

Abstract:

Dialogue is not merely a pedagogical tool but a transformative practice that shapes learning experiences in adult education. Rooted in theoretical perspectives on adult learning (Freire, 1970; Mezirow, 1977; Knowles, 1980), dialogue facilitates critical reflection, learner agency, and collective knowledge construction. However, while adult educators frequently employ dialogue as an instructional strategy, the depth and effectiveness of its implementation remain underexplored. Specifically, the extent to which educators possess the necessary communicative competence, particularly in a time and society that is characterised by rapid acceleration and technological change (Rosa, 2013), to sustain meaningful dialogue in diverse learning contexts warrants further investigation.

This paper presentation draws on a study in which the pedagogical and didactic training of adult educators in Cyprus, focusing on their ability to facilitate dialogue as a core teaching practice, was surveyed. The research carried out employed a qualitative methodology with an abductive analytical approach. Semi-structured interviews with a sample of 14 adult educators (7 certified, 7 uncertified), with a minimum of five years of teaching experience and representing a range of adult education settings, were conducted and analyzed.

Findings confirm the centrality of dialogue in adult education while also revealing significant challenges educators face in managing and sustaining dialogic interactions. Many participants reported struggles with guiding discussions, fostering critical engagement, and addressing diverse learner perspectives. These challenges point to a critical gap in communicative competence, underscoring the need for structured professional development programs that integrate training in dialogic facilitation. Without such training, dialogue risks becoming a surface-level practice rather than a deeply embedded pedagogical approach that fosters critical inquiry and transformative learning.

An additional layer of complexity arises with the rapid advancement of technology and artificial intelligence (AI). Recent research highlights both the opportunities and risks of digitalization in adult education. On the one hand, digital technologies provide greater accessibility to lifelong learning, enabling adults to engage with educational content at their own pace. However, studies also emphasize the challenges of digital literacy gaps, learner isolation, and the depersonalization of learning experiences (Rott & Schmidt-Hertha, 2024). These concerns are particularly relevant in adult education, where dialogic engagement fosters critical as well as transformative thinking and community-building. Educators must therefore develop new competencies to integrate technology in ways that enhance rather than replace human interaction. The question remains: how can we ensure that technological progress in education does not erode the foundational role of human dialogue in adult learning? While digital tools and AI-driven educational technologies offer innovative ways to

facilitate learning, they often prioritize superficiality and social conformity at the expense of deep, dialogic engagement, authenticity and genuine human connections. The increasing reliance on AI in education raises pressing concerns about whether these technologies genuinely support critical discourse or, conversely, diminish the necessity of human-mediated dialogue. Algorithmically driven learning environments, adaptive learning platforms, and AI-based tutoring systems may offer tailored content delivery, yet they lack the nuanced interactivity and spontaneous exchange of ideas that characterize meaningful dialogue.

In relation to the conference theme, Dialogue in and through Adult Education and Learning, this study extends the discussion beyond the recognition of dialogue's importance to interrogate its actual practice. Adult educators need to be better equipped to navigate the complexities of dialogic teaching. What structures are necessary to ensure that professional training moves beyond theoretical endorsement to practical application? Addressing these questions is essential for strengthening the role of dialogue as a catalyst for meaningful learning.

By advocating for a re-evaluation of adult educator training, this research calls for a shift from dialogue as an assumed pedagogical ideal to dialogue as a skill that requires intentional cultivation. Policymakers and educational institutions must prioritize professional development programs that enhance communicative competence, ensuring that adult educators are not only facilitators of dialogue but also skilled practitioners in its nuanced application, which can hardly, so far, be replaced by the most sophisticated AI algorithms. These insights contribute to ongoing discussions on adult learning, emphasizing the need to bridge theory and practice in dialogic education. Future research should explore innovative training models that embed dialogic competence as a foundational aspect of adult educator preparation, ultimately fostering more inclusive environments for learning and social exchange.

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Dialogue as healing: Examining trauma-informed approaches supporting young adults returning to education

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Keywords: trauma-informed education, dialogue, young adults, educational reengagement, intersectoral collaboration

Abstract:

This paper explores how dialogue can function as both a therapeutic and educational tool for youth transitioning from care systems. This presentation draws on research examining the critical transition of youth leaving care at age 18, a pivotal moment of heightened vulnerability in Quebec (Longo & al., 2024). This transition reveals a fundamental breakdown in dialogue between systems and young people, characterized by fragmented services that fail to engage with young adults' need for comprehensive, coordinated support (Goyette & al., 2019). Drawing on established work on vulnerable young adults' pathways (Bourdon & Supeno, 2015), we identify how institutional siloing creates environments where meaningful dialogue with and about these young adults becomes nearly impossible.

The qualitative research methodology through a Public health agency of Canada funded project is currently in progress. To date, four in-depth group interviews with practitioners and former youth protection recipients have been conducted. The thematic analysis, guided but not determined by the Equitable standards assessment model (Doucet, 2023), reveals three critical barriers to successful transitions where dialogue fails: (1) trauma impacts that hinder communicative capacities essential for learning; (2) absence of dialogue between service systems; and (3) lack of dialogical spaces where young adults can develop agency in educational planning.

The second section of the analysis examines Déclic, a Montreal-based non-governmental organization, as a case study of practice innovation that directly responds to these dialogue failures through a comprehensive approach. Déclic's work demonstrates how intentionally creating multiple forms of dialogue can transform educational engagement for traumatized young adults. Their model establishes dialogue at three critical levels: between professionals and young adults through trauma-informed practices creating psychological safety; between young adults and educational institutions through participatory approaches positioning them as active agents; and between previously siloed systems through intersectoral collaboration.

The analysis reveals how Déclic's dialogical approach creates spaces where genuine exchange becomes possible even for those whose previous experiences have made trusting communication difficult. By confronting established norms with values of “courage, benevolence, equity, efficiency, and innovation”, their practices enable young adults to develop voice and agency while navigating fragmented systems. This represents a form of collective resistance through dialogue to systems that have failed to meaningfully engage with vulnerable young adults.

This paper contributes to the conference theme by reconceptualizing dialogue as simultaneously healing and educational. It demonstrates how dialogue, when intentionally structured to account for trauma and power disparities, can foster dignity, recognition, and reciprocal learning while addressing the inequalities and marginalization that characterize contemporary transitions to

adulthood for vulnerable youth. By examining both the research identifying dialogue failures and a case study illustrating dialogue solutions, we offer insights into how adult education can better engage populations traditionally excluded from educational discourse.

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Dialogue between self-regulated and informal workplace learning in Czech context

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Keywords: Informal learning, self-directed learning, workplace learning

Abstract:

Although informal workplace learning is an important part of continuing education and training, especially important in the case of work-related adult learning (Decius, 2024; Kittel et al., 2021; Messmann et al., 2018), empirical evidence of its scope among Czech adult learners is rather rare. Likewise, self-regulated learning emphasizes the evolving nature of learning beyond formal education and importance of personal initiative in acquiring skills. It's presence in successful informal learning is central (Vancouver et al., 2017). However, their dialogue in adults' educational journeys remains underestimated. These themes emphasize the evolving nature of education and the necessity for adult learners to engage in self-directed and lifelong learning practices, particularly in the context of modern educational frameworks and technologies. Furthermore, learning does not exist in a vacuum, but occurs thru interaction with the context (Fuller, 2024) and, therefore, the work context will also be examined in greater depth.

On this basis, current paper focuses on dialogue in the relationship between self-directed and informal workplace learning in Czech context. For this purpose, we utilize data from a nationally representative sample of adult workers (n = 1,400) aged 25–64 years, ranging from individuals working as managers or specialists to manual workers with varying degree of qualification based on their occupation status from the Czech Republic. In terms of internal structure, gender, age, education, qualification (ISCO 1-9), and size of residential locations ratio to the overall population was reflected. Data collection was carried out online using the Computer-Assisted Web Interview (CAWI) method

during the summer of 2023 by addressing adult population by specialized data-collection agency with the response rate of 31.2%.

In this paper, we address following research questions: (i) Can self-regulated learning (as measured by cognitive, metacognitive and resource management strategies) be transferred to workplace learning context (as measured by learning culture and job characteristics), i.e. do all facets play a role, and what are the relational patterns? (ii) How does self-regulated and informal workplace learning interplay in job-related environment, i.e. what is the nature of their relationship? Regarding the first aim, we assume self-regulated learning strategies to be relevant for workplace settings (Hypothesis 1a), and we expect high correlations among metacognitive, resource management, and cognitive deep processing strategies (Hypothesis 1b). Regarding the second aim, we analyze which relational patterns can be found in informal workplace learning including job characteristics. We expect a connection between self-regulated learning and informal workplace learning (Hypothesis 2a). On the one hand, the job characteristics are positively associated with self-regulation (Hypothesis 2b), and, on the other hand, the job characteristics are positively associated with informal workplace learning (Hypothesis 2c).

For the first hypotheses, the paper evaluates the model fit of the self-regulatory factors and relationship with the work context using confirmatory and correlation analysis. For the second hypotheses concerning the relationship to informal workplace, we use structural equation modeling methodology (SEM). Results will be presented at the conference and will highlight the need for educational frameworks that support adult learners in navigating their learning journeys, utilizing both self-regulated and informal methods to foster continuous personal and professional development.

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Dialogue between Universities and Communities on ESD. Critical Studies on the ESDEUS Collaboration Pathways

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Keywords: Informal learning, self-directed learning, workplace learning

Abstract:

ESDEUS is a group of researchers from four European universities: DSW University of Lower Silesia, Goeteborgs Universitet, Universidade do Algarve, Università Degli Studi Di Milano-Bicocca, which formed a consortium for the implementation of the project: European Universities as Community Leaders of the Education for Sustainable Development (2023 – 2025) co-financed by the European Union under the agreement number 2023-1-PL01-KA220-HED000156638 (www.dsw.edu.pl/esdeus). The main activities are (i) mapping and collecting HE ESD policies, strategies, and instruments, (ii) identifying stakeholders' ESD perspectives and collective actions in the ESD field, (iii) comparing ESD practices in different EU regions, and (iv) designing-implementing a course called "Introduction to ESD". ESDEUS aims to build university capacity as a leader in Education for Sustainable Development. It focuses on ESD-relevant teaching and collaboration with stakeholders.

In the project, we designed research aimed at knowing the perspective of local actors on education for sustainable development (ESD). The research was conducted in a group of over 30 representatives of various organizations, institutions, local governments, leaders and civic groups operating in the field of ESD in Poland, Sweden, Portugal, Italy. The interviews were open and focused on three research questions: What kind of actions/practices do local actors take in relation to SDGs? What are the patterns of collaboration and building engagement with other actors in realizing ESD and SDGs? What kind of values shapes their understanding and action towards ESD?

The presentation of the results will concern the question of models/pathways of cooperation between universities and communities in the three countries represented by the authors and the role of the dialogue in this process. In our speech, we want to justify the thesis that dialogue is necessary for both the community and the university. The dialogue is an essential feature and a condition for the universities and communities to act together in a democratic way and to respond to a current challenges. In the analysis, we use the arguments of the discourse about the "university of excellence" (m.in. Readings 1996) and the "civic university" (Goddard et al. 2016). We believe that "Dialogical action aims to create and strengthen cultures of openness, democracy and participation, favouring sustainable development" (Evans, Kurantowicz, Lucio-Villegas 2022, p. 243). On the basis of the collected data, we will indicate different types of cooperation paths/models in the three European regions (Poland, Sweden, Portugal), analyzing their quality, barriers, opportunities to strengthen emancipatory activities in local communities and universities. As researchers, we are aware that both historical and cultural contexts greatly differentiate the collected experiences and paths/patterns of cooperation between local universities and communities.

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Dialogue for understanding of assessments in Swedish folk high schools

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Keywords: folk high school, general course, assessment

Abstract:

The folk high school is an institution for non-formal adult education and Bildung. In Sweden there are 156 folk high schools all over the country, run by different NGOs or by the regional authorities, and financed mainly by the state. These folk high schools have different profiles, but one common thing is that every school has the general course. This course provides general education and an alternative route to further/higher education if you lack a qualification from compulsory or upper secondary school, and the schools need to have this course to qualify for state subsidies. (Folkbildningsrådet, 2025)

As an institution independent from formal education, the folk high school does not give students grades as in the formal school system. However, to make the general course a way to qualify for higher education, there is a different assessment system, for the purposes of proving eligibility and making selection possible. The selection instrument for folk high school students applying for higher education is the “study assessment” (in Swedish: studieomdöme). Instead of grading in every subject and a grade point average for selection, the “study assessment” is decided upon collectively by all teachers. The student gets one single assessment, on a 7-step scale, and the assessment should be predictive concerning skills and abilities required in higher education.

This system is different from grading in school, which means that students not necessarily are familiar with the study assessment and how they are assessed. Therefore, efforts have been made to introduce this system to students at the general course. There is also some, but very limited, research concerning the study assessment (e.g., Andersson, 2000; Jönsson, 2022; Karlsson, 2001). Here, the outcomes of the study will be discussed in connection to theories concerning educational assessment and how assessments can influence students and their study strategies.

The aim of the present study is to analyse the outcomes of a method to improve the knowledge and understanding of the study assessment among general course students at folk high schools.

The method to introduce the study assessment was a dialogue workshop, where the guidelines for the assessment were introduced as well as the process for how these assessments are made at the folk high school. Furthermore, the students were involved in making assessments of non-authentic cases, in a process similar to the way their teachers in dialogue collectively decide upon the

study assessments at the end of the semester. The workshop was repeated twice at one folk high school, with mainly different student groups, once each semester during a study year.

The method of our study was to collect data concerning the outcomes via a questionnaire to the students before the workshops and some weeks after each workshops, and via group interviews with students conducted at the end of the semesters close to when the actual study assessments were decided upon.

An overall conclusion is that the workshop method contributes to knowledge and understanding and that this affects how participants on a general course relate to the study assessment. This relation can also be influenced by future plans and how the participant perceives the importance of the assessment in connection to these plans. Knowledge and understanding of the conditions for the assessment can make students less uncertain or less nervous about the assessment. But it can also contribute to increased nervousness and anxiety, depending on the fact that one understands the importance and value of the assessment better and with more knowledge of the assessment criteria becomes uncertain about how to succeed.

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Dialogue on alternatives through manifestos in adult education

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Keywords: Adult education, dialogue, manifestos, normativity, policy

Abstract:

The role of international organisations (IOs) in global and/or European education policymaking has received considerable attention in adult education (AE). Several authors argue that IOs are important agenda-setters that promote a normative vision of AE through their policies but primarily reinforce economic and instrumental perspectives and/or a technocratic-rationalist and economic-utilitarian worldview of AE in their policies (e.g., Milana, 2012; Nemeth, 2015; Field, 2018; Elfert & Rubenson, 2023). Available research also shows that many actors are active in policymaking processes and pursue their agendas in AE (e.g., Milana & Mikulec, 2023; Milana, 2024). However, little research is available about alternative normative visions and worldviews held by different “epistemic communities” (Campbell, 2002) that offer possible alternatives to the dominant discourses in AE of

IOs. Therefore, dialogue on these alternative visions is essential to resist the fatalistic discourse that there is “no alternative” to the economic-utilitarian worldview of AE.

This paper analyses and discusses the normative ideas and possible alternatives of two epistemic communities, i.e., civil society and academic communities, based on their published manifestos relevant to AE. The manifestos can be understood as texts that proclaim “principles or intentions” that “follow a persuasive, apodictic, pathetic or imperative style”, often aimed at “popular outrage”, sharing the “aspiration for collective empowerment” and calling for action (Heikkinen et al., 2023, p. 180).

The conceptual framework is interdisciplinary as it draws on educational and political science. First, it draws on the tradition of educational science that understands question of the purpose (“telos”) of education (i.e., what good education is) as essentially normative – normativity frames the particular way we think about (good) education and influences desirable educational outcomes (Bagnall & Hodge, 2018; Mikulec, 2018) – as well as a fundamental question of educational science (e.g., Biesta, 2010, 2015; Bellmann, 2017; Vileghe & Zamojski, 2020; Siegel & Matthes, 2022). In addition to the telos of education, Biesta (2020) also argues that education should address three different domains of education: the qualification, socialisation and subjectification domains (cf. Larson & Cort, 2022). Second, it also draws on the tradition of political science, which argues that ideas (beliefs, worldviews, etc.) matter in policymaking (e.g., Campbell, 2002; Schmidt, 2008, 2010; Carsten, 2016). This tradition distinguishes between two types of ideas – (a) cognitive ideas, which explain “what is and what to do” and (b) normative ideas, which state “what is good or bad about what is” with the view of “what one ought to do” (cf. Alexiadou & Rambla, 2023) – and three primary levels of generality of ideas: philosophical ideas or deep core beliefs (i.e., ontological assumptions), programmatic ideas or policy core beliefs (i.e., AE related beliefs), and policy ideas or secondary beliefs (i.e., beliefs that are narrower in scope) (Sabatier & Weible, 2007).

Methodologically, we will perform a document analysis (Bowen, 2009) of 8 manifestos that are relevant to the field of AE as the primary data source (Besson et al., 2015; Hodgson et al., 2017; Biesta & Säfström, 2018; Manifesto for critical adult education, 2019; ICAE, 2022; Bozgurt, 2024; EAEA, 2024; European Bildung Manifesto, 2024). Therefore, we will code selected documents based on a deductive coding scheme derived from Biesta’s (2020) three domains of education and Sabatier and Weible’s (2007) three levels of beliefs. In addition, we will examine websites and public profiles of organisations involved in manifesto creation.

The analysis is in progress, but we anticipate its contribution to knowledge creation by foregrounding alternative normative ideas about what is educationally desirable in AE and initiating a dialogue between these ideas.

We will discuss the ideational power of manifestos to enter the mainstream arena of global and/or European AE policymaking.

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Dialogue or monologue? The role of Learner Voice in adult education in Ireland.

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Keywords: learner voice; participation; democracy; further education and training; Ireland

Abstract:

In the context of rapid economic, social, and demographic change, fostering participatory dialogue and democracy in adult education is a prerequisite for adaptability, social cohesion, and human development. Emergent from the democratic and egalitarian norms of adult and community

education, Learner Voice foregrounds and supports vital forms of student dialogue and recognition (Fleming, 2021).

In the following paper, we examine the democratic potential of Learner Voice through the lens of a single case study: the National Further Education and Training (FET) Learner Forum (NFLF) of Ireland. AONTAS, Ireland's National Adult Learning Organisation, is responsible for the NFLF (Dowdall, Sheerin, and O'Reilly, 2019). AONTAS works in partnership with 16 Education and Training Boards to host regional forum events and to document Learner Voice in both regional and national reports. The purpose of the Forum is to ensure that FET meets the needs of adult learners today and continues to do so in future. In 2023-24, Forum events engaged over 1700 adult learners from across Ireland to ask their views on their FET experience.

The paper reflects on the NFLF in the context of current problems and opportunities for dialogue and learning between students, practitioners, and policy makers. It explores the potential for Learner Voice to inform FET policy and practice in Ireland and highlights the practical challenges associated with nonparticipation, tokenism, and meaningful participation. In doing so, the paper draws on diverse, interdisciplinary scholarship in the fields of transformative student voice (Fielding, 2010), citizen participation (Arnstein, 1969), and participatory social policy (Beresford, 2016). By way of conclusion, we highlight the ongoing emergence of Learner Councils in FET provision as a recent, hopeful development, one which underlines a latent possibility of enhanced forms of student participation in decision-making about their education and society.

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A Dialogue-based relationship as a Key to Success: The Role of Adult Educators in Supporting Second-Chance Learners with Mental Health problems and Socio-Cultural Risk Factors

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Keywords: Second chance education, vulnerable adults, teacher-learner relationship

Abstract:

Aims: In many countries, young adults who left compulsory education without or with only a low qualification are given a "second chance" to re-enter formal SCE to obtain the eligibility to study (level 4/EQF). Second chance education is becoming increasingly important in view of the shortage of skilled workers and digitalisation, as it gives adults access to higher education and professional

reorientation (Majer, 2018). In second chance education, however, mental health problems of learners combined with social and cultural risk factors are a particular challenge (Bellenberg et al., 2019; Karakitsiou et al., 2023). Around half of second-chance learners drop out of education (Schuchart & Schimke, 2021). The role that mental health plays in this is still unclear. Psychosocial adjustment and academic success are significantly promoted by positive relationships with teachers and counsellors, which have a protective effect against mental health problems (Krull et al., 2018). In relation to the conference title, it can be said that there must be a dialogue-based relationship between adult educators and learners that enables individual support (Schuchart et al., 2024) and takes into account the complex interactions between mental health, socio-cultural risk factors and school requirements. The article examines how the relationship between learners with mental health problems and adult educators is organised and what effects this has on the learners' risk of drop out.

Theory: Trusting relationships with adult educators have a positive influence on the academic development of vulnerable learners in socio-cultural risk situations (Schuchart & Siebel, 2025, Stanton-Salazar, 2011). Teachers can also provide specialist support, react flexibly to learners' personal problems and signal proximity (Krull, 2018). This enables them to accompany and support learners, especially those with limited psychological and social resources, in their academic development. Above all, those interaction processes between teachers and learners that are characterised by a great deal of proximity and high expectations combined with a high level of support from teachers are beneficial for the mental health of learners (Vösgen-Nordloh et al., 2023; Yeager et al., 2023). In our study we examine:

- 1) How are mental health problems, socio-cultural risk situations and the of drop out risk among second-chance learners linked?
- 2) What expectations do learners with mental health problems have of the relationship with their adult educators?
- 3) To what extent does adult educators practice meet the expectations of learners with mental health problems, what role do learners' socio-cultural risk factors play?
- 4) Do learners with mental health problems benefit from a fit between their expectations and the practice of adult educators regarding their dropout risk?

Methods: We take Germany as an example and use a rich dataset of 176 teachers and 600 adult learners in 9 schools of academic SCE in Germany. For question 2, we use items on adult educator practice from the perspective of learners that refer to several aspects of relationships with adult educators. For question 3 and 4, we use Latent Class Analyses to identify group membership and we compare the drop out risk of different groups.

Results: Learners with mental health problems and socio-cultural disadvantages have a particularly high risk of drop out. Learners with mental health problems expect personal proximity, support and awareness of their problems from adult educators much more than other learners. This need is increased if learners also have to deal with social and financial disadvantages. However, these learners also perceive a greater difference than other learners between their expectations and the practice of adult educators. A greater perception of difference increases the risk of drop out, especially among learners with mental health problems.

Significance: The findings highlight the crucial role of a dialogue-based relationship between adult educators and learners in second chance education, particularly for those facing mental health problems and social-cultural risk factors. Strengthening dialogue and aligning educational practice

with learners' needs can be a key strategy in reducing dropout rates and fostering academic success in second chance education.

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Dialogue-oriented research in adult and continuing education. Theoretical and research-methodological considerations for shaping the academic-practice relation

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Keywords: Dialogue, Dialogue-oriented research, adult and continuing education, academic-practice relation

Abstract:

Research in adult and continuing education faces the challenge of engaging with a dynamic and heterogeneous field of practice, whose unique characteristics must be carefully considered. A central claim here is to research those questions and subject areas in the academic-practical relations that

arise from the current needs of adult education fields of action (Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales, 2021; European Commission, 2020). Despite this social mandate of research, a research-practice-gap is repeatedly discussed (e.g. Biesta, 2008; Brühwiler & Leutwyler, 2020), which indicates that research results are not or only to a limited extent taken up in practical contexts of education. Against the background of a modern dialogue society (Flecha, 2022), research approaches that take such relations into account seem particularly necessary in adult education. The main aim of the presentation is to introduce a dialogue-oriented research approach that refers to perspectives of participatory research (Unger, 2013), design orientation research (Tulodziecki et al., 2013) and the critical communicative methodology (Gómez et al., 2011) and emphasises collaboration between researchers and research subjects during the whole research process. For the presentation, the question arises as to how research projects in adult education can be designed and carried out under the perspectives of dialogue-oriented research and what advantages result from this. First, basic references of the dialogue-oriented approach in international research are presented and its central aspects for adult and continuing education research are discussed: equal participation, open communication, critical reflection, and emancipation in the relationship between science and practice (Breitschwerdt & Egetenmeyer, 2022). Second, this is followed by an illustration of the requirements for a dialogue-oriented research methodology based on the example of the DigiEB (2019-2022) research project. Implementing this approach requires trust, spaces for ongoing dialogue throughout the research process, practice-oriented communication of results, and reflective development of new questions. An advantage of this approach is that the research identifies application relevance collaboratively with practitioners, who, as experts, take on an emancipated and co-responsible role in development tasks rather than being hierarchically evaluated. Further aspects, benefits, and challenges of a dialogue-oriented research approach in the context of educational policy funding structures in educational research will be discussed in the presentation.

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Dialogues in Landscapes of Practice - European University Alliances fostering Lifelong Learning

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Keywords: lifelong learning, EUIs, dialogue, practitioners

Abstract:

Since 2019 a total of 65 European Universities Initiatives (EUIs), also known as European University Alliances have been formed (EC 2025). EUIs are networks of on average 8–9 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) from different parts of Europe cooperating intensively on multiple levels to provide educational offers together. More than 570 HEIs across Europe are already involved. The official EUIs have competed and gained Erasmus+ funding to support their activities, but the partnering HEIs also invest notably themselves both in funds and as in kind.

While most of the EUIs still concentrate on building a joint offer for their own students and staff, roughly one third of them offer Lifelong learning activities, and some even offer them for the so-called external learners. Part of these offers are paid, part free of charge. Once completed, the activities provide the learners transcripts of records, certificates of participation, badges and/or Micro-credentials as rewards. The intercultural learning experiences on a topic of learner's interest are considered to add value to the effort.

Creating a joint and truly relevant offer on a European level for adult learners is tricky. The Lifelong learning (LLL) practices and structures of the partnering HEIs vary significantly. The local and national contexts differ in terms of legislation, policies and networks of actors. The staff involved in the EUI level development work come from a variety of backgrounds, and even the most common terms used leave room for interpretations. This landscape is also changing constantly.

For the external adult learners the EUIs are trying to reach, the need for physical offers in local languages in this predominantly online B2 level English-speaking setting is evident. Even for the most LLL oriented HEIs it is easier to offer re- and up-skilling opportunities for the working and solvent professionals than something relevant for the unemployed, the pensioned or other under-served groups of citizens. At a local level a HEI should not compete with other adult education providers, either.

This paper explores the multiple levels of dialogue necessary within and beyond EUIs to foster Lifelong learning for citizens. We focus on three dimensions: (1) the intra-alliance dialogues among partner institutions and practitioners working to co-develop LLL programs, (2) the EUI-led dialogues

between citizens of different European countries through LLL activities, and (3) the inter-alliance dialogues and benchmarking in the field of lifelong learning.

To analyze these dynamics, we adopt Wenger-Trayner's (2015) landscapes of practice framework, and are particularly interested in the so-called "system conveners" i.e. people reconfiguring the settings. The paper draws on three case studies: (1) intra-alliance interviews of one EUI's team building joint LLL offers for external learners, (2) analysis of an open-for-all hybrid event aiming to facilitate citizens' dialogue at the European level, and (3) the survey responses of practitioners participating in the emerging inter-alliance collaboration in lifelong learning.

With the eldest EUIs running already their 6th year of joint operations, it is evident that plenty of dialoguing between a plethora of actors is needed to facilitate a joint LLL offer for citizens on European level. The five dimensions of complexity, i.e. practices, institutions, scale, power and time (Wenger-Trayner et al. 2015), as well as the tensions between different LLL policies (Benasso et al. 2022, Formenti & West 2018) are present. The practitioners are forced to learn, too (Ludvigsen et al. 2010). Yet, regardless of the obstacles, the EUIs form a new network of actors and system conveners that play a role in forming the future landscapes of LLL and Adult Education in Europe.

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Dialogues in Transition: Parenting Education in Times of Social Transformation

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Keywords: parent education, counselling, dialogue, transformation, family

Abstract:

The current decade has been characterised by the COVID-19 pandemic, increased migration in Europe, and an ongoing process of digitalisation. Each of these processes has an impact on the prevalent topics of public dialogue and the ways in which this dialogue can be conducted. On both a societal and on an individual level, times of transition are an opportunity and a cause for learning. They are associated with new questions, challenges and often provide the need for self-improvement (Buschle & Meyer, 2020; Flammang & Böwen, 2020; Mairhofer et al., 2020; Müller-Giebler, 2020). The aim of adult education is to positively affect these transitions by empowering, informing,

counselling and teaching competences. During these times of transitions, adult educators are called upon to anticipate the needs of adult learners and to plan appropriate courses and programmes (Freide et al., 2021).

Parenting education, as a part of adult education, aims to provide low-threshold services working in a preventive, collaborative and holistic manner (Iller, 2017; Kane et al., 2007; Konter, 2019). The purpose of parenting education is to enhance parenting competences, as well as to connect and empower parents. It also promotes the skills necessary for active participation in society and democracy by demonstrating and practicing dialogue-based ways of resolving conflict.

To gain a more profound understanding of the way dialogue in parenting education is altered during periods of transition, we will examine the following research questions: (1) How do these processes of change affect the topics of dialogues between adult educators and learners? (2) How do the modes of communication change?

We chose a quantitative, multivariate approach, using data of parenting education services. The data offers insights into the topics and the modes of communication of more than 850,000 preventive counselling dialogues. These dialogues took place between 2014 and 2023 in different institutions focusing on parenting education in Germany.

Preliminary results indicate that while the topics addressed in these counselling dialogues remain largely stable over time, the learners' needs change in response to major societal events and social and cultural shifts. Prior to the pandemic, for instance, topics related to health and topics related to problem and conflict resolution were less prominent, while during the pandemic, they became the most prevalent topics. The way in which learners seek support and advice also responds to these events. During the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, the usual mode of interaction, i.e. face-to-face dialogues on site, was largely prohibited due to contact restrictions. In order to continue to meet the needs of learners, the services underwent a transformation, and expanded their available modes of communication, offering more digital counselling (Neumann et al., 2024).

Based on these findings, we will discuss the requirements that need to be fulfilled to effectively maintain the provision of preventive and modern adult education in times of social transformation.

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Dialogues with the dead: Generating imaginative dialogues with our deceased loved ones to open perspectives on navigating loss and suffering to consider how we sustain conviction and commitment as critical adult educators

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Keywords: autoethnography, grief, critical reflection, ways of knowing, collage

Abstract:

The death of my father and only sibling within six months of each other marked the end of my childhood family. This was followed by a disorientating period of grieving (Mezirow, 1991; Butler, 2004) which created an overwhelming sense of disconnection across all aspects of my life, including my sense of purpose as a critical adult educator. My response to this profound sense of loss was to search to reconnect with those relationships, in which my bereaved self is deeply entangled with and constituted by, which revealed how the beloved are implicated in my practices as a critical adult educator. As an adult educator I had longed to animate Freire's (1996) imperative to us, to continue to be in a "process of becoming" (p. 65). This means participating in emotionally responsive critical dialogues with each other, which involve a dynamic of moving outwards to explore the external forces which shape our humanity, while also "engaging with the nuances of subjective life [which] force us towards a transgression of conventional academic delineations" (West, 2016, p. 44). This becomes difficult for those experiences for which our day-to-day language will not do, and leave much of our inchoate and fragmented experiences of living and dying, silenced and beyond our reach.

The purpose of this paper is three-fold. Drawing on an autoethnographical tradition to create heartfelt and illuminative writing (Bochner & Ellis, 2016), I explored how the use of collage and evocative writing, evoke metaphors and emotionally laden images and intuitions which open me up to all of myself: my body, feelings, and cognitive insights. This led to a consideration of how this process challenged and supported me to generate imaginative dialogues with my deceased father and his unmet literacy needs, using cycles of critical reflection (Freire, 1996; Bainbridge, 2012; West, 2016, p. 44, Formenti and West, 2018). Finally I consider how this process opens perspectives on loss, literacy practices, disconnection and connections with values and good practice in adult literacy.

I adopted an adult education methodology which is embedded in critical and creative reflexivity and committed to integrating more holistic ways of knowing such as images, intuitions, hunches, feelings, dreams (Heron, 1992, Hunt, 2001). I did this by constructing a collage from fragments of documents I found in my dad's wallet after his death, which revealed a sensitive man, yearning for self-expression with hopes and dreams who was unknown to me. Collage provided "a novel and metaphoric language with which to give shape to thoughts and ideas" (Biffi & Zuccoli, 2016, p. 135).

However like Formenti and West (2018), I do not believe that transformation just emerges fully formed like a bolt of lightning from an artefact. I explored the necessity of participating in this collage-making activity, as an immersive experience which entailed a dynamic process of "self-exploration, positioning, and re-positioning, soul work, dialogue, and critical thinking" (p. 233). This took the form of a fluctuating grieving process of moving forwards and backwards, as I re-position the beloved as still present in my life through critical, imaginal and dialogical relationships. Such dialogues with our inner and outer struggles allowed me to meet myself in a way which could not have been possible, before my immersion with experiences evoked by the collage, which were up to that point either inaccessible, unarticulated or distorted renderings of experience.

Finally I consider how this process has enhanced my reflexivity and critical consciousness of how to learn from some of our fundamental human experiences, which raise questions about how as critical adult educators we might navigate loss and suffering to sustain our commitment and conviction as critical adult educators.

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Dialoguing with (eating) disorders: a performative and narrative research to activate community around stories

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Keywords: Eating disorders; performative approach; life stories; feminist approaches

Abstract:

Dominant cultural narratives about eating disorders tend to frame them exclusively within an individual and medical context, overlooking their collective and political dimensions. This study explores how performative research can restore a political voice to the experiences of those who have faced such disorders, fostering collective dialogue and new narratives that go beyond diagnostic reduction. By doing so, individual stories are placed within a relational and transformative context. Artistic performance is adopted as a political act, allowing for the recognition and visibility of the suffering experienced by those with eating disorders.

The social control over the body and its impulses, including eating, has always been shaped by cultural disciplines that define its legitimacy (Bourdieu, 2014). The term ""disorder"" tends to isolate individual experience from its social and relational origins, reducing it to a diagnostic label. Haraway (2016) instead proposes ""staying with the trouble,"" recognizing the generative potential of disorientation and differences, while Barad (2007) suggests a performative approach to research, in which the body itself becomes an agent of knowledge.

In the theoretical framework of this research, knowledge is not merely collected but co-generated through the intra-action between researchers, participants, and narrative materials (Formenti, Luraschi, & Del Negro, 2019; 2020). This implies a direct and sensitive bodily engagement in the production of meaning (Cuppari, 2024). The researcher's positioning is not fixed but evolves through an ethical entanglement of materiality, discursivity, and sociality (Ostern et al., 2021).

The study began in October 2022 with an autoethnographic phase in which researchers analyzed their own experiences with anorexia, alongside a literature review on autoethnographic approaches to eating disorders (Cuppari & Luraschi, 2023a; Holmes, 2016; Spry, 2001). Subsequently, through duoethnography (Norris, Sawyer & Lund, 2012), they rewrote their stories, discovering how this methodology could have a transformative impact not only on their personal experiences but also on their professional identity as social workers (Cuppari & Luraschi, 2023b). This shared rewriting process allowed for the deconstruction of the individualization of the disorder, restoring its political and collective dimension. The analysis highlighted the importance of embodying narratives within a relational context, reinforcing the need for a performative approach.

In the next phase, between February and June 2024, narrative materials were collected from books, podcasts, newspaper articles, and collective events in the province of Lecco (Lombardy, Italy). These materials inspired the creation of a collective video performance (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j2xO9YrL08I&t=59s>), developed in collaboration with academics, artists, and social workers. The working group included a choreographer, a professional dancer- both with a previous experience of anorexia - a musician, and a video maker. The development of the performance followed a methodological process inspired by dance-informed research (Bagley & Cancienne, 2002; Cancienne, 2012; Cuppari, 2024; Cuppari & Luraschi, 2024). The video produced through performative research was then presented in academic settings (such as the

ESREA LHBN Network Conference Retreat 2025) as a starting point for narrative workshops aimed at creating spaces for collective reflection. Likewise, in the coming months (from March to May 2025), the video will be presented to academic students who will become future care professionals.

The use of artistic and performative methodologies has allowed for the transformation of individual pain into a collective experience, creating new public narratives about eating disorders. The approach adopted enabled the overcoming of the rigidity of diagnostic categories, recognizing the productive ambiguity (Eisner, 1997) and fostering a process of re-signification of experience. Participants in the research were able to view their stories from a different perspective, becoming active spectators (Luraschi, 2020).

Furthermore, the possibility of initiating cooperative research workshops that will also involve students, future professionals in the care relationship (Del Negro & Luraschi, 2024), will open spaces for reflection that could introduce new possibilities in the professional relationship with individuals who are going through or have gone through the experience of an eating disorder.

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Dialoguing young second-generation migrants' narratives of being "in between"

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Keywords: young second-generation migrants, identity formation, biographical learning

Abstract:

The political debate in Sweden today, focuses to a large extent on criminality and integration and this debate also involves different perceptions of young second-generation migrants. A second-generation migrant is according to statistics, a person that is born in Sweden but have both parents born abroad (UKÄ 2024). They represent 9 per cent of the 18 to 25 years old in Sweden (SCB, 2025).

Even if there is no statistical correlation between migration and crime on a general level (Sarniecki et al, 2025), second generation-migrants are singled out as having a high risk of committing crime (Adamsson, 2020). They are also seen as having a higher mortality hazard rate from suicide, substance use and assault (Wallace et al., 2023).

Students in higher education being second generation migrants are also, according to the latest official statistics overrepresented in relation to the majority (UKÄ, 2024). As education is seen as one of the protective factors for criminality and one of the main solutions for integration, this shows a somewhat different picture from the expressions of misery.

Rojas (2001) claims that second generation migrants are in a state of in-betweenness, not seeing themselves or seen by others as fully Swedes.

The aim of this paper is to deepen our understanding of young second-generation migrants' identity formation in relation to the political debate in Sweden today. In the paper we want to create a dialogue between their different narratives to get a more complex picture than stated in the political debate.

In the paper, we depart from a biographical learning perspective and specifically the theory of biographical work (Bron & Thunborg, 2017). defines biographical learning as an ongoing process in which people continually construct and re-construct themselves and their lives, through storytelling (Alheit, 1995). When telling their life stories people relate their past, future to their present situation, in which they are able to imagine a future. The theory of biographical work focuses on the formation and transformation of identities through storytelling and specifically how identity struggles could lead to either processes of anchoring through which people avoid strangeness or

floating i.e., a state when they are unable to connect present and past experiences and have difficulties in imagining a future.

The paper is based on analyses of biographical interviews with eight second-generation migrants between 18 and 25 years living in a suburb in Stockholm.

The paper is part of a project called Spatial pockets of (in-) equalities – Exploring and enhancing the educational and life careers of young adults in disadvantaged rural and urban areas (Formas 2017-00939).

The paper relates to the theme: Involving excluded and marginal groups in dialogic education and public dialogue.

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Discursive policy influences on adult education for sustainable development in Slovenia

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Keywords: discursive influences, adult education policy and practice, adult education for sustainable development, Slovenia

Abstract:

Education for sustainable development (ESD) has been gaining prominence in education policy ever since the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. This process was further accelerated a decade ago by the adoption of the 2030 Agenda (2015) and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), leading to a greater emphasis on ESD in (adult) education policies at various levels – global, regional, and national.

Given the increasing significance of this concept in adult education policy, we set out to analyse the discursive policy influences on the Slovenian practice of adult education for sustainable development (AESD). Drawing on previous research (Košmerl, 2024, in press) and following an explanatory sequential mixed-methods research design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017), we used questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to examine the presence of dominant policy discursive orientations – neoliberal, liberal, and critical – among the educational aims of all Slovenian providers of non-formal AESD.

The results indicate that the discursive orientations of policies do not primarily determine the discursive orientations of AESD organisations and their programmes. While liberal and neoliberal discursive orientations are the most prevalent in the policies of the United Nations, the European Union, and Slovenia, liberal and critical orientations are at the forefront of non-formal AESD practice in Slovenia, with neoliberal orientation following closely behind. On a 5-point scale, liberal discursive orientation achieved a value of 4,16, critical discursive orientation 4,07, and neoliberal discursive orientation 3,83 among the providers' educational aims.

Among all organisations providing non-formal AESD in Slovenia, 72% report following at least one specific policy relevant to AESD. Among these, the 2030 Agenda is the most widely followed with 88% of organisations adhering to it (out of those that follow any policy), followed by the Slovenian Development Strategy 2030 (48%), and the European Green Deal (45 %). Somewhat surprisingly, the policies least followed are those specifically related to education, such as the Marrakech framework for action and the Slovenian Guidelines for ESD from Preschool to University Education, each followed by only 10% of organisations that adhere to any AESD-relevant policy.

The 2030 Agenda was also highlighted as the central AESD policy in the interviews, where organisational representatives identified its main political influence as an increase in AESD funding opportunities, mainly through EU-backed tenders. At the same time, interviewees emphasised that policies do not fundamentally shape their AESD practices, which they develop autonomously.

The influence between policy and practice does not flow in only one direction, as there is also a presence of a bottom-up policy influence. Nearly a quarter (23,7 %) of organisations providing non-formal AESD report participating in the development of at least one national, EU or global AESD-relevant policy.

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Doing advocacy through EU-funded projects: A case study of a Brussels-based organisation

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Keywords: NGO, Advocacy, Europe, Education policy, Network Ethnography

Abstract:

This paper investigates how project work and funding model support the advocacy of one Brussels-based NGOs, the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA).

Like other Brussels-based NGOs, EAEA is conceptualised as a “meta-organisations” (i.e. organisations of organisations) or an “arenas for the actions of other organisations” (Ahrne and Brunsson 2005, p. 447). As such it decides what type of organisations can join, while prospective member organisations tend to join like-minded meta-organisations. Most importantly, a meta-organisation depends heavily on the organisations which compose their constituency (Ahrne and Brunsson 2005; Berkowitz and Dumez 2016). Moreover, in pursuing collective action meta-organisations rely on alliances and coalition building with other organisations, being their constituency or other interest groups. This means that to pursue its mission meta-organisations also use traditional advocacy tools like political campaigns, etc. (see Tilley et al. 2018). However, as previous research examining the advocacy work on Brussels-based NGOs in education has shown, EAEA is using project work instrumentally as an unconventional advocacy tool (Milana, 2024). At the same time, it notably increased its revenues, much of which is derived from EU-funded projects. We hypothesise that this funding approach not only shapes EAEA’s activities but also influences its partnerships and lobbying efforts.

We adopt a case study design (Stake 1995). Empirical material is gathered through network ethnographic methods (Ball, 2016; Ball & Junemann, 2012) and used to map partnerships between the various participants and trace EAEA’s funding sources and project-based work. The material was gathered through extensive internet searches on EAEA and its EU-funded projects, as well as its activity and management reports since 2014, resulting in nearly 30 documents. Additionally, online information was gathered on all EAEA’s EU-funded projects in which they participated both as a coordinator or a partner between the years 2014-2024.

As the study is in its early stage, we do not have preliminary results as of yet. However, we expect the contribution to introduce a suggestion for tracing the connections of EAEA with other organisations of various types in order to understand its relationships inside its funding networks and its role as a central actor. This study connects to the conference theme in that it explores the place of dialogue in and through project work. In doing so, the study can contribute to ongoing debates about the advocacy in education of Brussels-based NGOs and the role of project work and EU funding in influencing their independence.

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Duplicitous dialogue? How higher education devalues lifelong learning in student mobility policy

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Keywords: Credit transfer, access, policy, higher education, lifelong learning

Abstract:

Aim: This paper analyses the failure of credit and qualification frameworks (CQFs) to provide transparent and consistent translation of lifelong learning competencies (LLC) into higher education equivalences. This is communicative failure, as effective credit systems would achieve dialogue between disconnected parts of an educational system. Credits communicate an individual has gained LLC foundational to the next learning process and their readiness should be recognised. This study (St. Clair, 2025) demonstrates that this dialogue is absent in four selected jurisdictions, resulting in a failure to recognise informal and nonformal LLCs.

Relevance to theme: The contribution of this paper is to show how dialogue matters not just on an intersubjective level but also within the policy-defined relationships of systemic actors.

Theoretical framework:

Habermas posits that three conditions must be fulfilled for valid communication. Utterances must be truthful, right, and sincere (1984, p. 307). This model has been criticised (e.g. Dorschel, 1988), including suggestions that utterances can produce action even if they are not truthful and right (Heath, 2001). For certain types of utterances within a rational system, however, Habermas' criteria can provide important insights. The supplementary theory is the policy significance of calculated inaction (McConnel & Hart 2019). There are mechanisms to address weakness of dialogue between sectors and it is important to understand why they are not activated.

Methodology: The analysis involved a major documentary review focused on four CQS in Europe, Scotland, Australia, and British Columbia, Canada. The review was supplemented by 11 key stakeholder interviews. The research question is “to what extent, and how, can CQFs support the educational mobility of lifelong learners?”

Moving between different forms of education—vocational, informal lifelong learning and higher education—requires LLCs to be recognised and translated between the site of acquisition and the site of application. The fundamental affordance of a CQF can be seen as communicative.

Findings:

1. Despite the differences between the systems the discourse justifying them was very similar: efficiency of the educational system (because learners would not have to repeat learning) and access to education (as lifelong learning would be a framework pathway). There was a common assumption that universities provide the highest status and most valuable learning.
2. The communicative mechanism utilised for recognition of competencies is recognition of prior learning (RPL). Habermas' model suggests that for this communication to be effective, RPL must accurately reflect LLCs, express them in an appropriate form, and credibly represent readiness for further learning. Establishing these elements requires dialogue between partners to create transparent and effective translation and recognition of information.
3. All four jurisdictions lack a cross-system approach to RPL. Individual receiving institutions choose independently whether to recognise LLCs, what the process is, and how much it will cost. The status of universities is seen to be challenged by accepting the value of LLCs, calling into question the "rightness" and "sincerity" of this communicative context.
4. Though policymakers understand the issues with this approach they have not acted to create an independent RPL system. This appears to be strategic inaction (McConnel & Hart, 2019) to avoid the risk of universities withdrawing from the framework.

Conclusions: By exercising their control over RPL, universities ensure that a key pathway for adult learners, from informal and non-formal lifelong education to formal higher education, is rarely attainable in practice. This represents two communicative failures. Firstly, there is the failed promise of the CQF as a tool for translation and recognition. Secondly, there is the failure of dialogue between the partner institutions, with the universities undertaking to participate in good faith, but prevented from doing so by their own institutional logics (Raffe, 2003).

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E

Emancipation and the practice of the commons in adult education

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Keywords: emancipation; commons; activity analysis; adult education

Abstract:

This proposal for a communication extends two exploratory studies on the analysis of the commons and the process of emancipation in adult education. Based on theories in the theories of learning from the workplace (Pastré, 2011; Sannino and Engeström, 2018), the first study (Sanojca and Briand, 2022) identified learning conditions in which communities of workers co-produce knowledge that relates to the commons (Ostrom, 1990). In this case, the affirmation of this form of value may reflect an awareness of a co-relation between the appreciation of professional activities (the meaning people attribute to them) and societal issues deemed critical (environmental, economic, social, etc.). The second study in progress (Sanojca and Eneau 2024) examines the links between open cooperation (including the production of commons) and the emancipation process. Drawing on previous work (Arendt, 1961/1994, Eneau, 2012, 2016; Eneau and Langar, 2022, Boyadjieva, and Ilieva-Trichkova, 2023, Rancière and Wald Lasowski, 2023), it is proposing a theoretical framework highlighting two axes of analysis: (1) temporal, encompassing 'before' (what awareness of what hinders freedom of action?), 'during' (what action has been taken to free oneself?) and 'after' (what is the horizon for action: freeing oneself to do what?) ; (2) a 'dimensional' axis linking the four levels of awareness and action (individual, collective, social, political).

Our contribution will put this theoretical framework under study in two fields of investigation. The first is the 'Riposte Créative Territoriale' (RCT) learning collective set up by a local authority training body in response to the Covid 19 health crisis. The second group is formed by professionals active in a regional public innovation laboratory, TyLab, which has been in activity since 2017. The analysis will be based on 23 comprehensive interviews (Kaufmann, 2011), conducted with persons selected on a involvement criteria (the most active in each project). These data will be enriched by textual data from the productions of the groups engaged in this dynamic (around 200 web pages), with the support of lexical analysis 'IRaMuTeQ: Interface de R pour les Analyses Multidimensionnelles de Textes et de Questionnaires'.

In terms of results, two objectives are targeted. At the minimum, the aim is to use complementary empirical data to verify the validity of the indicators of the emancipation process mentioned above. We also propose to contribute to a better understanding of what the production of commons introduces as a new perspective on the functioning of learning collectives in the workplace and on the emancipatory potential of these practices. In so doing, we would like to verify Pharo's (2022) thesis that a desire to re-establish a share of the common in social life is equivalent to a renewed form of emancipation.

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Emancipatory dialogue in bell hooks' thought

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Keywords: bell hooks, emancipatory dialogue, Donna Haraway, curiography, post-qualitative research

Abstract:

This paper investigates bell hooks' concept of emancipatory dialogue as a transformative practice that disrupts hierarchical communication and fosters both individual and collective growth. It develops a theoretical framework that bridges hooks' dialogic pedagogy with Donna Haraway's curiography and

post-qualitative research perspectives. The aim is to articulate how emancipatory dialogue functions not only as a pedagogical strategy but also as a critical methodology for knowledge production and social transformation.

The main objective is to analyze the potential of emancipatory dialogue to generate inclusive, participatory, and relational spaces across educational, social, and cultural contexts. The paper explores how such dialogue challenges dominant epistemologies, disrupts traditional power structures, and enables ethical and political engagement grounded in lived experience, intersectionality, and situated knowledge.

Methodologically, the study adopts a post-qualitative research approach, drawing on curiographic methods such as narrative inquiry, situated reflection, and speculative thinking. Rather than following predefined research protocols, it embraces a flexible, iterative strategy that emphasizes affect, positionality, and collective meaning-making.

Following hooks (1994; 2000; 2003), emancipatory dialogue is framed not as a passive exchange of information but as a dynamic, relational process that fosters the recognition of multiple perspectives. This dialogic practice disrupts established power relations and creates spaces for critical reflection and mutual transformation. Dialogue is understood not merely as a pedagogical method but as a political practice of freedom and coalition-building. Hooks emphasizes breaking down barriers of race, gender, and class by centering experience, care, and affect in educational practices.

In this light, Donna Haraway's work (2016; 2018; 2020) enriches the theoretical framework through her notion of curiography—a speculative, narrative-driven approach to knowledge-making. Her emphasis on situated knowledges, storytelling, and non-linear thinking complements hooks' political and ethical vision of dialogue. Haraway's curiography aligns with post-qualitative research principles (St. Pierre, 2011; 2019; Lather, 2017), which challenge normative structures of objectivity and linear discourse. Integrating Haraway and hooks allows us to frame dialogue as an emergent, affective, and co-constructed practice that contests epistemic authority.

Through this combined theoretical lens, the paper highlights the transformative potential of emancipatory dialogue in challenging systems of oppression and creating alternative spaces of meaning-making. It explores how dialogue can move individuals beyond passive participation toward active engagement, where knowledge emerges through collective experience rather than being imposed from above. The study also examines the role of affect, trust, and vulnerability in dialogic exchanges, arguing that genuine dialogue requires an ethics of care and reciprocity.

What this paper underscores is the importance of dialogue as a practice that transcends rigid disciplinary and cultural boundaries. By foregrounding dialogue as a means of negotiating power and building solidarity, it offers insights into how dialogic practices can be leveraged to create more inclusive and just social spaces. Emancipatory dialogue, understood through the lens of hooks and Haraway, presents a model of communication that is not only relational but also deeply political—enabling participants to reimagine their place within social structures and resist dominant narratives.

Ultimately, this paper argues that the intersection of hooks' dialogic vision and Haraway's curiography within a post-qualitative framework provides valuable strategies for rethinking dialogue as a transformative force. This interdisciplinary engagement challenges conventional notions of discourse and proposes an alternative approach grounded in relationality, reflexivity, and transdisciplinary thinking.

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Empowering Communities through Education: Peer-Led Research as a Catalyst for Learning

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Keywords: Community-based adult education, peer-led research, participatory arts-based methods.

Abstract:

Aim: This paper explores the role of adult education in fostering empowerment within economically disadvantaged communities, emphasising the transformative potential of peer-led research. The study focus is on the 'Communiversities' project in Glasgow (Scotland, UK), which utilises participatory research methodologies to facilitate intergenerational dialogue and explore learning experiences among diverse community members (Pain et al., 2011). The 'Communiversities' is an NIHR funded project, designed to empower community participants to become peer researchers and help identify and understand the barriers to active movement and physical activity for people living in poorer areas of the city.

Relevance to the Conference Theme: Aligned with the conference theme of dialogue in adult education, this proposal addresses key aspects such as community, identity and inclusivity. By examining the dynamics of dialogue between adult educators and 'seldom heard' adult learners, the research highlights opportunities for marginalised groups to engage in meaningful educational practices. The focus on peer-led initiatives underscores the importance of co-creating knowledge and understanding in diverse cultural contexts, enhancing citizenship and community connections (Freire, 1970).

Theoretical Framework: The proposed study is grounded in Paulo Freire's framework of critical pedagogy, which advocates for an educational process that promotes dialogue, reflection and

action. This approach recognises individuals as co-creators of knowledge rather than passive recipients, fostering a participatory culture that values lived experiences. Additionally, it integrates concepts from decolonising methodologies, emphasising the importance of relational learning and addressing systemic inequities within adult education (Smith, 2021).

Methodology: The research is led by Dr Nic Dickson, Research Associate with the School of Health and Wellbeing at the University of Glasgow. As an arts-based researcher, she employs qualitative, participatory action research (PAR) methodologies to explore the experiences of community members as co-researchers and adult learners (Pain et al., 2011). She shows how arts-based methods, such as visual mapping, photovoice and storytelling, enable participants to express their experiences and explore their understanding of the challenges to collaboratively design intervention strategies.

Expected Outcomes: The expected outcomes of the study include:

1. Enhanced understanding of the role of adult education in empowering participant-driven initiatives.
2. Insights into the effectiveness of peer-led methodologies in fostering inclusive educational spaces that respond to the needs of marginalised groups.
3. Development of a replicable model for utilising participatory research in adult education, showcasing the impact of collaborative learning on community resilience and social transformation.

The findings are anticipated to contribute significantly to the discourse on adult education, demonstrating how dialogic approaches can bridge the gap between academic knowledge and community experiences, promoting empowerment and equity for those who have faced marginalisation and inequality (hooks, 1994).

Conclusion: This paper articulates a clear connection between adult education and community empowerment and proposes a methodological shift in how adult education can be practised and understood. By focusing on peer-led research as a vehicle for community engagement, this paper aims to highlight the importance of dialogue in fostering social change and impactful learning experiences in diverse adult education environments.

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Empowering Voices in Adult Education: A Dialogue for Inclusive Health and Cancer Prevention Education for Persons with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

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Keywords: CUPID, Public Dialogue, Intellectual Disabilities

Abstract:

In 2019, the European Commission launched its Cancer Plan for Europe, underscoring the urgent need for effective prevention strategies, including equitable access to cancer education. In response, the COST Action CA21123, “Cancer—Understanding Prevention in Intellectual Disabilities” (CUPID), was established in 2022 to address the exclusion of persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) from cancer prevention efforts. This presentation explores how the CUPID project embodies the principles of dialogic education and public dialogue by centering the voices of a historically marginalised group in co-produced learning environments. Focusing on the 2024 CUPID Training School held in Prague, we highlight how the event brought together persons with IDD, their supporters, researchers, clinicians, and academics in an inclusive space for shared learning and advocacy. Through co-design, co-production, and collaborative problem-solving, participants engaged in mutual knowledge exchange and developed team developed multilingual, easy-to-read cancer prevention materials tailored for accessibility. A video depicting the lived voice of a person with IDD and cancer, along with a powerful narrative authored by a family member, served as dialogic tools—creating emotional and intellectual connections across diverse participants and challenging systemic barriers such as diagnostic overshadowing. Outcomes of the Training School included increased knowledge among all participants, empowerment of people with IDD, the formation of a policy-focused professional network, and expanded support for early-career researchers. By centring excluded voices and fostering sustained collaboration, the CUPID project contributes meaningfully to the advancement of health equity and models an inclusive approach to education and public dialogue that is essential for truly participatory health cancer prevention systems.

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Encouraging intercultural dialogue: utopia or reality? Insights from a cross-cultural research with teachers and educators from Ireland, Italy and Romania

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Keywords: Intercultural dialogue; Cross-cultural research; Contact Hypothesis; Video-research; Continuing Professional Development

Abstract:

While dialogue is an increasingly desirable dimension in adult education contexts, its promotion is far from a given. This is generally true because dialogue implies that all participants are willing to let

the dialogue 'happen', that they come out transformed, changed, different from before (Stanghellini, 2017). Ambivalences are even greater when participants from different cultural backgrounds are involved in the dialogical processes and cultural decentralisation, equity and empathy are required as prerequisites (Baraldi, 2003).

The scientific and political debate on intercultural relations has been - and still is - dominated by the paradigm of the contact hypothesis (Ellison, Powers, 1994). According to this theory interpersonal contact between different cultural groups can reduce prejudice by creating a space of dialogue (Allport, 1954; Williams, 1947).

Already twenty-five years ago, Connolly (2000) called for a new research agenda that would develop an in-depth reflection on both the theoretical premises and policy implications of the Contact Hypothesis approach. He suggested the need for a multilayered analysis of the interethnic relationships with a focus "on the central role played by broader social structures and institutions" together with "the more micro, interpersonal processes and practices which help sustain and reproduce racial and ethnic division" (ivi, p. 171).

Does the intertwining of these dimensions make dialogue a utopia? Should adult education therefore abandon the efforts to promote intercultural dialogue?

This paper aims to reflect on these questions using some insights from a research experience on professional development of teachers and school educators from three different countries from a cross-cultural perspective as points of provocation.

The project 'COoPING-Cooperando affrontiamo i cambiamenti' (Erasmus+ KA210-SCH) - coordinated by Pandora Cooperativa Sociale Onlus and methodologically supervised by University of Milano-Bicocca - aimed to empower the practitioners' pedagogical and didactic skills in relation to cooperative approaches, use of technology and promotion of social inclusion in Ireland, Italy, and Romania. The specific objectives were:

- To promote dialogue and cooperation between teachers and educators from different cultural backgrounds through active methodologies and the use of video as a tool for in-service training;
- To promote cross-cultural exchange of best practices, but also needs and limitations from the three schools involved in the project;
- To co-design, implement and evaluate, from a formative perspective, an innovative didactic experience capable of combining the socio-cultural complexity of the three contexts and the differences among them, to promote the development of cooperative practices between adults and pupils.

Methodologically, the study adopted an approach inspired by design-based research (Wang, Hannafin, 2005) and action-research. In particular, it combined the tradition of cross-cultural research (Madrid Akpovo, Moran, Brookshire, 2018) with the method of 'video feedback and reflection' (Tochon, 2009) using the video to stimulate reciprocal learning processes (Braga, Bove, Moran, Brookshire, 2021; Moran, Bove, Brookshire, Braga, Mantovani, 2017) between practitioners from different countries (Bove, Mussi, in press).

The challenges that emerged in the cross-cultural exchange between the three groups of teachers and educators highlight the importance of being aware of the different dimensions that come into play in intercultural encounters: the micro level of individuals, the meso level of the institutions, schools, and organisations, the macro level of the global asymmetrical power relations. Nevertheless,

it became clear that, in today's world of growing inequalities, dialogue is even more necessary to create spaces for recognition, solidarity and cooperation. From this perspective, insights from the pedagogy of discomfort (Akpovo, Neessen, Nganga, Sorrells, 2023,) - which seeks to interpret conflict and the discomfort that follows as a drive for transformation (Foucault, 1997) - are of potential interest.

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Evolving online dialogues into co-constructive spaces: The case of “dialoge digitalisierung”

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Keywords: dialogue, co-construction, digitization, online, mixed-methods

Abstract:

This paper presents (1) a mixed-methods, participatory approach for reworking a dialogical online format for researchers and practitioners in adult and continuing education (ACE) into co-constructive spaces for knowledge transfer. Also, (2) we outline our approach for researching facilitating conditions and outcomes of co-construction in these spaces.

Background: The unceasing dynamic in the development of digital technologies is a constant challenge for practitioners, researchers and policy makers in ACE (Rohs 2019). Additionally, there is a disjunction between research, practitioners and policy makers, hampering knowledge transfer and meaningful exchange for improving ACE (Schrader et al 2020).

Against this background, an online dialogue format (“dialogue on digitization” abb. “dd#”) has been implemented in 2020, bringing together researchers and practitioners in the German ACE sector. The deployment was greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in rudimentary conceptional elaboration. Still, the dd# have been effective in facilitating exchange and in building a special interest community. However, past evaluation shows that it can still be improved regarding transformation and implementation of knowledge between involved stakeholders (Koschorreck et al, 2022). Consequently, the format will be conceptionally reworked into online Co-Labs as co-constructive spaces.

Co-construction is a purposeful, interactive process of knowledge generation, reflection, and contextualization between individuals. The process is sophisticated and requires not only the provision of necessary resources (space, time and, if necessary, tools) but is also dependent on social conditions for success, specifically the establishment of a trusting working relationship and symmetrical communication of the parties involved (Cress & Kimmerle 2018; Beyer et al 2024). Ideally, stakeholders contribute to a focused dialogue and thus generate insights, solutions, or build competences that have an immediate impact on their respective professional contexts. The use of digital collaborative tools can support the process of co-construction (Li & Lai, 2022). Thus, Co-construction can be understood as a form of knowledge transfer (Grosche et al., 2020).

Method: A multi-phase convergent mixed-methods design is applied in the project [quan(QUAL) -> QUAL(quant)->QUAL]. The (1) conceptual revision of the dd#, also follows a participative approach. A preliminary survey among the established special-interest community around the dd# is conducted. The results, combined with the results from past evaluation efforts, were fed into a draft concept for the co-constructive spaces, then validated with selected members of the dd# community in a focus group interview. The latter will undergo systematic qualitative analysis (Kuckartz & Rädiker 2023). Future dd# will be conducted in adherence to the revised concept. For (2) analysis of facilitating conditions and outcomes of co-construction during dd# events, standardized short surveys after each event in combination with a systematic qualitative analysis (Kuckartz & Rädiker 2023) of artefacts from the dd# generated with collaborative digital tools will be conducted. These will be complemented by likewise analyzed semi-structured interviews with

stakeholders from research, practice and policy in ACE that participated in multiple #dd events. Embedded (1,2), purposeful (2) and convenience sampling strategies (1,2) are applied.

Results from the preliminary survey (n=28) show that participants prefer events up to 2 hrs and a majority rates 'receiving relevant information' (n=26) and 'collaborative development of solutions for concrete problems' to be 'rather important' or 'very important' (n=24). A concept that includes an information part and connected digital working spaces (Co-Labs) was drafted and presented to two focus groups (2xn=5). Analysis is in progress, but the first appraisal of transcripts hints that participants judge the concept as valid, but some details need further elaboration. These reveal contradictory demands between fidelity and practicality in implementation. We expect data from the first iteration of the reworked format to show different categories of outcomes.

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Experiential Learning: revisiting the meanings of a key concept for self-reflexivity and adult learners' engagement in transformative communicative action(s)

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Keywords: Experiential Learning; self-reflexivity; alterity and prejudgments; democratic dialogue; transformative communicative action.

Abstract:

This paper, of a theoretical and essayistic nature, seeks to retrieve basic ideas of the polysemic concept of experiential learning, with the aim of rehearsing a discussion that identify clues, of a theoretical-conceptual nature, that can (re)illuminate the potential role of self-reflexivity for the contemporary adult learner's emancipation, as individuals are increasingly moving in a digital and material (des)information atmospheres, inherent to the current (un)communicative society.

If meeting the 'other' is a way to look at ourselves, revealing (often by contrast) our presuppositions, narratives, and representations, as the conference theme claims, then all the experiential learning is relevant for educators promoting dialogic transformative adult education practices in communities, by one hand, to foster the development of an in deep knowledge about ourselves and our social contexts of living, and, by another hand, to promote a (de)learning when disruptive, violence or manipulative oppressing circumstances have embedded the socialization process of the learner's prior experiences.

The methodological approach has revisited the conceptual foundations of David Kolb's experiential learning model, highlighting the key features of its cyclical process, based on four main phases, and the potential of this methodology for generating new experiences and reflections, that can be relevant to grow individual consciousness and collective critical awareness. Then, we also revisit the multiple theoretical senses of the concept of experiential learning, both in the Anglo-Saxon and Francophone socio-educational western traditions, as we consider those systematization exercises very fruitful, e.g., for the planning of learning activities in communities. Among the various proposals found, the paper highlights two models in particular, the Landry model (1989) and the Weil and McGill model (1996), because both have heuristic possibilities for develop further the analytical-conceptual maps available for educators that chose to work with the experiential learning of adults, as a basis for improve democratic and critical dialogue.

As outcome of this theoretical exercise, we argue that critical reflections on experiential learning can be a key-ingredient, today as before, for engagement in transformative communicative action(s), allowing to work collaboratively to, first, recognise and then, combat the experiential roots of prejudgments, that usually nurture the hate against alterities, causing exclusion(s) and multiple exploration(s), that keep undermining social justice and threatening democratic relationships in today's world.

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Exploring a collaboration with Irish Tertiary Education to empower Adult Educators to promote flexible learner pathways, making education accessible Collaborative education between the Literacy Development Centre (LDC) – South East Technological University (SETU) and Longford Westmeath Education and Training Board (LWETB)

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Keywords: Lifelong learning; tertiary education; flexible learning pathways

Abstract:

This research is situated within the Irish tertiary educational space, between Higher Education (HE) and Further Education & Training (FET). The higher education organisation within this research is the Literacy Development Centre (LDC) – South-East Technological University (SETU) and the further education organisation is the Longford Westmeath Education Training Board (LWETB). This study focuses on the provision of a 30 Credit NFQ Level 6 qualification entitled Certificate in Adult Literacy Studies. Methods include multiple focus groups to capture the differing accounts of experience, (Connelly and Clandinin, 1994). The findings of this research presents a unique 360 degree view of experiences of the blended delivery of this curriculum programme (Markovitch et al., 2021). Voices reported include all stakeholders, specifically the people who logistically managed the programme from both the HE and FE perspectives, the lecturers and the students. It is important to note that the students on this programme are tutors within LWETB. The research focuses specifically on the opportunities, the positives, the challenges and the lessons learned for all of the research participants involved in delivering this programme within this tertiary space. This article concludes with a discussion of the impact of this type of academic delivery upon the students and other respective organisational stakeholders from both the HE and the FE perspectives.

Context and Rationale for the Research: In 2021, the Adult Literacy for Life Strategy 2021-2031 introduced a ten-year plan to improve literacy, numeracy, and digital skills for adults in Ireland, emphasising accessible learning and coordinated support. A cornerstone of the strategy is the continuous professional development of adult educators (SOLAS, 2021). The Literacy Development Centre (LDC) at SETU, a national centre providing third level programmes for educators and managers in the adult literacy and wider further education and training (FET) sector has been instrumental in supporting the strategy through collaboration with various stakeholders.

In 2022, in collaboration with Longford and Westmeath Education and Training Board (LWETB), a College of Further Education, the LDC took part in a pilot programme with a group of adult education practitioners who enrolled in the NFQ Level 6 Certificate in Adult Literacy.

This research aligns to all conference topic areas for each of the three stakeholder areas:

- Lifelong Learning Ecosystems – (for the blended delivery method of the pilot programme under review and identifying which day face to face delivery versus online delivery was most effective for all stakeholders)
- Strategy and Leadership in Lifelong Learning – (this speaks to the stakeholders from both the LDC and LWETB, the managers and the programme leads from both organisations who logistically managed the successful delivery of the programme)
- Flexible Learning Pathways – (the student voice within this research, in addition to all stakeholders within this 360 research, speaks to this topic area also)

The research we conducted with the LDC and LWETB, on the CALS pilot programme aligns to all three themes, thereby adding to the 'Dialogue in and through Adult Education and Learning'.

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Exploring Dialogue in Adult Education: An examination of the application of Phenomenography

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Keywords: Phenomenography; Adult Education; Dialogue; Qualitative Research; Learning Design

Abstract:

This presentation aims to explore how phenomenography can support dialogue as a pedagogical and research tool in adult learning. Phenomenography is a qualitative research methodology that investigates the distinct ways people experience, understand, and conceptualise phenomena in their surroundings (Marton, 1981). Importantly, phenomenography does not aim to classify or judge people; instead, it seeks to map the qualitative variations in how people comprehend, perceive, and experience various aspects and phenomena in their environment (Marton, 1986). Rooted in a non-dualistic ontological perspective, phenomenography is underpinned by the epistemological assumption that meaning emerges from the relationship between people and the world. It posits that any given phenomenon can be understood through a limited number of distinct experiential frameworks (Marton and Booth, 1997). This second-order perspective prioritises not the phenomenon itself but rather how it is experienced by people, revealing patterns of variation that provide profound insights into learning and perception. By understanding these variations, curriculum designers can target the critical aspects that differentiate more limited from more sophisticated understandings and design learning activities that promote conceptual change or deeper understanding, rather than rote memorisation or surface learning.

Developed in the 1970s within the domain of educational research, phenomenography has since been used to examine how people experience a broad range of phenomena, including political power, death, conflict resolution, and the meaning of life (Marton, 2015; Tight, 2016). Furthermore, it has been employed to address various issues in higher education, including teaching and learning (Shreeve, 2010), curriculum development (Fraser and Bosanquet, 2006), academic development (Akerlind, 2007), disciplinary studies (Ashwin, Abbas and McLean, 2014; Ashwin, Abbas and McLean, 2016) and lifelong learning (El Amoud, 2024). In the context of adult education, phenomenography has been applied to investigate the experiences of adult educators and adult learners regarding concepts such as learning (Rotar, 2021), online learning (Rasmussen, 2018) and workplace learning (Arden, 2023).

The presentation will reflect on two phenomenographic studies undertaken at an Irish higher education institution and involving adult educators. The first study examined lecturers' perspectives on technology-enhanced learning, while the second focused on lecturers' perceptions of integrating a Learning Design capability into professional undergraduate curricula (Widger, 2025). These researchers illustrate how phenomenography enhances adult education by making explicit the meanings learners attribute to dialogue, thereby informing more equitable, dialogic, and transformative pedagogical practices. Ultimately, this research positions phenomenography as a robust framework for comprehending how adults learn through dialogue and for fostering more student centred and socially just educational approaches.

Phenomenography provides a methodological framework for mapping experiences into an "outcome space"—a structured representation of the diverse ways people experience a given phenomenon. This approach is particularly well-suited for adult education, where learners bring varied life experiences and sociocultural contexts to the educational environment. Dialogue in adult education transcends mere information exchange; it constitutes a generative process of mutual recognition, critical reflection, and transformation. Phenomenography facilitates this by elucidating the various ways dialogue is experienced, including as a space for validation, a challenge to existing beliefs, or a co-creative encounter. By making these variations visible, educators can design inclusive and responsive learning environments that acknowledge and leverage the diverse experiences of learners.

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Exploring professional well-being of adult educators. Dialogical approach

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Keywords: professional well-being, dialog, professional identity

Abstract:

There is a growing need for supporting adult educators and their professional well - being. . Professional well-being is a dynamic part of the process of personal development and professionalization of adult educators. The paper and presentation is based on research „Professional Well-Being in the Perceptions of Adult Educators“ and focuses on the dialogical challenges between adult educators and other professionals in adult education. The research question is: what are adult educators' perceptions of professional well-being? The aim of this research is to map and understand adult educators' perceptions of professional well-being and to construct a model of adult educators' professional well-being.

Professional well-being is related to the experience of competence and mental balance. In constructing the theoretical framework, self-determination theory and studies describing the relationship between self-determination theory and conceptions of well-being as well as holistic personality theory were used.

Empirical data was collected using a novel dialogical method for data collection, which was created by combining the method of a sensorobiographical walk and a semi-structured interview with eighteen (n=18) Estonian adult educators. The data collection method was carried out in form of a

dialogue between two professionals, obtaining quality data through interviews as provided by experts. Empirical data analysed using qualitative content analysis.

The findings of the study revealed that adult educators' perceptions of professional well-being are a pleasant, human feeling when the adult educator feels balanced, competent and the learners' well-being is ensured. Professional well-being is shaped by multiple components: professional identity, professional development, psychological capital and professional well-being that form an interrelated conceptual whole. The development of professional well-being is initiated by a dialogue with oneself in which development needs are identified. As a result of this research, the concept of professional well-being will be presented and discussed.

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Foreign-born students communicating and negotiating the norms of an adult education community of practice

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Keywords: foreign-born students, adult education, communication, negotiation, community of practice

Abstract:

Dialogue and communication are often viewed as enabling transformation and development in adult education. In practice, however, the participants in adult education may find themselves in an asymmetric situation when communicating with their teachers, especially when they, as foreign-born

students, need to communicate in their third or fourth language. Folk high school is a form of adult education institution, and foreign students make up around 40% of the participants. The Swedish Folk High school is known to work in collective settings, focusing on the social integration of the students (Paldanius, 2007). However, if you flip the coin, flexibility and learning through social integration means the students need to interpret the norms of the educational practice more on their own to be able to successfully produce the expected results and be ready for higher studies. In this paper, popular education is understood as constituting a community of practice (Wenger, 1998) where students find their place through three modes of belonging: mutual engagement, a common enterprise and a shared repertoire of linguistic, personal and digital resources. To be engaged, understand the enterprise of mastering the academic language and way of studying at hand as well as using the repertoire in the expected way – you need to negotiate with both teachers and fellow students around what can be expected of you as a student in the Folk high school community of practice, something that does not look the same for different categories of students. “Learning thus implies becoming a different person with respect to the possibilities enabled by these systems of relations.” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 53). The paper will investigate the Folk high school ideals of equal dialogue in teaching. Results from a ten-week long field study will be discussed, where four foreign-born students were shadowed. Semi-structured follow-up interviews were then carried out with the students and five of their teachers. Here the focus was on the students’ identity constructions in the school’s community of practice. Results indicate that the Folk high school community of practice is conditioned in ways that are problematic when considering the foreign-born students’ potential for becoming full participants in it, implying important consequences for the learners’ identity constructions.

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Fostering Collegial Learning through Dialogical Approaches in Higher Education

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Keywords: academic staff, professional development, academic developers, professional learning communities, developmental research

Abstract:

This paper examines how collegial learning among academic staff can be supported through dialogical approaches in academic development, aiming to overcome institutional fragmentation and foster collective professional growth. In universities, the dissemination of effective teaching practices often remains limited within institutional silos, restricting opportunities for collective professional

learning. External evaluations have also highlighted this challenge, underscoring the need for more structured dialogue among academic staff. Addressing this requires a shift from competitive learning cultures toward collaborative approaches that foster institutional change (Kezar & Holcombe, 2021).

Reflective practice plays a central role in fostering collegial learning through dialogical approaches. It enhances teaching performance, builds trust among colleagues, and supports the development of professional communities by structuring meaningful discourse (Gustavsson et al., 2019; Nehring et al., 2010). Research suggests that fostering collegial learning requires creating spaces for authentic dialogue, and when reflective practice is scaffolded with dialogical protocols and embedded in collaborative settings, it leads to deeper understanding, innovation, and organisational learning (Guzmán & Larrain, 2024). Therefore, fostering collegial professional learning requires not merely structural interventions but also deliberate efforts to cultivate a culture of trust, shared leadership, and reflective dialogue among academic staff (Vangrieken et al., 2017).

Recent studies emphasise that collegial learning through dialogical approaches enhances faculty development by fostering relational trust, deep reflection, and shared professional growth (Chang, 2018; Guzmán & Larrain, 2024). Dialogical learning communities enable faculty members to engage in reflective practice, develop communicative competence, and collectively transform teaching practices. Such approaches highlight that sustainable change in higher education requires not only structural initiatives but also nurturing interpersonal relations and fostering a culture of dialogue.

Theoretical perspectives emphasise the importance of accounting for disciplinary and institutional specificities, dialogue, collaboration, and empowerment as key strategies for promoting professional learning (Karu & Aava, 2023). Research has shown that conversations among academic staff are central to professional development, as they foster conceptual growth and learning through trusted, intellectually stimulating, and private exchanges rather than formal public discussions (Roxå & Mårtensson, 2009). The co-learning format at Tallinn University has been designed to accommodate the diverse needs and cultural particularities of seven academic units. Academic developers and researchers of the Centre for Learning and Teaching have taken on the role of facilitators as they are crucial in stimulating increased collaboration, coherence, and organisational learning in modern universities (Stensaker, 2018). Each academic unit was given the opportunity to participate in a dialogical seminar process, enabling a dynamic and adaptive exchange of teaching practices. The intervention was structured around key principles: collaboration with institutional leadership, thematic co-learning seminars for faculty in all units, sharing and validating teaching practices through evidence-based approaches, and making pedagogical decisions through dialogue. Data collection methods included interviews with leaders of seven academic units, researchers' notes, observations, and feedback analysis from seminar participants.

The paper is based on an ongoing developmental research study conducted by the Tallinn University Centre for Learning and Teaching. It explores a co-learning initiative that fosters collegial learning through structured dialogue. The initiative enables academic staff to exchange experiences, co-develop innovations, and build professional learning communities. By promoting dialogue within and between different academic units, it aims to overcome institutional fragmentation and support professional growth.

The initiative is structured around an annual thematic focus on professional learning, guiding development seminars within different faculties. The process culminates in an institution-wide Co-

Learning Day, where participants share best teaching practices and co-develop new pedagogical insights. Outcomes are documented in a publication titled "The Educator Learns", ensuring sustainable professional development.

Preliminary findings indicate that the initiative fostered dialogue, collaboration, trust, and openness within academic units. The combination of theoretical reflection and practical application reinforced the importance of dialogue in professional learning. To sustain dialogical approaches in professional development, it is essential to identify key stakeholders within academic units who can facilitate dialogue and engagement. Establishing initial contact and balancing tailored professional development with institutional capacity remains a significant challenge, as excessive customisation may undermine collaborative approaches. This initiative integrates structured dialogue into professional development, demonstrating how universities can cultivate a more collaborative teaching environment. It ensures that effective teaching methods extend beyond individual boundaries and contribute to the broader learning ecosystem. Strengthening dialogue within and between different academic communities fosters sustainable professional growth and institutional development.

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Fostering Dialogue and Connection in the Virtual Public Sphere: Supporting Online Adult Learners through Social Networks

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Keywords: Social Presence, Online Community, Coaching, Engagement

Abstract:

In the rapidly evolving landscape of online adult education, feelings of isolation and imposter syndrome are significant challenges that can hinder student engagement, motivation, and retention. Unlike traditional in-person classrooms, where spontaneous interactions and social bonding occur naturally, online learning environments require intentional strategies to foster dialogue and community. The absence of physical presence and in person interaction often leads to a sense of disconnection from peers and the university, impacting emotional well-being and academic success. While virtual public spheres cannot fully replicate the richness of in-person interactions, they offer unique opportunities to connect learners across geographical boundaries, creating new forms of social presence, emotional support, and personal reflection.

This paper explores how an intentionally designed online social network space, supported by life coaching principles, can create supportive virtual public spheres that encourage dialogue and enhance learners' emotional well-being, sense of community, and educational experience. The research adopts a qualitative case study approach, focusing on a two-year ICT conversion programme where adult learners, primarily in full-time employment, engage in a fully online learning environment. The case study is situated within a practitioner context, drawing on four years of reflective practice in the facilitation and observation of the "life-etc" channel. This work is anchored in the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework (Garrison et al. 2000) with a particular emphasis on social presence. It examines the role of an intentionally designed social network space in fostering informal dialogue and community among online adult learners. "Slack" is a collaboration platform designed as a digital workspace and is used as the core communication platform for students and staff on this programme, where students are generally in employment. The CoI framework posits that effective online learning environments require the integration of three interdependent elements: social presence, cognitive presence, and teaching presence. The "life-etc" Slack channel, examined in this study, intentionally fosters social presence by enabling informal, supportive dialogue among students navigating the complexities of part-time adult education. This paper reflects on the intentional development of the "life-etc" channel on the Slack platform as a space for holistic conversations addressing the social, emotional, and personal dimensions of building a community of adult learners. Data sources include surveys, facilitator reflections and informal learner feedback.

Unlike traditional learning management systems and standard online platforms, the "life-etc" channel allows students to share experiences, seek peer support, and engage in meaningful dialogue about balancing life commitments, returning to education as an adult, and managing the challenges of online study. Drawing from life coaching techniques like active listening, goal-setting, and emotional intelligence, the "life-etc" channel is intentionally designed to promote self-awareness, resilience, and empower the students to navigate the complexities of online learning with greater resilience and a deeper sense of connection to peers.

The "life-etc" channel and virtual meetups also encourages students to take ownership of their learning by setting personal goals, identifying obstacles, and developing strategies to manage academic and life responsibilities. The researcher, being a qualified Life Coach, draws on Life Coaching and Emotional Intelligence (Goleman, 1996; Whitworth et al., 2007) frameworks to promote positive psychology and support personal growth. Rather than top-down instruction, the space aims to support autonomy and emotional self-regulation, two elements that are crucial for adult learners balancing multiple responsibilities.

This paper acknowledges that virtual interactions cannot entirely replace the spontaneous social exchanges of in-person classes. However, the "life-etc" channel demonstrates how virtual spaces, informed by life coaching principles, can emulate elements of classroom community, offering a sense of connection and peer support that mitigates feelings of isolation. The paper provides a reflective analysis of observed interactions within the channel, examining themes such as emotional support, identity negotiation, and community bonding. These observations show how informal social networks, infused with coaching strategies, can foster an inclusive learning environment, enhancing student engagement, emotional well-being, and academic success.

Contributing to the conference theme, this paper demonstrates how innovative dialogue strategies can transform the social experience of adult education. It offers practical insights for educators, administrators, and instructional designers on leveraging social networks and coaching strategies to create emotionally supportive, community-oriented online learning environments. These findings underscore the need for a paradigm shift in online adult education, where community connection, and intentional dialogue are prioritised to enhance student engagement, retention, and success.

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Fostering dialogue in hard times: What to do when the 'world' says "NO"

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Keywords: dialogue across difference, teacher education for peace, life stories

Abstract:

Dialogue has been a central goal of teacher education in many educational settings, and particularly so in contexts of multicultural education, intergroup conflict and diversity. For teachers, however, the goal is not merely dialogue in itself, but as a practice that might enable them to "engage in a collaborative and imaginative encounter to transform their own practices and their schools" (Nieto, 1994).

In the conflicted context of Israeli society, studies have repeatedly shown that dialogue, while difficult, is not impossible (Maoz, 2005; Bekerman 2009). The use of personal life stories to provide direct encounters between individuals from diverse backgrounds has become one of the prominent ways to explore issues of multiculturalism in teacher education. A narrative study in the United States, Canada and Israel (Li, Conle & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2009) showed that a "pedagogy of narrative shifting" based on personal stories contributed to the students' understandings of multiculturalism, and to widening the possibilities for dialogue across difference in all three contexts. A recent Israeli study examined the experiences of students from diverse backgrounds preparing to become teachers of English in Israel; the study demonstrated how reading and discussing literary works, and exchanging letters with their peers in the classroom fostered dialogue and gave students a greater understanding of cultural, social and religious differences, with implications for how they saw their future work as teachers (Kinsbursky 2024).

The traumatic events of October 2023 – the Hamas attack on the area of Southern Israel bordering on Gaza (which targeted civilian communities – including women, children and elderly people - with unprecedented cruelty); the subsequent war, still ongoing, with disastrous consequences for both sides, and which has largely sidelined previous ideas and discourse about peace and dialogue; the ensuing protests (sometimes violent, often grounded in ignorance, and mostly uninterested in dialogue) on campuses in North American, the UK and elsewhere; and the growing polarization of public discourse on many global issues around the world: all these have raised one question: Is dialogue still possible? It is this difficult question, directly relevant to the conference theme, which I propose to examine in this presentation.

The methodology of the presentation will be reflective and in part autobiographical. I will begin by looking back at the work that I (and others) have engaged in for over two decades, of facilitating students' writing of their own stories and those of their communities, and then enabling dialogue between and among them (Elbaz-Luwisch 2001, 2004, 2014, 2015; Estola and Elbaz-Luwisch 2003; LI, Conle & Elbaz-Luwisch 2009). I will identify the defining features that encouraged me that this work was worth doing, and in particular that enabling dialogues across difference in this way was ultimately contributing towards creating a culture of cross-cultural understanding and peace (McGlynn et al., 2009). I will also engage with colleagues who have in the past been involved in similar activities aimed at fostering dialogue, and will seek to understand how they view the possibility of dialogue in the present moment.

Despite the difficulties, I remain hopeful, bearing in mind the words of Vaclav Havel that "Hope is a state of mind, not of the world. Hope, in this deep and powerful sense, is not the same as joy that things are going well, or willingness to invest in enterprises that are obviously heading for success, but rather an ability to work for something because it is good."

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From Borders to Bonds: Podcasting and Intercultural Mediation for Generative Learning

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Keywords: informal learning; intercultural pedagogy; educational research; podcasting; biographical approaches

Abstract:

Migration studies have long been shaped by Eurocentric and ethnocentric paradigms that reinforce unequal power relations through the construction of the “enemy” and the “scapegoat” (Said, 1999; Sayad, 2002; Eco, 2020). More recently, social media has intensified stereotypes and anti-dialogical narratives (Ratajczak & Galzignato, 2019; Galeotti, 2019), fueling toxic discourse and cultural polarization (Fiorucci, 2019; Pasta, 2018, 2022). In response, the Council of Europe (2022) has reframed hate speech as a multidimensional threat to democracy, while the interdisciplinary field of Hate Studies mobilizes educators, researchers, and activists to explore viable countermeasures.

This paper addresses a key pedagogical question: how can critical insights into hate and marginalization be transformed into meaningful educational practices, especially in contexts marked by migration, cultural plurality, and social inequality?

To explore this, we present a case study from a non-formal educational workshop conducted in Italy. The intervention aimed to support Italian L2 acquisition foster narrative agency (Wenger, 1999; Formenti et al., 2014), and enable critical reflection through a two-phase process involving thematic focus groups and podcast co-creation.

The first phase facilitated group discussions on hate speech and verbal violence; internalized exclusion and stigma; and the embodied dimensions of culture (religion, music, dance). These sessions created dialogical spaces where individual experiences and collective reflection generated critical awareness. In the second phase, participants collaboratively produced a podcast series, blending soundscapes, testimonies, and cultural references to voice personal stories and reframe marginal positions.

The podcast design drew on Universal Design for Learning principles, enabling flexible, inclusive access to oral expression and language learning—particularly relevant in contexts of linguistic vulnerability. Framed within the concept of super-diversity (Vertovec, 2023), the project recognized the transnational, intersectional nature of learners' identities (Evans, 2021; Hoggan & Hoggan-Kloubert, 2021), challenging static models of multiculturalism.

Grounded in borderland theory (Balibar, 2015; Khosravi, 2010) and humanistic-transformative mediation (Morineau, 2018), the educational design enabled participants to reinterpret their positionality from the margins and transform exclusion into shared knowledge. A multidisciplinary team facilitated biographical re-elaboration, while close attention to group dynamics addressed potential intra-group marginalization.

This case study demonstrates how podcasting, integrated with digital media, reflective dialogue, and creative storytelling, can serve as a powerful tool for intercultural mediation and critical pedagogy (Taylor & Cranton, 2012; Nicolaides, 2015; Formenti & West, 2016). It offers a replicable model for generative learning in adult education, particularly in contexts affected by hate speech, social fragmentation, and migration.

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From dialectics to dialogic adult education: revisiting aspects of Buber's social ontology

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Keywords: ontology, Between, inclusion, authenticity, democracy

Abstract:

This paper aims to shed light on a well-known yet often overlooked concept in adult education: the Buberian "sphere of between" (Buber, 2002). Framed as a term of social ontology, this concept is explored in dialogue with key adult education theorists. Our objective is to propose an alternative approach to empowering learners in the face of the ontological crisis - namely, the contradictions inherent in attempting to build an inner "city" of critical awareness.

Such awareness, we argue, can uncover and challenge the power structures embedded in politics. The central question we raise is whether adult education, in the postmodern era of fluid and ambiguous conceptual forms, can adopt the path opened by Buber, forging a discourse aligned with its foundational vision.

Martin Buber introduced a framework for understanding dialogue that reveals meaning both within and beyond the individual. He shifted the focus of Being from abstract contemplation to the realm of interpersonal relationships and the communal Being of humanity. This perspective transcends the "false consciousness" of the prisoners in Plato's cave (Villa, 2001). For Buber, "freedom in education is the possibility of communion; it cannot be dispensed with, and it cannot be made use of in itself" (Buber, 2002, p. 108).

Buber's inclusive approach emerged from his critique of modernity as a fragmented society, inspiring him to work toward societal unity through the creation of communities. Freire's vision of social transformation - influenced by the work of the Austrian-Israeli philosopher - similarly depends on cultivating authentic relationships within communities, as well as the historical necessity for individuals to take responsibility for walking consciously toward the truth of human connection. As Jarvis (2009, p. 13) puts it, "individual responsibility is important as we think about learning to be persons in society."

The ultimate goal of dialogue is an inner reconstruction that enables learners to discover new perspectives and possibilities - seeking meaning beyond the superficial allure of the "sirens." This pursuit fosters a lasting opening of the spirit while capturing the quiet transformation of a society

striving for transcendence. Such a journey reflects democracy's role in building a knowledge society, advancing "active citizenship as one of its aims for lifelong learning and the learning society" (Jarvis, 2008, p. 167).

Buber thus shifts the center of human existence from the void of meaningless abstraction to what Freire would later define as praxis, enriching the content of human life. The society Buber envisions is one of collective learning, constantly renewing itself through a journey of exploration and transformation. It is an "adventurous journey," akin to that of Odysseus, where upheaval propels the evolution of history toward the new and uncharted. As Jarvis (2008, p. 157) aptly observes, "it is looking forward."

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From Jacques to Jacques and beyond: rethinking dialogue in adult education

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Keywords: Adult education, dialogical relationship, knowledge mediation, philosophy of language, psychoanalysis

Abstract:

Formal adult education in Quebec, also known as general adult education, refers to several study programmes traditionally designed for adults 18 years and older for them to learn the French language, develop their literacy or their social and professional integration, etc. (MEQ, 2025). These diverse initiatives include a specific programme enabling, since 2000, people aged 16 and over who have not completed their compulsory schooling to obtain a secondary school diploma. This has led some authors to consider this pathway as a 'second chance school' (Marcotte et al., 2014) for students with complex educational backgrounds (Grossmann et al., 2014).

Historically, this programme was designed in the 1970s for older adults, based on the premise it would welcome autonomous adults working individually and at their own pace (using activity books). Over the last few decades, however, the target group has become younger and younger (16-

20 years old). The percentage of young people under 20 enrolled in Adult Education Centers (AEC) rose from 1.3% in 1985 to 30% in 2016 (Grossmann, 2022), some of whom transit directly from secondary schools to AECs. Thus, the current student population no longer aligns with the system as it was initially conceived and struggles with working independently in a self-directed manner, which often results in students dropping out of school for a second time. Some AECs, taking note of these changes, are adopting a more dialogical approach between teacher and pupils, and between the pupils themselves.

The aim of our paper is to examine this notion of dialogue in general, and more specifically in the context of adult education, to better understand its complexity in educational settings. To do so, we will begin by drawing on the philosophical work of Francis Jacques, who proposes a canonical (comprehensive, complete) conception of the dialogical relationship and highlights the foundational role of interlocution for the emergence and development of individuals (Jacques, 1982, 1985). This ideal conception of relationship and dialogue underpins a fruitful logic of interlocution, allowing us to envision an education that recognises a certain reciprocity between teachers and students. However, Jacques' ideal conception of dialogue considers the relationship from an essentially dual and socially weightless point of view, which does not take into account the reality of adult education (mediation through knowledge, group dynamics, socio-economic, cultural and institutional realities, etc.). Another Jacques, Jacques Lacan, rooted in the psychoanalytic tradition, also deploys a logic of interlocution, but introduces other dynamics that significantly 'disrupt' the ideal of the relationship. Unconscious forces are at work in dialogical relationships. Another scene is played out in the subject's relationship with and to the Other, where affects such as anxiety, desire, anger, etc., are exchanged in a phantasmatic logic (Grossmann, 2019; Roiné, 2019).

The conceptualisation of dialogue, as proposed by Francis Jacques in philosophy and Jacques Lacan in psychoanalysis, is also firmly rooted in their respective theoretical fields. In the field of education however, it is important to consider a third actor, knowledge, which acts as a mediator in the dialogical relationship. Knowledge functions like an institution, shaping the dialogical space by mediating the relationship with the Other.

Drawing for fieldwork in a context of teaching young adults (2022-2023), we will describe some ethnographic scenes (Marchive, 2003) in hopes to illustrate the functionalities of knowledge in the educational dialogical relationship. We will show that knowledge functions as a real actor and becomes a full-fledged interlocutor within the dialogical relationship, which ultimately becomes a trilogical relationship.

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From narratives to dialogue: Student veterans' stories as catalysts for transformative learning in higher education

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Keywords: Transformative learning, student veterans, higher education, narratives, dialogue

Abstract:

The transition of Danish veterans from military service into education is often accompanied by an experience of alienation, as veterans enter university with meaning perspectives that are significantly different from traditional students (Mezirow, 2012). In many cases, veterans' meaning perspectives emerge in military service and armed conflicts (Pedersen, 2025), which can produce a disjuncture upon entering higher education. Here, we draw on Jarvis' (2012) concept of disjuncture to refer to the gap between the meaning perspective of veterans and their experience of entering higher education and encountering civilian, academic meaning perspectives. Exploring these issues, our presentation raises the question: How can we mediate the gap between the meaning perspectives of veterans and traditional students, who veterans perceive to be occupied with "first-world problems"?

Addressing this question, our presentation aims at illustrating how veterans experience themselves as the other in civilian, academic culture, how they interact with non-veteran peers and faculty to navigate their sense of belonging in higher education, and how they engage in critical reflection that leads to perspective transformation.

Grounded in narrative interviews with Danish student veterans, we use Grounded Theory and, more specifically, situational analysis (Clarke et al. 2015) to identify how student veterans engage with non-veteran peers and faculty and illustrate how qualities of this engagement initiate perspective transformation. Linking to contemporary discussions in transformative learning theory, we explore transformative learning of student veterans and qualities of their engagement with higher education through three questions: (1) Is transformative learning initiated by an immediate, shock-like experience (Mezirow, 2012), or rather by a non-determining start and a subsequent shift in relevance (Nohl, 2015)? (2) Can the disorienting experience of veterans be accurately represented as a disorienting dilemma that prompts them to act (Mezirow, 2012), or do veterans rather experience

a disjuncture through which veterans become aware of a difference in meaning perspectives (Jarvis, 2012)? And ultimately, (3) Which qualities of engagement between student veterans and non-veteran peers scaffold and consolidate perspective transformation? The expected outcome of this analysis is a description of patterns in which student veterans engage in higher education.

The second part of the presentation builds on our observation that veterans are often highly competent storytellers and capable of conveying their biographical experiences (Schütze, 1992). We argue that storytelling among veterans and non-veteran peers creates an in-between position between the self and the other that enables sharing meaning perspectives and disclosing the uniqueness of the other as a person (Biesta 2016). We also discuss the potential of narratives as a catalyst for dialogue that carries the potential for perspective transformation (Gunnlaugson, 2006). Such transformative learning aims to transcend personal meaning perspectives on what counts as human to shield democratic societies against polarization and future genocides. The expected outcome of our exploration of storytelling as a catalyst for perspective transformation provides a set of core principles for facilitating engagement with student veterans.

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From Professional Dialogue to Emerging Communities of Practice: Exploring the Effects of Non-Formal Education on Cultural Professionals

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Keywords: cultural professionals, informal learning, non-formal education, communities of practice, social capital

Abstract:

Thompson (2002, p. 29) asserted that arts and cultural institutions—‘whether they like it or not’—play a significant educational role in society. However, less attention has been given to the learning in which these actors themselves engage. This paper examines the informal learning experiences of cultural professionals participating in non-formal education in Slovakia as part of the Trenčín2026 European Capital of Culture (ECOC) project. The study is inspired by the following statement from the conference's open call: ‘In dialogue, we can share, listen and change what we think and say while keeping it open to debate, and therefore learning.’ The authors explore what adults can learn through informal dialogues with their peers, both during and after participation in non-formal education.

To investigate this issue, the study employs the communities of practice framework (Lave & Wenger, 1991), which provides valuable insights into how adults acquire and apply knowledge through social interactions and collaborative activities—both essential for effective learning and professional development. Additionally, we draw on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of social capital, which helps explain the long-term impact of informal learning on professional growth (Bourdieu, 1986). Specifically, we examine how cultural professionals build social capital through informal learning experiences, how they continue to develop and utilise these networks for dialogue, and how this ongoing dialogue contributes to their learning and career progression.

This study is embedded within the monitoring and evaluation strategy, a mandatory requirement for selected ECOC cities (European Commission, 2018). The Runway Cultural Professionals programme, offered by Trenčín2026, aims to strengthen capacities within the cultural sector and enhance the skills of individuals working in the creative industries—not only in the Trenčín Region but also across Slovakia. The programme, which admits a maximum of 25 to 30 participants per term, is free but selective, with applicants undergoing interviews to assess their motivations. The educational programme was evaluated through three focus groups with participants, conducted at the conclusion of three programme cycles.

Our preliminary findings suggest that peer interactions among learners were perceived as more valuable than the course content itself. During the focus groups, participants emphasised the importance of professional dialogue in their learning experience. Through these dialogues, they were able to share the challenges they face in their daily work and benefit from their peers' solutions.

To gain deeper insights, we plan to complement the research with walking biographical interviews (O'Neil & Roberts, 2019), the results of which will be presented at the conference. This methodological approach provides a richer understanding of how cultural professionals continue to develop and utilise the social capital acquired through non-formal education. By engaging participants in movement-based storytelling, we aim to explore their individual career trajectories, the significance they attribute to their professional networks, and the evolving impact of informal learning on their practice and collaborations.

As far as we are aware, walking interviews have not yet been used to investigate informal learning among cultural professionals. More specifically, we employ the bumbling approach to walking interviews, in which participants recall and describe experiences through the act of walking (Anderson, 2004; Moles, 2008). In this approach, neither the location nor the route of the interview affects the results.

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G

A Generative Welfare to Reconnect Adult Education to the Challenges of Today's Times

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Keywords: Adult education, generative welfare, lifelong learning, social inclusion, digital literacy.

Abstract:

In an era characterized by rapid technological transformations, demographic shifts, and increasing socio-economic inequalities, adult education emerges as a pivotal domain for fostering social cohesion, economic resilience, and democratic participation. Traditional welfare paradigms, often structured around redistributive policies and compensatory mechanisms, appear inadequate in addressing the difficult and evolving educational needs of adults (Field, 2020).

The concept of generative welfare draws upon interdisciplinary perspectives, including transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 2009), the capabilities approach (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2011), and lifelong learning policies (European Commission, 2020). This model promotes intergenerational learning, digital literacy, and community-based education, recognizing that education must be dynamic and adaptable to contemporary challenges such as globalization, automation, and shifting working markets (Formenti & West, 2018). The generative welfare

paradigm emphasizes shared responsibility between persons, institutions, and policymakers, fostering an ecosystemic approach to adult education that integrates formal, non-formal, and informal learning environments (Biesta, 2021).

This paper advocates for the adoption of a generative welfare model, which moves beyond mere redistribution towards a proactive and co-constructive approach that empowers individuals and communities to take part in shaping their educational trajectories.

One of the key arguments presented in this paper is the need to redefine adult education policies in a way that moves away from remedial and fragmented interventions and instead cultivates a holistic and future-oriented educational framework. This is particularly crucial given the increasing demand for upskilling and reskilling in response to the digital transition and the green economy (OECD, 2021). Many current welfare policies still perceive adult education primarily as a work market instrument, aimed at reducing unemployment and fostering economic productivity. While employability remains an essential component, this paper argues that a broader vision of adult learning is necessary one that includes critical thinking, civic engagement, and personal development as central pillars of an inclusive society (Schuller & Watson, 2009).

Also, the digital transformation presents both opportunities and challenges for adult education. While digital technologies enable greater accessibility to learning resources, they also risk exacerbating educational inequalities if digital literacy and access to technology are not sufficiently addressed (Facer, 2021). A generative welfare approach must then integrate inclusive digital learning strategies, ensuring that marginalized populations, older adults, and low-skilled workers are not left behind. Digital platforms and Open Educational Resources (OERs) offer potential for expanding educational participation, but their effectiveness depends on pedagogical quality, social support mechanisms, and contextual adaptability (Laurillard, 2016).

Another dimension of generative welfare is its importance on intergenerational and community-based learning. Societal transformations, including the ageing population and the erosion of traditional social networks, necessitate new spaces for learning that foster intergenerational dialogue and mutual exchange (Jarvis, 2010). This paper explores case studies of innovative adult education plans that implement cooperative learning models, where younger and older generations engage in knowledge-sharing initiatives that strengthen social capital and intergenerational solidarity.

From a policy perspective, the paper calls for a rethinking of adult education governance, advocating for integrated strategies that connect educational policies with social, economic, and cultural dimensions. This requires a shift from fragmented policymaking towards multi-stakeholder collaboration, involving educational institutions, civil society, businesses, and local communities in the co-design of lifelong learning initiatives (European Commission, 2020). The generative welfare approach ultimately envisions education not as a reactive tool, but as a transformative force that empowers individuals to navigate contemporary challenges with autonomy, adaptability, and agency.

In conclusion, a generative welfare paradigm offers a forward-looking vision for adult education, responding to the challenges of our time by fostering inclusive, participatory, and adaptive learning ecosystems. Through embracing lifelong and lifewide learning approaches, integrating digital and community-based innovations, and promoting co-responsibility among diverse actors, education can serve as a pillar for democratic resilience and sustainable development.

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Graduates without an anchor? Challenges Faced by Young Adults in Completing Education and Starting Careers

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Keywords: Upper Secondary Exit Examination; Failure; Life Trajectory; Professional Community

Abstract:

This study concentrates on the complex transition process from upper secondary vocational/professional school to work. It focuses on young adults who fail their final exams and, therefore, repeat them, finding themselves in difficult situations. In Czechia, such a person appears under threat of finally not passing this final exam, which means ending up with only a basic education level. It would limit their opportunities in the labour market. During the research, the researchers followed the respondents through the two years after the failure, interviewed them up to four times, and investigated their life pathways (see Novotný et al., 2023). Respondents' narratives reveal, among other things, the limited correspondence between key actors defining the broader framework of the transition.

In Czechia, at the upper secondary education level, students enter one of the following streams: The academic stream consists of grammar schools (Gymnázium) and lycea (Lyceum); these provide general education for approximately 30 % of the cohort. The apprenticeship stream consists of Secondary Vocational Apprenticeship Schools (Střední odborná učiliště). These focus on practical training in specific trades and professions and serve about 25 % of the students within the cohort. The programs typically last three years, leading to an apprenticeship certificate, not Maturita.

The third stream which the paper deals with consists of Secondary Vocational Schools (Střední odborné školy). These offer specialized education to approximately 45 % of students within

the cohort in various fields and prepare students for both professional careers and further studies at higher vocational schools or universities—the programs usually last four years and end with a Matura exam.

The educational outcomes of the students within this stream vary a lot. The proportion of graduates who continue to higher education is around 40%. This proportion has slightly increased in recent years, possibly due to a growing interest in higher education in technical and vocational fields. On the other hand, about 8 % of the students struggle with the final exam (Maturita) and cannot smoothly continue their studies or enter the labour market.

The path of those who repeatedly fail the final exam begins with finding themselves floating in a vacuum created by having to leave the education system (Majcík et al, 2024). They need to reassess their study and career plans, and their academic and professional identities can feel precarious, resembling structures ""built on sand."" This situation constrains their ability to make informed career decisions (Hloušková et al., 2022). By engaging in professional contexts, they develop a sense of agency over their life trajectories, reshaping their identities constructively and reflectively (conf. Matías García et al., 2024; Ogresta, 2023; Reardon et al., 2010; Rönnlund et al., 2017).

The context of transition is shaped by various actors who pursue interests limited by educational and social policies. a. Schools implement their curricula, with the professional component often isolated from the professional community their students aim to join. b. The Maturita exam, administered by a designated organization, frequently bears little resemblance to the school curriculum or the realities of the workforce. c. Social policy lacks support measures for the period between re-examinations. These actors do not engage in dialogue with each other to facilitate a smooth transition for young adults from school to work.

Research: This study is a part of the project Life Pathways of Unsuccessful Graduates. In total, the sample consisted of 52 students. The data corpus for this concrete study consists of 46 students. The sample included four different cohorts: examinees who passed the final exams in the years 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021. The data was collected through repeated longitudinal biographical interviews. For each of the series of interviews, a specific version of the research instrument was created. As these were biographical interviews exploring informants' life paths, the interview scheme was based on a biographical narrative approach.

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H

"Hello that's me, democracy". Dialogue at informal places of democracy education

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Keywords: doing democracy, social cohesion, informal places, relational

Abstract:

We find ourselves in a so-called transformation society (Schäffter, 2001; Kondratjuk, 2005), which concerns all functional systems of the society. This socio-ecological transformation (Brand & Wissen, 2017) has far-reaching effects on our social cohesion (Fonsesca et al., 2018; Manca, 2014), which then raises questions about social justice in particular because our democracy is threatened by the associated developments which makes it necessary to educate for democracy beyond formal educational contexts. According to John Dewey (2011), democracy cannot function if it is only understood as a form of state and government. What is needed is an understanding of democracy as a way of life, as a unifying practice of human community and based on dialogue that must be actively lived in order to unfold and become effective.

As part of a larger research project on informal places of democracy education, this paper focusses on the conception of this project regarding the theoretical foundation, methodological considerations and research methods.

Subject of research are democracy education processes at informal places, for example in music clubs, gardening and sports clubs, community centres, neighbourhood meeting places and other informal places. Of interest here are opinion-forming processes, participation structures, co-determination and forms of communication and negotiation. The aim is to examine how democracy is made (doing democracy) and also prevented in specific places.

Dialogue is understood here as a relational structure in which we move away from a linear understanding. A theoretical basis is thus provided by a relational interpretation (Emirbayr, 1997) of dialogue based on the relational turn that has taken place in recent years. With the interdisciplinary resp. transdisciplinary concept of participation (Breitschwerdt et al., 2023), the structural and action levels, i.e. the structure of participation in society and participation in learning and education, are considered together, interlinked and raised as a field of tension in their mutual conditionality.

Different research methodological approaches, such as ethnographic, participatory (Vaughn & Jacquez, 2020) and transdisciplinary methods (Hirsch Hdorn et al., 2008) will be used. Some examples of research methodological approaches: From a power-critical perspective (Foucault, 1981) so-called ""regulars' table slogans"" (Stammtischparolen) are to be analysed, in which it is primarily a matter of interpretative sovereignty and no other opinions are heard and admitted, are countered (e.g. through rhetorical aphasia) or socio-spatially (Broak et al., 2024) how informal places of democracy education are shaped and what implicit logic is being followed here. The aim is also to find out which places facilitate encounters and dialogue and which tend to prevent this. The opening (inclusion) and closing (exclusion) mechanisms (UIL, 2020) are of interest here. Inclusion is always accompanied by exclusion, i.e. phenomena of inclusion and exclusion orientated towards the question of how and with what structure-forming consequences the relationship between the individual and society is established in and by modern society. The two are neither contradictory nor mutually exclusive; rather, as analytical distinctions, they can contribute to understanding the inherent dynamics of differentiation processes in institutionalised contexts of upbringing and education, which as a result systematically create differences between individuals.

Through these theoretical frameworks and research methodological approaches of this project, we hope to obtain results on doing democracy in informal places in order to gain a better understanding of the mechanisms and practices of social cohesion.

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How can dialogue foster and promote inclusion in adult education?

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Keywords: adult education, relationships, learning support, inclusion

Abstract

Introduction: Ainscow (2022) conceptualizes inclusion as a matter of thinking and talking about practices that can meet all students' needs. In the policy of Swedish municipal adult education (SMAE), the value of inclusion has been present since its establishment in 1968 (cf. Rubenson, 1994). Today, SMAE educates almost the same number of students compared to the Swedish upper secondary school (SNAE, 2024). However, SMAE is a place of learning for, foremost, large number of adult immigrants, adults deprived of previous education, and an increasing number of adults with (dis)abilities (cf. Fejes et al., 2020; SSI, 2023), indicating extensive needs of (additional) learning support among the students. Despite SMAE being regarded as a means of social inclusion through the education of mainly (dis)advantaged adults (see Fejes et al., 2020), research on inclusive practices in SMAE is absent. The vast learning diversity in SMAE makes it, likewise, an educational space of conflicting attitudes, goals, abilities, values, beliefs, and the ways groups and individuals perceive themselves and 'the other', creating challenging learning environment(s) for all. International research has described teachers' struggle with attending to the needs of all their adult learners, due to lack of adequate training and resources (Lund Larsen, 2015; Ngwenya & Makoelle, 2023; Noyes Spear, 2011). Research also points out the importance of supportive and positive relations among adult learners for their learning process (Kilic & Jacquet, 2025).

Aim and research questions: The aim of this paper is to explore the role relationships play in creating inclusive teaching and learning spaces in adult education. More specifically, the paper looks at ways relationships affect teaching and learning in SMAE. Thus, this paper aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What characterizes learning-supportive relationships in SMAE?
2. Through which techniques are learning-supportive relationships in SMAE built?

Methodology and theoretical frame: This paper is based on semi structured individual interviews with 24 teachers and 10 students from five SMAE-schools. The empirical data has been analyzed through thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021), and subsequently interpreted and discussed within the frames of theoretical work of Buber (1965), who considered genuine relationship between the self and the other to be an undisputable element of learning through dialogue.

(Preliminary) Results: Interest in students' learning conditions and needs, open and respectful climate in the schools, and teachers' competence were identified as crucial characteristics of learning-supportive relationships in SMAE. For the teachers, discussing conditions for participating and learning with students and colleagues is seen as a means of better understanding of their students' needs, which leads to more efficient teaching strategies whereby learning barriers are removed. For the students, genuine interest and mutual understanding with school staff and with

other students generated feelings of being understood, acknowledged for who they are, and made them more motivated to attend the classes and better equipped for learning. For building learning-supportive relationships, the students and the teachers would arrange talking sessions in group or individually, create digital communication channels and discuss different aspects of learning or assignments, meet for discussions or collaborative work, or engage in spontaneous communication, both during and after lesson/working hours.

Lack of interest, respect, competence and possibilities to meet and engage in genuine communication, on the other hand, were highlighted as elements of concern and contributors to new barriers for learning, resulting in exclusion of some individuals.

SMAE as a space for meeting as equals: The results support Buber's ideas of importance of genuine communication, meaningful relations and dialogical approach to education. When we engage in dialog with the aim of understanding and supporting each other despite our differences, we contribute to inclusive learning environment(s). If we do not engage and take interest in understanding each other, learning is hindered leading to exclusion of groups and individuals. Therefore, this paper will engage in a discussion on how groups and individuals can meet on equal terms in SMAE through a dialog that supports everyone's learning and as such, contributes to inclusion rather than exclusion of the already disadvantaged in both educational system and in society.

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I

Identifying a Dialogical Component in the Process of Dropping Out: The Case of Dropouts in Nursing Education

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Keywords: Social experience, Student's dropout, nursing student, Identity

Abstract:

Nursing education constitutes a space of alternating learning and profound transformation, both personally and professionally. Students face multiple tensions related to institutional demands, societal expectations, and their own identity quest. During this period, they experience various identity dynamics: transition to adulthood, transition to a student identity, and construction of a professional identity. They also confront the dialectic between aspirations/projects and the reality of their experiences. The accumulation of these tensions along their trajectory makes this training period one of instability in their identity construction process. Simultaneously, nursing education suffers from numerous cases of dropouts (Hovdhaugen et al., 2023; Jeffreys, 2015, 2022; Kukkonen et al., 2016; Sweetman et al., 2023).

These dropouts, and more precisely the multiple tensions involved, can be analyzed through François Dubet's (1994) theory of social experience, which highlights the contradictory logics of action that individuals must negotiate to construct their identity. Additionally, the works of Claude Dubar (2010, 2015) and Danilo Martuccelli (1996, 2020) on identity construction and trials enrich this perspective by emphasizing the role of social interactions and structural challenges in the formation of the self. This contribution proposes to articulate these theoretical approaches to study how nursing students integrate dialogue to cope with the trials and tensions they encounter during training and when interrupting their studies, in order to preserve their identity construction.

Dialogue, as a relationship with Others and with oneself, is identified as a contributory component in the dynamics of identity restructuring within the context of academic dropout. It will be analyzed from a temporal perspective, situating its place and role(s) in the movements of life trajectories and, more specifically, in the process of identity construction-deconstruction-reconstruction associated with dropping out.

This study is based on biographical interviews (Bertaux, 2016; Bouchetal, 2022; Delory-Momberger, 2022; Demazière, 2011) conducted with individuals who have interrupted their nursing education. These interviews reveal the oscillations in the process of identity construction as they engage in dialogue with others and themselves as part of their social experience.

The results focus on the dialogical components of dropout and are presented in two sections. The first section, oriented around the social experience (Dubet, 1994) of training, presents the tensions between vocations, integration, and career projects. The second section targets identity construction processes, identifying tensions between self-identity and identity for Others, while attempting to identify and qualify the tensions emerging from these interactions.

A discussion contextualizes these results within the process of academic dropout in nursing education, offering pathways to better target support during training. Finally, proposals for practical

applications, particularly those contributing to supporting the dialogical dimensions of training experiences in this context, offer promising perspectives for reducing dropout rates in nursing education.

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(Im-)possibilities of space: Exploring Different Images of Learning Milieus in National Language Programs in Sweden

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Keywords: Migrant education, Swedish for Immigrants (SFI), learning spaces, ethnographic case study, governmental initiatives

Abstract:

In Sweden, many migrants participate in the nationally standardized Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) programs. These credentials are often seen as entry tickets into society (Pötzsch & Saksela-Bergholm, 2023). With segregation regarded an increasingly pressing issue and language as a critical battleground, the SFI has however faced constant scrutiny in recent years. This has led to significant governmental initiatives, including curriculum changes, a simplified grading system, and expanded distance learning to enhance individualization (Papadopoulos, 2024). Yet, drop-out rates remained high at 46% in 2022 (Swedish National Agency of Education, 2024), indicating a lack of dialogue and understanding between adult education providers and recipients.

Contributing to the limited research on adult education in Sweden, particularly from a student perspective, this paper aims to examine this apparent gap between the well-intentioned efforts of the state and the students' perceptions of what constitutes meaningful language education. In this work, focus is on the manifestation of student experiences of learning spaces. Research questions for the study are:

- What kind of spaces are created through student meaning-making at the SFI?
- How can these spaces be understood?

This ethnographic case study explores the varied perceptions of the functions and dimensions of the SFI space. The data comprises over 20 hours of fieldwork from three different SFI school sites in the same urban area. This includes participative observation, artefacts, informal conversations, interactions, and both interior and exterior features. Together, these elements create a complex picture of a learning environment for migrants, where meaning is shaped by the possibilities and limitations of the space. Additionally, seven in-depth interviews with migrants of different genders, ethnicities, and ages, each with diverse educational and professional backgrounds before arriving in Sweden, enrich the ethnographic material. A continuously updated research journal has also been consulted, contributing to reflections on the meaning of the space.

Representational metaphors (Dilworth, 1979) were used to add dimensions and richer context to the understanding of students' overall impressions of the SFI learning environments. Images from other well-known domains were applied to the SFI settings to explore student experiences that might be less familiar (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). The three places—the airport, the bus stop, and the waiting room—reflect student experiences of language learning at the SFI but also hint at imagined futures beyond the language classroom. Although qualitatively separate, these metaphors are united in their association with movement versus waiting. They were crafted to assist in the analysis, offering complexity and meaning beneath the surface. In the analysis, place and space were further connected using Doreen Massey's ideas of places as interrelational and constantly changing, creating heterogeneous spaces (Massey, 2005).

In this work, assumptions about the assigned spaces for adult learning are boldly challenged by those they were meant to serve. The findings aim to deliver fresh perspectives and deeper insights into migrant language education, underscoring the urgent need for genuine dialogue to shape more relevant and effective governmental strategies for migrant inclusion.

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Informal experiences in Higher Education: A pathway to transformative learning?

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Keywords: Transformative learning, Higher education, Informal experience, Critical reflection, Critical discourse

Abstract:

Higher education is not merely a space for knowledge transmission but a setting where students live experiences that challenge their own assumptions and those grounded by dominant ideologies. Beyond formal curricula, informal experiences expose students to dissonant perspectives, encouraging them to deconstruct taken-for-granted meanings, interrogate hegemonic discourses, and reposition themselves within complex social, cultural, and political structures. This study examines how such informal experiences function as triggers of transformative learning by fostering critical reflection and dialectical engagement (Yorks & Kasl, 2002).

Grounded in transformative learning theory, this study frames informal experiences as disruptions that destabilize habitual ways of knowing and compel individuals to reexamine ideological assumptions (Peeters et al., 2014). Drawing on Mezirow's (1991, 2012) framework, informal experiences can provoke disorienting dilemmas that trigger critical reflection on belief systems, values, and socio-political orientations. Hoggan's (2016) transformative learning outcomes typology—worldview, self, epistemology, ontology, and behavior—provide an analytical lens for tracing these changes. Through engagement with unfamiliar realities and negotiation of ideological contradictions, adults navigate meaning-making processes that challenge dominant discourses and entrenched power relations.

Employing a qualitative, multiple-case study design, this research examines the experiences of university students involved in three educational initiatives: the Student Representative Council at the University of the Free State (South Africa), the Paz y Región program at Universidad de Ibagué (Colombia), and the Action Learning methodology in the Master of Development Cooperation at Universitat Politècnica de València (Spain). Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews and focus groups. A comparative, cross-case analysis identifies both shared patterns and contextual differences in how these experiences shape transformative learning processes. The first case highlights the balance between student activism and representation in a politically charged environment. The second case emphasizes how students see the region as a safe space to develop both personally and professionally. The third case illustrates how exposure to new theoretical and methodological frameworks in development cooperation challenges students' pre-existing assumptions.

Findings indicate that informal experiences can act as potent sites for transformative learning when they disrupt normative assumptions and provoke sustained engagement with structures of power and inequality. Students exposed to divergent worldviews, direct encounters with social injustices, and collective inquiries often undergo significant epistemic and ontological shifts. These transformations align with Hoggan's five dimensions, yet their impact is contingent on the presence of dialogical spaces that nurture reflexivity and encourage deeper interrogation of ideological assumptions. When these experiences remain unexamined or are absorbed into existing cognitive frameworks, their potential to challenge students' thinking is diminished. Critical scrutiny is necessary to unlock their full value.

This study concludes that informal experiences do not inherently lead to transformation; rather, they introduce epistemological and ontological tensions that may initiate critical reflection and cognitive reorientation. Their effectiveness depends on the availability of structured opportunities for dialogical engagement, collective meaning-making, and the emotional labor necessary to process ideological ruptures. Instead of treating informal experiences instrumentally, universities should cultivate intellectual and affective environments that encourage students to scrutinize dominant paradigms, challenge hegemonic norms, and envision alternative ways of knowing, relating, and acting within broader social and political contexts. The cases analyzed illustrate how disorienting dilemmas facilitate change across Hoggan's categories, reinforcing the role of informal experiences as catalysts for transformative learning.

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An Innovative dialogue-based approach for adult language teaching

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Keywords: Adult education, dialogic approach, English as a foreign language, humanistic, textbook-free

Abstract:

Language teaching and learning have always been challenging issues, especially in adult education, where learners' diverse backgrounds and previous knowledge must be considered. In a rapidly globalizing and communicative society, the demand for English as a foreign language continues to grow (Teo, 2019). However, the quantity and speed of communication do not guarantee meaningful learning, social justice, or democratic deliberation. Linguistically and culturally diverse learners, coupled with rapid technological developments, require adaptive teaching approaches that foster dialogue, recognition, and solidarity (Michel et al., 2009). Research suggests that dialogic processes acknowledging learners' cultural backgrounds significantly enhance learning (Gay, 2018; Sawyer, 2004). Furthermore, abandoning textbooks and predefined curricula in favor of co-constructed content around learners' needs, can deepen dialogue and improve outcomes (Guerrettaz & Johnston, 2013; Meddings & Thornbury, 2009).

Despite extensive research on language teaching, studies focusing on textbook-free, dialogic, learner-centred and improvisational approaches in adult education remain scarce. Current adult language teaching practice does not offer concrete ways for learners to contribute with their knowledge and to interact with each other and with the teacher in meaningful ways. The co-construction of a digital, "fluid" textbook—developed through an enhanced dialogic interaction between teacher and learners tries to fill in this gap. This approach creates occasions based on dialogue, where learners meet as equals, sharing experiences, feelings, and knowledge in an open, inclusive space (Buber, 1958). It also reflects critical pedagogical traditions emphasizing recognition, solidarity, and reciprocal learning (Bakhtin, 2010).

To address this gap, two experimental English courses, totaling 20 hours each, were conducted at a large University in Lisbon. Thirty-five adult learners participated at A1 and A2-B1 levels. These courses adopted a "fluid" syllabus, entirely co-constructed during lessons based on learners' emerging needs, without relying on traditional textbooks. By the end of the course, the digital document produced during the lessons became the course textbook itself—a representation of the learners' voices and experiences.

An action research framework guided this study, addressing three key questions: (1) How effective was the approach in improving participants' language skills? (2) How were the dialogic and improvisational aspects of the approach implemented? (3) How did participants perceive this dialogic, textbook-free, learner-centered methodology?

To evaluate language skill improvements, pre- and post-tests in listening, speaking, reading, and writing were conducted. Results were analyzed using the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test, revealing statistically significant improvements, particularly in speaking and writing. Interactional analysis of transcribed lessons demonstrated how humanistic, improvisational, and dialogic elements were integrated in real-time, creating a supportive environment where learners felt safe to experiment and make mistakes. Thematic analysis of 15 interviews and 2 focus group discussions further highlighted the fact that learners viewed dialogue and interaction as essential to their progress. Participants unanimously perceived the absence of a traditional textbook as a prerequisite for an authentic, learner-centered learning process. They described the co-constructed digital textbook as more relevant and personal, reflecting their needs and identities. The approach was viewed as more effective and engaging than traditional methodologies, with participants expressing a strong desire to continue learning English through this method.

The findings of this action research study, although limited to only two courses, may provide valuable insights regarding the potential of dialogic teaching in adult language learning. The results resonate with broader themes in adult education, such as the role of dialogue in fostering dignity, recognition, and collective critical consciousness (Alexander, 2008; Freire, 2021). By enabling learners to co-construct knowledge in an inclusive and dialogic space, this approach supports the development of the communicative skills necessary for democratic participation and social cohesion.

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Integrative Learning: A Dialogue with the Embodied Self

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Keywords: integrative learning, embodied learning, tacit knowledge, non-propositional knowledge

Abstract:

Dialogue is often framed as an interpersonal exchange, but meaningful learning also requires an internal dialogue—a process of integrating subconscious, embodied knowledge into conscious awareness. This theoretical paper explores integrative learning as a dialogical process, drawing on Elizabeth Bennett's concept of integrative learning and linking it to embodied learning to examine how adults access and make sense of tacit, bodily, and experiential knowledge.

Elizabeth Bennett extended Schugurensky's typology of informal learning by introducing integrative learning, which describes intentional yet unconscious learning. Unlike self-directed and incidental learning, where learners are aware of the learning process, integrative learning is defined as the "intentional nonconscious processing of tacit knowledge with conscious access to learning products and mental images." This means individuals access learning outcomes rather than the process itself, though the process can be intentionally initiated. This perspective resonates with embodied learning, which suggests that our bodies actively shape knowledge in ways that are difficult to verbalize or consciously register.

Tacit knowledge is central to Bennett's theory and is further explored by embodied learning theorists. Polanyi, who coined the term, illustrated it with the phrase: "We know more than we can tell." Tacit knowledge is best understood in contrast to explicit, propositional knowledge. John Vervaeke expanded this idea by distinguishing different types of knowledge: propositional (knowing that), referring to factual, declarative knowledge; procedural (knowing how), involving skills and competencies developed through practice; perspectival (knowing from), related to shifting perspectives and experiencing the world differently; and participatory (knowing with), emerging from relational, and contextualized learning experiences.

Embodied learning does not privilege one form of knowledge over another but highlights the body's role in forming, integrating, and retrieving knowledge. In practice, it primarily engages procedural, perspectival, and participatory knowledge, arriving at propositional knowledge through reflection on experience. Many body-based methods, such as theater pedagogy, dance and other somatic practices, involve forms of knowing that are felt and enacted rather than explicitly articulated. Learners gain insights and develop new ways of engaging with their environment, even if they cannot immediately explain how the transformation occurred. This aligns with Bennett's idea of integrative learning as a process where tacit knowledge becomes consciously accessible – either gradually (state shifting) or suddenly (sublimation), potentially leading to propositional insights.

Recognizing embodied learning as a dialogical process suggests an ongoing conversation between mind and body, between tacit and explicit knowledge. This is not merely about random insights or "aha" moments but implies that we can intentionally access tacit knowledge if we find the right way to "ask." Bennett places integrative learning on the intentional side of the learning spectrum, suggesting that the tacit does not just "speak" to our conscious mind - we can actively communicate with it.

Embodied learning, applied in various ways, may offer a means to enter this dialogue with the subconscious. While not a new idea, it provides a concrete way to support the concept of integrative learning, which is otherwise difficult to grasp. Although Bennett primarily considered informal learning, accessing tacit knowledge is also relevant to non-formal and formal education.

If learning is not solely cognitive but a dialogical process involving bodily and emotional experiences, educational environments would benefit from engaging both body and mind. This means creating spaces where learners move between different forms of knowledge, allowing tacit insights to surface before arriving at propositional understanding. Methods integrating movement, sensory experiences, and reflective somatic practices enable learners to engage with bodily knowing and later articulate their insights. By fostering such environments, we can cultivate deeper, more holistic learning experiences that bridge the gap between the implicit and explicit, enriching personal and collective knowledge formation.

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Learning in times of transitions: critical moments in the life of family business Women taking over family businesses

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Keywords: Family business, succession, tacit knowledge, trust, motivation, gender, informal learning, IPA, post-socialist context

Abstract:

Approximately 80–90% of businesses globally—and 87% in the Czech Republic—are family-owned, yet only 30% survive succession. As a major generational challenge, succession is more than a legal or managerial shift—it is a process of intergenerational learning, relational negotiation, and the transfer of tacit knowledge. When the successor is a daughter, this process intersects with gendered expectations and post-socialist cultural legacies, making it especially complex.

This qualitative study draws on adult education theory, particularly concepts of informal learning, tacit knowledge, and intergenerational knowledge transfer, while also incorporating a gender-sensitive lens. The research uses Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to explore how women experience and interpret their transition into leadership in Czech family businesses. It addresses four gaps in existing literature: (1) the lack of gender analysis in Czech family business research; (2) the absence of a learning-focused perspective on succession; (3) the rarity of in-depth qualitative research in this field; and (4) the specific historical context of Czech post-socialist family firms.

The sample includes five women aged 40–50 who have successfully completed succession and become owners or CEOs. Findings show that succession is rarely a gradual, mentored process; instead, it is often triggered by crisis (e.g., illness or death of the founder). The successors are “thrust” into leadership roles without preparation, formal training, or structured knowledge handover. Learning occurs informally—through practical trial-and-error, personal networks, and reflective practice. Respondents reported imposter syndrome, emotional overload, and difficulty balancing leadership with family roles, especially when their husbands were involved in the business.

Importantly, the research reveals a shift in leadership values: while founders prioritized product and technical innovation, female successors focus on organizational development, digitalization, and inclusive leadership. Resistance from the founding generation—especially toward digital and structural change—was a common theme.

Preliminary conclusions:

- Succession is a deeply relational and emotional process, influenced more by trust, communication, and motivation than by formal succession planning.
- The absence of explicit invitations from founders and acknowledgment of daughters' leadership potential negatively impacted how successors experienced the transition.
- A gendered perspective is crucial: traditional family expectations, emotional labor, and informal learning environments shape women's experience uniquely.
- Adult education offers valuable tools for understanding and supporting leadership learning in family businesses.

This research contributes to the understanding of succession as a gendered learning process rooted in lived experience, and highlights the need for more nuanced, relational approaches in both theory and practice.

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Learning to teach for sustainability through dialogue and collaboration

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Keywords: teaching for sustainability, dialouge, professional development

Abstract:

Aim: This presentation explores the dialogical processes involved in planning teaching for sustainability from a critical adult pedagogy perspective. Drawing on data from an ongoing research project on teaching for sustainability (Holmqvist & Millenberg, 2024), we examine how collaborative dialogue between two educators shapes their learning and professional development, and their proficiency in teaching for sustainability. Firstly, we focus on the interplay and rhythms of recurring dialogical planning sessions. Secondly, we analyse the characteristics of these dialogues, looking to

understand what made them generative for the transformative learning that both educators experienced during the planning process.

Theoretical framework: The analysis is grounded in dialogical and transformative learning theories. Inspired by Bakhtin's (1981) notion of dialogue as a space for meaning-making and critical engagement, we examine how educators' discussions contribute to pedagogical development. Additionally, we draw on transformative learning as meta-theory (Hoggan, 2022) to explore how engagement in sustainability teaching challenges and expands educators' perspectives. By viewing teaching for sustainability as a co-constructive and reflexive process, we highlight the role of dialogue in shaping educators' abilities to teach for sustainability effectively.

Methodology: The paper draws on auto-ethnographical data captured through audio and video recordings of the dialogical planning sessions. Over a period of four months, the educators met regularly to develop a workshop and test the activities themselves. After trying out the workshop with folk high school teacher students, the educators had two additional meetings to discuss and reflect on the design and possible future developments. The data is analysed paying particular attention to the dialogical rhythms and oscillations (1) within each session and (2) between sessions and across the entire process of developing and teaching the seed package.

Tentative results and relevance to the conference theme: An initial screening of the data suggests that the two educators both had transformative learning experiences. The task of designing and planning learning activities for sustainability prompted the educators to learn about sustainability and thus engage with this complex subject much more deeply than before. As such, the task functioned as a disorienting dilemma and prompted paradigmatic change in the educators' worldviews (Hoggan, 2022). Changes in both educators' understanding, attitudes, and engagement with the topic were observable in each new meeting session.

Moreover, our initial screening of the data suggests that a dialogical approach to planning and preparing to teach for sustainability have multiple advantages over working alone. Structuring planning as a series of dialogues allowed the educators to engage in critical reflection and become aware of on their own assumptions about sustainability, teaching, and learning. Looking at the discussions within each dialogue session, we see that these revealed tensions, uncertainties, and creative possibilities when teaching for sustainability, which in turn opens space for deeper engagement with the subject matter. Lastly, the tentative findings also suggest that this type of collaboration can strengthen educators' confidence in integrating sustainability into their teaching.

The qualities and relevance of dialogue as methodology suggested by our findings, have previously been argued for and showcased both within adult education research (Formenti & Jorio, 2019; Formenti & West, 2018; Sawyer, 2021), and by sustainability researchers (Stoddard, 2021; Ishihara et al, 2021). In light of this, our study serves as an example and offers insights into how dialogue and collaboration when planning to teach can improve teaching outcomes as well as support educators' own learning and professional development.

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Let's talk about adult learning. Examining National Skills Strategies and their discursive power

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Keywords: Skills strategies, Policy implementation, Comparative analysis, Stakeholder collaboration

Abstract:

Education and skills are crucial for economic performance and societal well-being, particularly amid structural challenges such as the digital and green transitions. Many countries, following OECD and EU recommendations, have adopted strategic policy documents to improve skill formation and adult learning systems. However, there remains limited systematic analysis of their effectiveness and impact (Working Group on Adult Learning, 2022). This study addresses this gap through a comparative analysis of skills and lifelong learning strategies in Bulgaria, Germany, Austria, Norway, and England (UK), aiming to identify both their benefits and barriers to implementation. Our main aim is twofold: First, we illustrate what can realistically be achieved via such strategies, thereby providing the education and training as well as strategic public management literature with a pragmatic picture of strategies' main benefits and limitations. Second, by staying attentive to the broader context of strategy implementation, we aim to identify barriers for implementation, and provide broader lessons learned to mitigate these barriers. Crucially, we foreground the role of dialogue—both as a process and an outcome of strategic policymaking—in fostering mutual understanding, aligning stakeholder interests, and sustaining reform momentum. We are showing that dialogue is not merely a byproduct but a foundational mechanism through which strategic policymaking enhances collaboration, trust, and long-term policy coherence.

The study applies Mill's Method of Agreement and "most different system design" (Ragin, 1989) to uncover common enabling factors for successful implementation, as well as shared barriers to strategy execution across diverse national contexts. Additionally, using Mill's Method of Difference,

it contrasts successful and unsuccessful strategies within countries to highlight key design factors influencing implementation outcomes.

Findings indicate that while skills strategies are not a panacea for skill formation system reform, they can facilitate policy coordination, introduce effective policy instruments, and mitigate reform deadlocks. None of the observed strategies were fully implemented, and usually, the strategies remained rather limited in the extent to which they aimed for far-reaching, large-scale reforms. However, skills strategies have led to the implementation of at least some rather successful skills policy instruments or established new channels of coordination that build the foundation for later reforms and the potential to ultimately accumulate up to large-scale changes via a process of incremental, gradual institutional change (Mahoney und Thelen, 2010; Streeck und Thelen, 2005).

Furthermore, the respective strategy processes were often able to mitigate reform deadlocks related to the introduction of new policies, and/or improve the interplay between smaller sets of relevant skills policy measures by making them mutually reinforcing and/or avoiding duplications of efforts. Finally, skills strategies served as reference points that help involved stakeholders to push forwards reforms, providing justifications in favour of the introduction and/or funding of specific policy instruments. In sum, while it may be true that strategic policy documents sometimes follow a “political logic that coopts policies that would have been formulated anyway” (Nordbeck und Steurer, 2015), skills strategies can certainly *improve* skills policy-making by building foundations for policy coordination and facilitating change, increasing complementarity between policy measures and reinforcing policy priorities among decision-makers. Dialogue is both a condition and an outcome of these processes—enabling flexibility, legitimacy, and sustained stakeholder engagement across political cycles. Furthermore, we will identify barriers for implementation and ways to mitigate them. External disruptions (e.g., government changes, socio-economic shocks) and internal misalignments between strategy goals, indicators, and country-specific needs pose significant challenges. Strategies that are encompassing, adaptable, and consistent—incorporating broad stakeholder coalitions, flexible governance mechanisms, and robust monitoring—demonstrate greater resilience.

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Life structure approach and the potential for informing dialogue of adult learning policy actors and practitioners.

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Keywords: adult learning policies, workplace learning, learning biographies, informal learning

Abstract:

Understanding more deeply why adults in some countries learn less than their counterparts in similar situations in other countries is vital for a well-informed dialogue of adult learning policy actors and practitioners. This and the fact that most learning occurs at the workplace were the key focus areas of the research we present in this contribution.

Despite the increasing volume of research focusing on participation inequalities, more evidence is needed to understand why increasing participation rates remains challenging for many countries (Boeren 2023). While the importance of improving the participation of adults in learning has become well understood in the past years, the understanding of how this can be done is less clear (OECD 2020). We follow up on the multidisciplinary research of the sources and drivers of inequalities in accessing lifelong learning opportunities (Holford et al. 2023) and the research part devoted to studying workplace learning.

We have developed an analytical framework for gathering insights into nonformal and informal learning at the individual level and the role of the organisational environment. We did so by creating individual learning biographies of early career workers. Our approach aims to study how the organisational structuration of early career pathways supports or inhibits the learning potential within workplaces and to investigate employers' provision of training. We suggest that specific content of learning biographies and their representation through a graphical tool which we denoted as learning biography vignettes, can be instrumental for communicating and presenting biographical accounts of organisational environments and their impact on employees, i.e., how they face and deal with challenges of the early career phase in interaction in different organisational setups. We stress that individuals' uptake of learning opportunities is linked not only to their motivation but also to the social context in which the individual is located (Rubenson & Desjardins, 2009; Evans 2007). This contribution follows work on the conceptual framework of individual and organisational agency (Hefler & Studená, 2023). It provides another component for analysing workplace learning and for interpreting observed inequalities in upskilling pathways of adults. The empirical basis of our research was built by developing organisational case studies in different sectors and countries in the EU (ENLIVEN 2020a, 2020b). To illustrate our approach, we choose and present examples of learning biography vignettes for early career employees of organisations engaged in the provision of adult education and training programmes in different sub-fields of the adult education sectors in two countries: basic skills education sector in Austria, and the sector of corporate training in Slovakia. We discuss how learning biography approach and tools such as learning biography vignettes could fill the gaps in understanding the observed and persistent inequalities in the participation of adults in learning opportunities at the workplace. Without understanding the nature of these gaps, adult learning policies might fail the key objectives of increased participation and equity in adult learning.

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Lifelong Learning in Migration: Educational Strategies of Adult Migrants from Ukraine and Belarus

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Keywords: migrant learning strategies, lifelong learning, adult learning, integration

Abstract:

This paper explores the educational strategies adopted by adult migrants from Ukraine and Belarus who have settled in Poland in recent years. Poland has witnessed a significant increase in migration, particularly from Ukraine since 2014, with a sharp rise in forced migration following the escalation of the war in February 2022. Migration from Belarus also grew substantially after August 2020, presenting new challenges for Polish institutions and authorities. In addition to addressing the immediate provision of basic needs such as shelter, food, and clothing as well as support in legalizing their stay, the adaptation process for migrants has become a key concern, particularly regarding the acquisition of the Polish language and integration into the labor market.

In this paper, adult learning is examined within the context of lifelong learning (e.g., Volles, 2014). Lifelong learning enables individuals to adapt to the demands of an ever-changing reality (Delors, 1998). It plays a crucial role in the integration process for adult migrants, enabling them to actively participate in social, cultural, economic, and political life. The ability to learn, particularly language skills, is essential for successful integration into the host society. Understanding the educational strategies of adult migrants is critical for developing policies and support systems that facilitate integration, enhance social cohesion, and improve career opportunities.

The aim of this paper is to present the various educational strategies adopted by adult migrants from Ukraine and Belarus, taking into account both their educational goals before migration and their aspirations upon arriving in Poland. These objectives were identified in a study focusing on three key areas: language acquisition, vocational education, and skills recognition. The study also identified the factors that support or hinder migrants' participation in educational activities, such as institutional support, financial constraints, legal status, and the availability of tailored educational opportunities. Moreover, the study provides information on the role of learning in the adulthood of migrants and their attitudes toward it. Additionally, it explored migrants' attitudes toward learning from cognitive, behavioral, and emotional perspectives, identifying key stages and motivations in their learning processes.

This paper is based on in-depth individual interviews with adult migrants from Ukraine and Belarus who have been living in Poland since 2019. The interviews were conducted across three Polish voivodeships, with nine different locations selected to ensure a diverse sample of participants. The research focused on the different forms of education in which migrants engage, including formal education (language courses, vocational training, degree programs), non-formal education (workshops, community programs, employer-led training), and informal learning (self-directed learning, workplace interactions, social networks). A multi-level analysis was employed, considering micro (individual), meso (institutional), and macro (policy) factors to provide a comprehensive understanding of how personal agency and structural factors shape migrants' educational experiences.

The findings of this paper contribute to a deeper understanding of the educational strategies used by migrants and highlight the role of learning in acquiring Polish language skills and vocational competencies. Furthermore, it provides insights into the barriers migrants face in accessing learning, such as financial difficulties, legal uncertainties, and the lack of targeted programs. By identifying the factors that influence engagement in learning, this paper contributes to a broader discussion on the role of the learning process and attitudes towards it in the integration process, particularly in the context of migration.

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Lonely teaching? Peer dialogue within teaching development processes in continuing higher education

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Keywords: Continuing Higher Education, Collegial Dialogue, Peer Observation

Abstract:

Aims: Professionalization processes in adult and higher education are often implicit and informal (see e.g. Rohs, 2014), making them difficult for both researchers and practitioners to capture and track. This paper explores peer dialogue as a reflective tool for teaching development and professionalization processes in continuing higher education. The objective is to analyze how peer observation and collegial dialogue contribute to self-reflected teaching development and professional development.

Relevance to Conference Theme: One thematic area of this conference emphasizes the role of dialogue and reflection in professionalization and teaching development. This paper aligns with this topic by investigating peer dialogue mechanisms as a means of fostering professional growth in adult and higher education. By focusing on collegial dialogue, the pre-study contributes to discussions on professional learning communities, self-reflection, and continuous professional development in adult and higher education settings. The research highlights strategies that bridge the gap between formal qualification frameworks and the informal, yet essential, learning experiences of educators.

Conceptual Background: For explication strategies in professionalization processes by using narrative approaches (see Fahy, forthcoming) we distinguish experiential, fictional and collegial examples. The rational is to make implicit or personal reflections on teaching accessible to an explicit dialogue.

1. Experiential Dialogue: Published Learning Journals (Weil, 2013) Informal learning often occurs unnoticed, with limited opportunities for publication and wider discourse. Learning journals serve as raw material for reflective publications, supporting professional dialogue beyond

personal reflections or local communities of practice. They might also play a role in qualification processes, such as portfolios for adult education degrees as forms of a professional dialogue.

2. **Fictional Dialogue: Passive Role-Playing** (Weil & Korhonen, 2015; Korhonen & Weil, 2016) This method makes professional beliefs accessible by engaging in story continuation exercises (fictional dialogue). Course participants in continuing higher education settings in Finland and Switzerland extended fictional narratives in professional contexts, providing insights into their conceptual frameworks and teaching development. This approach facilitated discussion on a specific topic and was used as documentation and source of dialogue in teaching portfolios and comparative research.
3. **Collegial Dialogue: Reflective Companion as an Outside View** (Feixas & Flepp, 2024) Peer or expert observation in adult and higher education settings supports professionalization by offering an external perspective to the often “lonely” role of being a teacher. Methods such as co-teaching, as well as peer-observation with feedback and debriefing discussions enable educators to process their professional development and reflect on specific teaching aspects.

This paper focuses on collegial dialogue, particularly through peer observation cases in Swiss continuing higher education settings, to explore self-declared aspects of teaching development.

Methodology: The pre-study employs an explorative approach, analyzing the collegial dialogue strategy. A small cohort (n=10) of continuing education participants in a higher education setting serves as data source. A systematic peer observation approach is implemented in training settings, wherein participants engage in structured observations, provide feedback, and document reflections. The qualitative data consist of reflective reports on this vice-versa peer observation and lead to a heuristic and explorative content analysis (see Mayring & Fenzl, 2022). The aim is to identify self-reported professional development and the role of structured peer dialogue in fostering reflective practice in order to build hypothesis for further studies and on the other hand in order to improve the training settings in the continuing higher education courses.

Expected Results: The explorative study anticipates some findings in order to further develop a broader research-oriented scheme for continuing higher education that possibly might be transferred to adult education.

- Moving from lonely teaching, the peer dialogue enhances self-awareness and professional identity formation among educators.
- Structured peer observation provides a valuable framework for self-reflection, allowing educators to identify strengths and areas for improvement.

These findings contribute to a broader understanding of professionalization in continuing higher education, emphasizing the importance of peer-based dialogue in adult learning environments. The study’s implications extend to curriculum design for professional development courses and the integration of structured reflection methodologies in higher education settings.

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Loneliness and Community in Civil Society

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Keywords: loneliness, community, adult life, social capital, habitus

Abstract:

Involuntary loneliness is recognized as a public health and societal concern in Sweden and many other countries. Particular at-risk groups include, for example, elderly and younger individuals without a clear attachment to work, studies, or social networks. From a sociological-pedagogical perspective, the desire to belong and to be recognized can be understood as central driving forces in (most) adult' lives (e.g., Gottzén & Lögdlund, 2022).

The aim of the paper is to explore what community and loneliness mean in adult life, and how they are experienced and managed. It also seeks to understand how social capital and habitus influence opportunities, perceptions, and attitudes toward community and loneliness.

This paper engages with the emerging field of 'sociology of loneliness', which emphasizes a social and relational understanding of loneliness (Van den Valden, 2025). In a late-modern context, it is easy to see that affiliations are not 'given' but actively interpreted, chosen, and negotiated. In this paper, loneliness and community are addressed as two sides of the same coin, and dynamic aspects of adult life. It is suggested that adults shape and reshape their social ties, at the same time as they navigate social conditions and rules, in both professional and personal contexts.

In addition, the paper draws on a Bourdieusian framework, in which community and loneliness – as well as emotions more broadly – are understood as related to social capital and habitus (Hagan et al., 2020). Recent research on social capital highlights the potential for change, suggesting that social ties are not solely given or determined but can be shaped and reshaped as expressions of agency (Field, 2015). At the same time, it remains important to recognize that significance of habitus which contributes to the self-regulation of individuals' actions and aspiration, for example in terms

of social interaction (Bourdieu, 1990, 1999). The paper addresses these dynamics between change and reproduction, as suggested by Field (2015) and Bourdieu (1990, 1999).

Two empirical cases are used to examine this, from both working and personal contexts. In the working-life case, freelance musicians (n=13) were interviewed, which provided insight into how they navigate temporary versus ongoing gigs and employments; close versus distant professional relationships; and periods of solitary work. In the personal-life case, activists in a local network (n = 6) were interviewed, which provided insight into experiences from building community, working together for a cause of mutual concern.

Preliminary conclusions suggest that, in both contexts, community functions as a central driving force – promoting interest, sustaining engagement, and fostering development. Loneliness, by contrast, is perceived as something to be minimized and balanced, as it is associated with risks of exclusion and demotivation. In addition, community can be experienced as conditioned and structured by social rules. Social background and capital may shape whether individuals experience a sense of ease or unease in relation to these conditions and social rules. Both bonding and bridging social capital can provide support – either in managing and adapting to prevailing norms, in challenging them, or in facilitating processes of change.

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Longevity and Care: Exploring Women's Stories through the Listening Guide Methodology

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Keywords: Education, Longevity, Caregiving, Voices, Listening Guide

Abstract:

This article presents a qualitative research study using Carol Gilligan's Listening Guide (LG) methodology to analyze semi-structured interviews with 10 women living in rural mountainous areas of Piacenza, Italy. The study explores themes of longevity, focusing on the personal narratives of women whose voices are often marginalized in academic research. The research uses the LG method to uncover the emotional complexities and contradictions in these women's experiences, particularly their desires for longevity, caregiving roles, and the social and emotional impacts of migration.

The Listening Guide methodology, developed by Carol Gilligan in the 1980s, emphasizes a multi-vocal and emotionally rich approach to analyzing personal stories. It goes beyond superficial content, exploring deeper layers of meaning, internal conflicts, and unexpressed desires. For this

study, the method was applied in four phases. The first phase involved initial listening, identifying key narrative themes such as care, ageing and migration, while also paying attention to the omissions and silences that often reveal as much as what is said.

The second phase focused on analyzing the first-person voice, reorganizing them into “I poems” to explore personal emotions, identities and contradictions. The third phase, identifying multiple voices, looked for different voices in the narratives, acknowledging tensions between care responsibilities, personal aspirations and emotional conflict around migration. The final phase involved integration and reflection, synthesizing the findings from the first three steps and interpreting how these responses addressed the research questions.

The study revealed key insights. Women expressed a strong desire for longevity, which was linked to maintaining social connections and emotional well-being, not just physical health. Ageing was deeply linked to caring roles, often a source of pride and frustration as they balanced personal aspirations with family obligations.

These findings highlight the importance of listening to marginalized voices, particularly in remote mountain areas. The Listening Guide method proved invaluable in revealing the contradictions and emotional complexities these women faced, especially in relation to gender, ageing and migration. By giving space to these voices, the study contributes to the broader discourse on dialogue in adult education, highlighting how it can bridge generational, gender and cultural gaps.

Participatory dialogue in adult education can create spaces where marginalized voices are not only heard, but also respected and valued, thus promoting inclusive and democratic educational practices. This approach challenges traditional top-down models of education and fosters environments where participants engage in mutual learning, supporting social justice, solidarity and empowerment. In this way, dialogue becomes a key tool for promoting social change and democratic engagement in adult education, helping individuals to address social challenges together.

Ultimately, this research demonstrates the transformative potential of dialogue. It demonstrates that true dialogue goes beyond communication; it involves reflexivity, empathy, and mutual recognition. The Listening Guide methodology facilitates this type of authentic communication, making it an essential tool for promoting democratic and responsive social institutions. By integrating this methodology into adult education, educators can foster environments that encourage deep and reflective dialogue, leading to positive social transformation.

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M

Managing evidence-based 21st-century transformation of lifelong learning through intergenerational dialogue in Canada

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Keywords: Intergenerational, societal dialogue, lifelong learning, PIAAC

Abstract

The Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) is an assessment of the foundation skills of adults aged 16 to 65 years. The results were released in December 2024 for the thirty-one member countries of the OECD which participated in this international survey. The objective of this paper is to encourage intergenerational dialogue based on recent PIAAC evidence to achieve 21st century transformation of lifelong learning in Canada to become a productive society through learning. Analysis indicated that there was a strong correlation between proficiency in literacy and numeracy and the economy of countries. Because of the similarities in the PIAAC results of Canada and European countries, the sharing of policy experience could be valuable. The theory of human capital suggests continuous investment in learning by individuals to build their assets through life to keep pace with change. Results for Canada and many European countries show that lifelong learning is still under-achieved. First, the average Canadian literacy and numeracy skills that affect the capability of every generation aged 16 to 65 is above the OECD average but well behind countries in the lead. Eleven European countries scored below the OECD average in literacy. Second, there has been no great improvement in literacy and numeracy over the last decade among countries. Third, the foundational skills of literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills decline starting at age 35. Fourth, between 25% and 65% of adults did not participate in training in the past 12 months in Canada and there was an increasing relationship with age.

To meet future challenges, all generations have to engage in upskilling and new knowledge and skills. Because the decision to learn is individual and cannot be mandated, improvements cannot be achieved without a societal discussion for collective awareness of the need to learn in order to be competitive and productive. Intergenerational learning is important in ageing societies to develop a talent pool of all ages that acquires knowledge faster or at the same rate as it is generated and demanded. Intergenerational learning means that generations not only learn, work and innovate together but also share knowledge and skills between individuals and generations while living in societies that support national growth and wellbeing.

It is important to use a clear framework indicating the importance of lifelong learning and the opportunities to learn and train in a changing world which could form a common basis for society-wide intergenerational dialogue about improving growth in national capital. The first step is to accept that traditional ideas are insufficient due to emerging factors. The framework includes inter-related

factors. (1) The current learning outcomes – low foundation skills and learning capability; no improvement in literacy over the last decade; declining literacy with age (2) Changing context - shrinking of working age and large aged populations; new technologies such as AI; Climate change- Environmentally conscious production and consumption for sustainability (3) multiple impacts – new growth sectors of the economy; trade, communication and economic relations in a multipolar world; five-generation labour force aged 20 to 70; social stresses and inequities (4) National goals: food, energy and mineral sufficiency, constantly increasing and changing knowledge and skill demand in labour market, lifelong learning as part of life; expanded world and local citizenship roles and aspiration for a just economic and social transition.

Canada has invested \$14m in the Future Skills Centre whose mission is “strengthening Canada’s skills development ecosystem so that Canadians can look to a future of meaningful and relevant lifelong learning opportunities.”

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Marching toward transformation: Collective learning, identity, and civic agency in the Serbian student protests

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Keywords: collective transformative learning, students’ protest in Serbia, non-formal civic education, social movements

Abstract:

This paper explores collective transformative learning within the context of the student and civic protests in Serbia, analyzing how participation in social movements fosters perspective change, critical reflection, and identity transformation. Transformative learning, as conceptualized by Jack Mezirow (1991, 2000), traditionally focuses on individual shifts in worldview following a disorienting

dilemma. However, scholars such as John Dirkx (2006) and Knud Illeris (2014) have expanded this theory to include a collective dimension, where transformation occurs through shared meaning-making, emotional engagement, and identity reconstruction. This paper contributes to this discourse by examining how protests serve as a site of collective transformation, reshaping both individual and societal narratives.

The Serbian student protests 2024/2025, triggered by the collapse of a train station canopy that killed 15 people, created a disorienting dilemma for many citizens. The event exposed government negligence and corruption, challenging the carefully maintained populist image of an authoritarian regime once perceived by some as protective and heroic.

A second disorienting dilemma emerged through the marching students themselves. Initially vilified by state-controlled media, their symbolic journey from Belgrade to Novi Sad and other cities invoked powerful cultural archetypes – the Hero's Journey (Campbell, 2008), and historical Serbian narratives of resistance and justice. Their march reframed public perception, transforming them into figures of courage and integrity, awakening collective memories of historical agency and moral leadership.

As the students moved through towns and villages, they engaged in dialogue with local communities, bridging the gap between young, urban students and older, rural populations. These encounters fostered critical reflection of local oppression while empowering rural citizens to challenge long-standing authoritarian structures. This collective learning process revitalized historical narratives of resistance and civic responsibility, shaping a new, emergent identity. By examining how collective transformation unfolds through shared experience, dialogue, and historical memory, this research contributes to the understanding of social movements as powerful sites of adult learning.

Methodology: A qualitative, multi-method approach will be employed, integrating: Semi-structured interviews with two key participant groups: Student organizers leading the movement and citizens who watched, supported or joined the protests and experienced a shift in civic identity. Systematic observations, incorporating elements of autobiographical explorations to document the protest dynamics, symbols, and emerging narratives of transformation. Social and mass media analysis (limited), utilizing digital ethnography to examine how transformative learning elements, such as emotional engagement, empowerment, identity reconstruction, and public discourse, are amplified in online spaces and media.

Expected Results: This research anticipates demonstrating that student protests function as sites of informal learning, where dialogue, reflection, and shared narratives contribute to both individual and collective transformation. Expected findings include:

Students experience both individual and collective transformation, moving from passive observers to active civic agents.

The broader public, including previously disengaged citizens, undergoes perspective shifts, aligning with the movement's goals and embracing a more active, empowered role in fights for social justice and responsibility (Hoggan-Kloubert and Mabrey, 2022)

Social and historical narratives play a key role in identity transformation, as the protests reactivate positive collective memories and historical examples

Social movements create spaces for critical reflection, where citizens challenge authoritarian structures

By analyzing how collective transformation unfolds in real-time within a social movement, this paper contributes to both transformative learning theory and the study of activism as a site of adult learning, offering insights into the role of political crisis in fostering civic engagement, resistance to populism, and systemic change.

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Marketisation in German and Slovenian Programs in Adult Education: A Comparative Dialogue on Methods and Results

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Keywords: Marketisation, Germany, Slovenia, folk high schools, program analysis

Abstract:

Aim/objectives: Program analysis has gained significant attention in adult education research over recent years. National longitudinal program analyses have been conducted, such as those by K  pplinger (2018) and Manninen & Vuorikoski (2024). Additionally, researchers like Nylander & Holmer (2022) have applied advanced quantitative data analysis techniques. Conferences and academic volumes also provide in-depth insights into international approaches across various countries and continents, as exemplified by K  pplinger et al. (2017). Despite this research, analyzing and comparing adult education programs in different cultural contexts remains challenging. Our collaborative paper aims to shed light on the methodological dialogue surrounding how programs from distinct nations and cultures can be compared without resorting to simplistic analogies and divergences.

Theoretical/conceptual framework: Building upon interest in marketization within adult education and learning research, as explored, for example, by Ko  merl & Mikulec (2021), Mikulec & Jelenc-Kra  ovec (2016), and K  pplinger (2019), we will trace marketisation influences on educational practice in three ways through, as defined by K  pplinger (2019): (1) marketisation by ideas and words, (2) marketisation by instruments and methods, and (3) marketisation by resources and finances.

Methodology: We will present a qualitative analysis of selected programs and program planning strategies (K  pplinger, 2008, Nolda, 2015) from adult education centres/folk high schools (Volkshochschulen) in Berlin, Germany, and Ljubljana, Slovenia. Germany and Slovenia are two Central European countries with different histories, governance structures and distinctive clusters of realisations of adult education as a common good (Boyadjieva & Ilieva-Trichkova, 2018); however, both represent conservative welfare regime (cf. Roosmaaa & Saar, 2016) and have long traditions in institutionalised forms of adult education (in both countries, folk high schools recently celebrated their 100th anniversaries). Through dialogue, we aim to navigate the methodological challenges inherent in this data and strive for a shared comprehension of both similar and divergent practices across these two countries, which might be also relevant when comparing other countries/cultures representing different welfare regimes. While our approach is qualitative, incorporating case examples from diverse programs and interviews with program planners, we aspire to achieve a deeper mutual understanding and explanation of how marketization manifests within adult education and its accompanying difficulties.

We are also intrigued by the strategies employed by adult education providers, such as the centers mentioned above, in initiating conversations with potential learners about their interest in participating in adult education initiatives. This dialogue can be observed clearly through program materials, which serve more than just a means of communication; they are primarily directed at prospective participants.

Results/conclusions: This work is in progress, but we anticipate its contribution to knowledge creation with understanding the mechanisms of ""quasi-market"" (cf. Hake, 2016; K  pplinger, 2019; Andersson & Muhrman, 2022) that public adult education centres are facing with. Our analysis indicates that while the state—both individual nation states and intergovernmental alliances and organizations like the European Union—exerts influence over adult education programs, it also drives marketization approaches and efforts (Mikulec & Jelenc-Kra  ovec, 2016). This dynamic leads to challenges and complexities in programs and program planning. Thus, the political economy underlying this process will be discussed as a backdrop but perhaps with a fresh perspective rooted in empirical data even beyond certainly interesting, but solely theoretical foundations and discussions (Regmi, 2023).

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Meaningful knowledge work and provision of reliable knowledge in the context of work intensification in media

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Keywords: media, knowledge work, meaningful work, provision of reliable knowledge, intensification of work

Abstract:

Knowledge work in the media industry is undergoing a major digital transformation: AI and other technological advancements are rapidly changing how work is organized, content is produced, and revenue is generated. This also means that the traditional role of media in providing reliable knowledge and educating the public is diminishing. The public's role is no longer just to consume media products but also to participate in generating the contents in different media platforms. Due to this major transformation, competition in the media industry is intensifying and media organizations have been faced with the need to make their operations more effective. As one solution to increase the efficiency, media organizations have implemented Lean thinking and practices with the aim of improving the efficiency and smoothness of work processes and thus generating value for the customer without waste (Womack & Jones 1996). However, so far research on Lean has been scarce in the media industry and other knowledge work contexts (Kropsu-Vehkapera & Isoherranen 2018). Moreover, the relationship between Lean and meaningfulness of work have not been examined in prior research.

While media organizations strive to make their operations more efficient, the meaningfulness of work has become an important goal for individuals in working life and has been named even as a fundamental human need (Yeoman 2014). In this presentation, meaningfulness of work refers to the value of an individual's own goals of work, which he or she has assessed based on his or her own ideals or principles (May et al. 2004). In our study, we use the theorizations of Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2009) to analyze the meaningfulness experienced by media professionals working in media organizations. Employees' own ideals may conflict with high expectations for productivity, which may be reflected in their experiences of meaningful work. This creates an interesting tension between the intensification and meaningfulness of work. Related to the conference theme we will reflect on the dialogue between these two faces of knowledge work in the media industry from the perspective of media's traditional role in producing reliable knowledge for the benefit of the public. Overall, media

is an important means to learn and educate oneself and, thus, for providing equal learning opportunities for adults. This way it is also a relevant context in adult education.

This presentation is based on employees' answers for open-ended questions on meaningful work generated through two surveys aimed at the whole media sector (n=127) and one large media organization (n=87) in Finland. The study is part of a larger project on Lean thinking in knowledge work and employees' experiences of meaningful work funded by the Finnish Work Environment Fund (2023–2025). We applied thematic analysis (Braun & Clark 2006) to answer these questions: what are the sources of meaningful work constructed by employees engaged in knowledge work in different sectors of the media industry? How do they experience the meaningfulness of work in relation to the intensification of work in media industry?

Our study shows that media's traditional task to provide reliable knowledge and, thus, serving and educating the public remains an important source of meaningful work for the employees in the media industry. In addition, work for the benefit of the work community and for oneself, for example, continuous learning and development, were seen as important sources for meaningful work. The intensification of work was seen as negative especially in journalistic work and it did not contribute to experiences of meaningful work and the production of high quality knowledge. Based on the study we argue that it is important to provide adequate resources for media professionals' work so that work intensification would not jeopardize reliable knowledge production and learning for the benefit of democratic future societies.

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Migrants learn a second language to become recognized

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Keywords: Adult migrants, Civil Society Organisations, Culture of Silence, language learning, recognition

Abstract:

In these times of rampant racism and xenophobia, one of the major challenges for migrants in host societies is being recognized as human beings (Honneth, 2005; Taylor, 1993). One way to achieve this is by acquiring some proficiency in the language of the host society, as it enables communication. However, this can be paradoxical, because language can also serve as a tool of assimilation, particularly for migrants. This occurs not only by differentiating those who speak differently from a member of the host society (Collins, 1979) but also by creating distinctions between those who speak ""correctly"" and those whose use of the language is considered ""deficient"" (Stubbs, 1984). Additionally, language can establish hierarchical differences within society (Hardt & Negri, 2004) and shape our thinking (Vygotsky, 1985).

In this paper, I focus on the work of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in supporting adult migrants' participation in their new society, particularly through language learning - though not exclusively. To explore this, I interviewed six individuals responsible for language courses in different CSOs. Each interview lasted approximately one hour, and all were shared with the interviewees for review.

Following the analysis, several key categories emerged: i) The connection between second-language learning and the process of integration into the host society. ii) The different pathways available for migrants to access language-learning programs. iii) The type of language instruction provided and its practical usefulness. iv) The training - or lack thereof - of the teachers, who are mainly volunteers. v) The teaching materials used in the classroom. vi) Other factors influencing the teaching and learning process, such as gender issues, conflicts, and resistance to learning.

For the purposes of this paper, I will focus on category i), emphasizing that language learning in this context - unlike in 'traditional' adult education schools - is deeply intertwined with the process of welcoming and supporting migrants. Additionally, I will highlight category iii), reinforcing the importance of conversational skills and basic language acquisition, which equip migrants with the necessary tools to communicate and ""survive"" both socially and in the workplace.

In my conclusions, I will first reflect on Freire's concept of the 'Culture of Silence' (Freire, 1970) and how even basic language learning can help migrants overcome it, ultimately leading to recognition and participation in society. I will also examine the richness of these CSOs' initiatives, which operate outside the formal schooling system and foster a dialogue between people's daily lives and their learning processes, remaining distant from mainstream lifelong learning trends.

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Misinformation and dialogue about intersex and trans* people: Challenges in education about natural binarity and its queer critique

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Keywords: Trans*; intersex; DEI education; illiberal backsliding; populism

Abstract:

Czech people with variations in sex characteristics (intersex) and trans* people have to navigate their lives in an environment characterised by strong sexological and medical hegemony over gender and sexuality (Lišková, 2016; Sokolová, 2021), weak LGBTQ+ NGO infrastructure and advocacy (Sloboda, 2022), a lack of support groups and awareness about the topic, especially for intersex (or DSD) people (Dušková, Fafejta & Sloboda, 2023), and post-socialist neoliberal individualisation (e.g. Císař, 2018). The last decade has brought trans*, intersex, non-binary and queer (TINQ) people to the forefront in regard to DEI (diversity, equality, and inclusion) politics, even in educational and corporate environments. However, the development and mainstreaming of DEI has experienced illiberal backsliding (e.g., Graff & Korolczuk, 2022; Kuhl 2024, etc.) against the backdrop of the so-called Cultural Wars. Neo-traditionalist and populist media and political discourses use the disruptive potential of TINQ identities to fuel fear and uncertainty. Areas such as children's wellbeing, schooling, school curricula and corporate education on DEI have become prominent targets. However, these areas were, and still are, the main arenas for pro-TINQ (and LGBTIAQ+) awareness-raising and advocacy, facilitating pluralism, liberal attitudes, and inclusion.

This paper presents a mixed-methods approach. It will present an analysis of Czech populist media, using Semantic Network Analysis, and an analysis of original Czech data from in-depth interviews with people with variations in sex characteristics and public statements of trans* people (specifically from the popular YouTube show V Tranzu/In Trans). On the one hand, the paper presents the experiences of these individuals concerning their bodies and the social environment, for example, in relation to health service providers, public coming out, gender self-identification and labels such as intersex, DSD, transsexual and transgender, or medical diagnoses. These provide a fundamental queer critique of the binary conception of gender and the body. On the other hand, the paper will contrast these experiences with neo-traditionalist and populist media and political discourses about TINQ people that reinstate the binary as a fundamental, natural and, consequently, cultural truth.

In line with the conference theme, in the discussion, the paper will focus on the education of young people, adults and professionals (e.g., medical staff), which is intertwined with both queer experience-focused discourses and neo-traditionalist political and populist discourses. The ambivalent position of education and awareness-raising in both discourses poses a great challenge to education itself, as it is accompanied by censorship of what can or cannot be said or taught, banning of speakers and teachers, and even leads to budget cuts in education, lawsuits, termination of work contracts, and so on. The paper aims to stimulate debate on this ambivalent position of (not only adult) education.

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N

Naming the World of Adult Learning & Education: Voices of Veteran Adult Educators of British Columbia, Canada

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Keywords: History; Canada; Adult Educators

Abstract:

According to Freire, "dialogue is the encounter between men [sic], mediated by the world, in order to name to world" (p. 88). In sharing our own ideas, perspectives, and words with another, we name our world. And, through encountering the ideas, perspectives, and words of another—and deeply listening to them—we, together, can more fully name the world which we share and jointly inhabit. In this paper and presentation, we aim to bring to ESREA participants the voices of veteran adult

educators from across the Atlantic (in Canada) and from across time (the 1980s until today), as they share their lives, experiences, and insights in adult learning and education. In naming these adult educators—who have worked in adult literacy and basic education, in immigrant settlement services, and in social justice organizations—and uncovering their work and wisdom, we bring these adult educators into a dialogical encounter with conference participants thus helping to further name our overarching field of adult learning and education.

The project that we draw on in this presentation is entitled “The people, programs and places of adult education in British Columbia’s Lower Mainland: 1980-2025” and is currently in progress. The idea of it emerged from, what Walter Benjamin once described as, a desire “to save the past from the threat of irretrievable disappearance” (cited in Beiner, 1984, p. 428). We were inspired, in part, by K  pplinger and Elfert (2018) who published a co-edited book that shared a number of abandoned places of adult education in Germany and Canada. As they showed, while certain practices and programs of adult education may have been abandoned, they need not be forgotten—and, we would add, nor do the people of adult education need to remain in the shadows. Our goal, similar to that of the many great adult education researchers who came before us (e.g., Hake & Laot, 2009; Harrison, 1961; Selman, 1995), is to “unearth the hidden [recent] past” of adult education (Welton, 2012), thus preserving and expanding our memory of adult learning and education and broadening the conversation.

As part of this project, we have been, and will be, interviewing adult educators in our community with decades of experience who bring a wealth of knowledge on teaching adult learners, and who can tell us more about the intricacies of changes and continuities in the field in relation to policies, provision, programs, and organisations in adult education in our province. They share with us their challenges, achievements, disappointments, recommendations, and learning they have gained through decades of professional practice in the field. We will bring to ESREA participants the voices and insights of these adult educators as a preliminary exploration of our findings.

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Navigating Migration Through Learning: Turkish Migrant Women's Educational Pathways in Germany, Austria, and Canada

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Keywords: migration, adult education, life course, educational trajectories, biography

Abstract:

Education in its formal, non-formal, and informal forms plays a crucial role in the social, cultural, economic, and political integration of migrants into host societies (Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2017; Shan, 2015). While recent feminist and critical studies have examined migrant women's learning experiences in Europe (Erel, 2007, 2015; Christou & Kofman, 2022; Lutz & Amelina, 2021), their representation in educational research remains limited, especially in investigating learning trajectories. This study addresses this gap by exploring the learning biographies of Turkish migrant women in Germany, Austria, and Canada, analyzing how their educational trajectories shape and reflect their integration experiences across diverse migration and educational backgrounds as well as socio-cultural contexts.

This research investigates the role of education in migrant women's lives, emphasizing both individual learning pathways and systemic factors influencing their experiences. It explores: (1.) How do Turkish migrant women construct meanings of learning and education, and how do these perceptions shape their migration experiences? (2.) How does learning facilitate social inclusion and integration into the German, Austrian, and Canadian labor markets, considering both individual agency and systemic conditions?

Using a life course approach (Wingens et al., 2011), this study employs in-depth narrative and biographical interviews with Turkish migrant women in Germany, Austria, and Canada. Participants are selected based on migration history, education level, and professional background, enabling a comparative cross-country analysis of diverse learning trajectories. This methodological framework allows for an intersectional analysis, considering how gender, migration status, language, and socio-economic factors influence education and labor market experiences. Additionally, this research is informed by transnational life course perspectives (Erlingen, 2021), which provide insights into how different socio-cultural and political contexts shape migrant women's access to education and employment opportunities.

At this stage, data collection is ongoing, with participant recruitment and interviews in progress in Austria and Canada. However, preliminary findings from first five Turkish migrant women in Germany provide initial insights into the role of education in shaping self-identification, career trajectories, and perceptions of learning. Their narratives highlight how education is both an empowering and constrained process, shaped by institutional structures, linguistic barriers, and gendered migration experiences.

By conducting a comparative transnational analysis, this study contributes to ongoing discussions on migration, education, and social inclusion. It also will offer insights for adult education and labor market in Germany, Austria, and Canada.

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Negotiating Teacher Presence in the Digital Landscape of Adult Education

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Keywords: online teaching, artificial intelligence, teacher presence, Actor-Network Theory

Abstract:

This paper explores how digital materialities—such as platform interfaces, AI-generated text, and chat functions—mediate dialogical interaction in online teaching, with a focus on Swedish Municipal Adult Education (MAE). Grounded in Actor-Network Theory (Latour, 2007), the study examines how teachers navigate digitally mediated environments where both human and non-human actors shape communication.

With 36% of MAE students participating in online education in 2021 (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2024), understanding how technologies affect teacher presence and interaction is increasingly urgent. In this study, technologies are viewed not as passive tools but as active agents that materially shape instruction (Hartong & Decuyper, 2023; Henderson & Bradey, 2008; Kavanagh et al., 2024). Drawing on observations and interviews with teachers, the findings show how digital platforms, AI interventions, and assessment systems reconfigure teacher roles and the conditions for dialogue (Celik et al., 2022).

Rather than framing social justice and democratic engagement as abstract ideals, the paper shows how these are negotiated through everyday communicative practices. Dialogical teaching becomes a means of recognizing diverse voices, fostering mutual understanding, and creating space for critical reflection (Brown, 2015). These practices are vital in adult education, where learners' life experiences and structural vulnerabilities intersect with digital infrastructures.

By conceptualizing online teaching as a socio-technical assemblage, the paper argues that digital classrooms can function as transformative spaces for inclusive dialogue and democratic learning—if designed and enacted with attention to power, participation, and relationality (Pischetola et al., 2021; Sorensen & Brooks, 2018).

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Novel approaches to workplace learning – experiences and results from a participatory-driven learning intervention

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Keywords: case study, participatory design, pragmatism, workplace learning,

Abstract:

Research Framing: Workplace learning is crucial for employee well-being and productivity, especially in today's rapidly changing global environments (Danner-Schröder, 2025; Lokhtina & Faller, 2024). Practice-based learning, involving cycles of experience and reflection, is vital for addressing challenges that cannot be solved by expert knowledge and formal learning designs alone (Ellström, 2010; Marsick & Watkins, 2018; Nicolini, 2012). There is a pressing need to understand the impact of workplace learning practices that develop spaces for open conversations and reflection among employees (Brandi & Iannone, 2020; Faller, Marsick & Russell, 2020). However, the outcomes of participatory and democratically inspired designs on employee's competence development remain underexplored (Brandi & Elkjaer, 2024). This paper aims to explore the impact of a participant-driven, democratic learning model on employees learning opportunities in workplace settings. It presents results from a collaborative research and development project that designed and tested a

participatory-driven development model, called Learning Labs (LL). It was assumed that the LL model would foster a workplace that promotes experimentation, collaboration, and breaking down silos across expertise areas enhancing workplace learning opportunities and improving how employees address work-related problems.

Theory: Theoretically, the paper is grounded in experiential learning theory, particularly drawing on Dewey's pragmatist ideas of learning capturing the dynamic nature of workplace learning processes (Brandt & Elkjaer, 2024). Dewey emphasized the importance of the transactive process of inquiry by transforming uncertain situation to more resolved situations (Elkjaer, 2018). The LL model aligns with Dewey's pragmatism by fostering democratic learning designs where participants are actively engaged in experimentation, collaboration, and critical reflection. This approach leverages and use participants' experiences and knowledge, promoting continuous learning and adaptation in response to dynamic workplace challenges. By creating spaces for open dialogue and challenging assumptions, the LL model enhances employee's competence development in workplace settings, crucial for navigating the complexities of modern work environments.

Case Settings and Methods: This study involved two participating enterprises: a large multinational industrial company in Sweden and a large food production enterprise in Denmark. The LL model was implemented in these organisations to foster participatory and experiential learning. The research employed multiple explorative case studies using semi-structured interviews (n=20), observations, and process data to detail the outcomes of the LLs on employee learning and competence development in the Swedish and Danish enterprise sample groups. Gioia's (2013) analytical framework was used to explore the outcomes.

Preliminary Results: The analysis of case data yielded two main results. Firstly, a collaborative effort of researchers, developers, and industry partners refined the democratic-inspired learning model, the LLs. This model is characterised by open experimentation and recognition of participant experiences, valuable for organisations engaged in explorative learning and managing continuous uncertainties. Secondly, an inductive analysis revealed tangible changes at both individual and collective levels in the participating enterprises. These changes include developments in competence, stemming from a multifaceted learning mode, and improvements in social capital and reflective practices. Overall, these changes enhanced the quality of connections between employees across functions and the utilisation of available knowledge, experience, and competencies, thereby increasing the potential for both routine and innovative learning in the workplace.

Relevance to the conference: This paper explores how a participant-driven, experience-based learning model can enhance employee competence, addressing a critical gap in understanding workplace learning. Traditional models often rely on formalistic approaches that miss the dynamic, participatory nature of modern workplace learning. By presenting the LL model, this paper shows how open, democratic, and participatory environments foster innovation, collaboration, and reflective practices. The findings are relevant to the conference theme of dialogue in adult education and learning in that the LL model demonstrates that creating spaces for critical reflection and challenging assumptions leads to significant improvements in individual and collective competences. This aligns with the conference's focus on dialogue's role in fostering social justice, democracy, and responsive institutions. By addressing the complexities of today's fast-changing work environments, the LL model enhances dialogical skills and collaborative learning processes essential for growth and employee well-being.

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P

Parental Engagement as Adult Learning: The Case of South Korean Immigrant Parents in Canada

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Keywords: parental engagement; immigrant parenting; adult learning; educational support, sociocultural learning

Abstract:

Many immigrant families relocate in pursuit of better educational opportunities for their children. However, while managing settlement tasks—such as language acquisition, employment, and social integration (Kloubert & Hoggan, 2021)—immigrant parents must also navigate unfamiliar educational systems. Nevertheless, existing literature highlights insufficient communication channels between schools and immigrant parents, often leading to their marginalization (Antony-Newman, 2019). As a South Korean immigrant parent in Canada for five years, I have observed the lack of systemic support and meaningful dialogue between immigrant parents and schools. This research addresses this enduring discrepancy, which perpetuates educational inequities.

The absence of such dialogue stems from institutionalized education systems, which construct teachers as experts and parents as passive supporters with limited roles in children's education (Jeynes, 2018). Concurrently, neoliberal policies shift greater responsibility onto parents

for student success (Holloway et al., 2024), further marginalizing those unfamiliar with local educational norms. For immigrant parents from non-Western backgrounds, these challenges are exacerbated by racialization and the devaluation of their parenting knowledge (Goodall, 2022). Discourses such as ""hard to reach"" (Crozier & Davis, 2007) or ""tiger parenting"" (Kim et al., 2013) reduce immigrant parents to essentialized stereotypes, reinforcing Western-centric assumptions. While such challenges are well-documented, few studies examine immigrant parents' learning process in new educational landscapes, particularly in supporting adolescent children. This study addresses this gap by focusing on South Korean immigrant parents' learning trajectories in supporting their children's education.

Informed by sociocultural learning theories (Vygotsky, 1976), this research conceptualizes learning as a social process, shaped by interactions with people, contexts, and materials. While this theoretical lens is widely applied in formal education and workplace learning, it remains underexplored in informal adult learning, particularly among racialized minorities. In the context of immigrant parents, this perspective highlights how their knowledge of parental engagement is (re)constructed through sociocultural and historical influences, particularly as they navigate new school systems and participate in communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This approach challenges deficit-based discourses that depict immigrant parents as passive or disengaged, instead recognizing them as active learners adapting to complex educational landscapes.

A critical ethnographic approach enables deep engagement with participants while critically examining power structures shaping their experiences (Madison, 2005). Its emphasis on reflexivity, reciprocity, and participant agency (Castagno, 2012) aligns with the study's commitment to amplifying immigrant parents' voices. This research will involve approximately 15 South Korean newcomer parents in British Columbia, participating in a federally funded settlement service program within school districts. Upon ethics approval, data collection will begin in March 2025 and span six months, incorporating participant observations and ethnographic interviews. This design will highlight collective learning through meaning-making along with their individual life histories, transnational experiences, and strategies for supporting their children. I will additionally recruit ten South Korean immigrant parents through purposeful sampling to hear diverse voices with different social backgrounds.

This study makes a significant contribution to adult learning and education by positioning immigrant parents as active learners seeking legitimate membership in education. Reframing parental engagement as an adult learning expands its conceptualization beyond the dominant school-home binary. This community-based research, conducted in collaboration with immigrant settlement programs, provides critical insights into the tensions and dynamics between immigrant parents, schools, and practitioners, informing more inclusive and effective educational policies that better support immigrant families. By challenging deficit-based discourses, this study diversifies narratives on immigrant parents and communities, moving beyond essentialized stereotypes and reinforcing the view of 'difference' as a learning opportunity for all (Formenti et al., 2018). Ultimately, strengthening authentic dialogue between immigrant parents, educators, and policymakers will not only facilitate children's adaptation but also enhance immigrant parents' participation as legitimate members of society.

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Participation from the participants' perspective - A dialogue-based research approach to change the perspective to that of the participants and their appropriation of learning opportunities in the field of work-related learning

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Keywords: learning opportunities, work-related learning, subject-oriented view of participants, situations, participation

Abstract:

Aim: Numerous findings from research on participation in continuing education demonstrate inequalities in opportunities to participate in adult education and learning (Kalenda & Kočvarová, 2022; Lee & Desjardins, 2019). Furthermore, complex participation models show that participation in continuing education is multifaceted (Boeren, 2017). With this paper, we would like to add a subject-oriented view of participants, asking in which life and work situations they take up

opportunities for work-related learning and use them for learning in informal, non-formal or formal settings.

Relevance to the conference theme: A dialogue principle in research facilitates an encounter between researchers and respondents, aligning with the tradition of adult education, where individuals engage at eye level. This occurs even when they assume different roles in specific contexts—such as course teachers and participants in adult education, or interviewers and interviewees in a research setting. This dialogue principle of data collection offers a rich database on appropriating learning opportunities from a subjective perspective. During the interviews, narratives regarding the perception of learning opportunities were reported, which could be developed into multidimensional situations during the analysis, illustrating how individuals perceived work-related learning opportunities. Diversity was considered through systematic sampling based on age, educational level, gender, disability, and migration, ensuring that individuals from various backgrounds could share their perspectives and experiences.

Theoretical framework: Work-related learning occurs as an iterative process throughout the entire duration of employment (Kraus, 2011). Beyond biographical, psycho-social, and socio-structural prerequisites, as well as opportunity structures and support options (Boeren, 2017), the relevant life and employment context plays a crucial role in appropriating learning opportunities (West et al., 2007). To better understand the significance of appropriation in the iterative process of work-related education, this paper places special emphasis on ‘situations’ in which societal structures, individual life circumstances, social contexts, and biographical developments systematically converge (Friedrichs, 1974; Karger et al., 2022).

Methodology: The findings are derived from a narrative-biographical and typological approach to analysing the appropriation of work-related learning opportunities. The emphasis is on the learner's perspective and their life and work context. For this purpose, two data sets are combined: Firstly, 62 problem-centred interviews were conducted, gathered through systematic diversity sampling based on indicators such as educational attainment, age, gender, impairment, and migration background, all of which are central to participation in continuing education. These data are analysed using a type-forming qualitative content analysis (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2023). For interpretation, they will be triangulated with a second set of data gathered using the life cycle approach. Combining the two data sets facilitates the reconstruction of the subjective logic underlying the pursuit of work-related learning opportunities. It establishes a link to the restrictive or favourable conditions. (Kühn, 2017). The internal perspectives of the individuals expressed in the narratives of the interview situation are critical here.

Outcome / Results: The situations identified, in which people typically appropriate work-related learning opportunities, offer insights into how individuals organise their work-related educational processes. Specifically, based on situational circumstances that, while they appear as snapshots, are situated within structural frameworks and biographical developments. They also demonstrate the social dimension of adult learning, which includes the mobilisation of resources. the multidimensional situation describes typical constellations of subjective reasons for learning, the forms of learning employed, the material and immaterial resources utilised, how they are mobilised, the decision-making processes conducted, and specific personal characteristics, including socio-demographic traits, life and employment contexts, and degrees of digitalisation. Specific patterns emerge in the constellation of factors related to the reasons for learning, as presented in the paper.

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Participatory Teachers' Professional Development in AI Literacy Through Dialogues on Cognitive Artifacts

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Keywords: participatory action research, south-north, creative artifacts, AI literacy, teachers' professional development

Abstract:

While the hype around Artificial Intelligence (AI) has given way to critical considerations about AI literacy, professional development in AI-related competencies is given more attention in education (Miao & Cukurova, 2024; Sperling et al., 2024). As one of the aspirations of adult learning and education (ALE) is fostering people's capabilities, the complex entanglements of AI in society (Lindgren, 2024) prompted scholars to reflect on the reciprocal influences between AI technologies

and adult learners' capabilities (Markauskaite et al., 2022). Building on Milana & Tarozzi's (2021) four-dimensional conceptual model for ALE, this contribution focuses on how to design and deliver teachers' professional development in AI literacy, in contexts in which people perceive and experience lack of time for personal and professional growth due to society's acceleration (Rosa, 2010). This contribution describes a part of a research project in the Italian Provincial Adult Education Centers (CPIAs), predominantly attended by adult students with migratory backgrounds. Agreeing with Bondi et al. (2021), a participatory approach seems appropriate for expanding and equalizing capabilities in ALE, and it pairs with a community-centered, context-specific definition of AI literacy (Knoth et al., 2024) and the design of professional development activities that engage teachers and value their voices and perspectives on AI. We design reciprocal, structured observations of in-class activities with AI tools, where peer mentoring between teachers and researchers is privileged as an occasion for teachers to experience AI in the teaching practice and describe their *vivencias* (Fals Borda, 2003) or lived experiences of AI. As cognitive artifacts (Lave & Wenger-Trayner, 1991; Norman, 1991), interactions between users and AI tools can be considered situated crystallizations of discourses and practices concerning AI, which teachers themselves can scrutinize critically. We assume that focusing the discussion on the artifacts has a double benefit to teachers' professional development: first, in the dynamic implementation of AI technologies in ALE teachers can detect, recognize and understand discourses about AI within super-diverse educational contexts (Pasta & Zoletto, 2023) and possibly from a South-North perspective (Medrado & Verdegem, 2024), and thus steer the dialogue towards self-emancipation and empowerment in the postdigital society; second, teachers can reflect upon their professional development without exposing themselves by exteriorizing their practices into objects of observation (i.e., the cognitive artifacts), enabling positive and enriching dialogues within teachers' communities. We expect to encounter challenges to this approach to teachers' professional development in critical AI literacy, as some resistance to autonomous and engaged, critical pedagogies can emerge in adult education (hooks, 2014) and with teachers (Little, 1995). Nevertheless, we also expect that the additional effort required by implementing and reflecting upon artifacts could result in more empathic dialogues between the participants in the PAR. After collecting teachers' words about *vivencias* of AI in education, we analytically interpret the qualitative data to look for teachers' strategies in interacting with AI tools.

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Patterns of Educational Reflexivity in the Context of Lifelong Learning: A Study Among Mobility Participants in Poland

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Keywords: reflexivity, agency, mobilities, adult education, learning pathways

Abstract:

In the face of challenges related to an aging population, adult education plays a crucial role (European Commission 2020; Turek & Worek 2016). It has become an increasingly significant field, particularly in public policy, including initiatives aimed at fostering social cohesion and enhancing social and human capital.

In Poland, participation in learning activities — whether formal, non-formal, or informal — has been more common among younger, employed, and highly educated individuals, particularly those in high-skilled occupations. Among the youngest age groups (25-34 and 35-44), nearly three-quarters engaged in educational activities, whereas in the oldest age group (55-65), participation dropped to just over half (Petelewicz et al. 2023).

Programs such as Erasmus+ can play an important role in fostering educational engagement among older adults and employees of educational institutions in Poland. By providing opportunities for mobility and lifelong learning, Erasmus+ can help bridge the participation gap, encouraging

seniors to stay active in education, develop new skills, and engage in international learning experiences (Rospondek et al. 2024).

The aim of this presentation is to share research findings on patterns of educational reflexivity among adult learners participating in mobility programs, using the typology of six reflexivity styles proposed by Wojciech Gola (Gola 2023).

The conference organizers emphasize the importance of dialogue between different theoretical and methodological approaches in adult education. This presentation aligns with this focus by exploring the bridge between structure and individual agency in the learning process. The analysis is grounded in Margaret Archer's concept of reflexivity and Anthony Giddens' structuration theory.

Archer argues that reflexivity is a mediating mechanism between social structure and individual agency, shaping educational trajectories (Archer 2013). Giddens, on the other hand, highlights the dual role of social structure as both a medium and an outcome of individual actions, emphasizing agency in shaping educational pathways (Giddens 2023).

The typology of educational reflexivity patterns focuses on how individuals interpret education and implement their learning strategies, served as an analytical tool for examining diverse learning styles among adult mobility participants. The developed typology of reflexivity styles reveals variations in learning strategies and attitudes toward educational engagement, including the meaning attributed to education and learning (values), dominant concerns and goals pursued through education, decision-making processes regarding adult learning, preferred learning formats, and the role of socio-biographical context.

The analyses were conducted based on data from a Polish study that involved in-depth narrative interviews with 15 mobility participants, mainly older adults, as well as employees of educational institutions (folk high schools, universities of the third age, senior clubs, and public libraries).

The analysis revealed four distinct patterns of educational reflexivity among mobility participants: normative reflexivity, search-oriented reflexivity, challenge-oriented reflexivity and utilitarian reflexivity. Some older adults demonstrated high autonomy in making educational decisions, perceiving mobility as an opportunity for self-actualization and personal development. Others engaged in learning primarily in response to external factors, such as professional circumstances or the need for social integration. A key differentiating factor among reflexivity styles was previous educational experience and the participants' social conditions.

The discussion will also address structural barriers and potential directions for the development of mobility programs to better meet the diverse educational needs of older learners. In this way the presentation will also illustrates how individual reflexivity, mediated by social structure, plays a crucial role in understanding learning processes.

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Peer Observation of Teaching: Developing Dialogue and Shared Vision of What Effective Teaching Looks Like in Higher Education

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Keywords: Peer Observation of Teaching, Dialogue, Higher Education, Effective Teaching, Competences, Development

Abstract:

The aim of this paper is to explore the implementation of peer observation of teaching in higher education at a university (to be specified in the review) and report what are the main benefits of these programmes. Effective teaching is a key initiative of Paedagogium - an innovative platform and advisory body that supports the university leadership in developing pedagogical competencies and help academics reflect on and improve their teaching skills. The overarching goal of Paedagogium is to cultivate a collaborative and supportive environment that enables academic staff at the University to engage with theoretical frameworks and practical applications in the field of undergraduate study programmes and didactics.

Peer observation of teaching is a formative process in which two colleagues work together and observe each other teaching. The observer provides feedback to the colleague who is teaching. A constructive dialogue rather than an evaluative exercise between university teachers can challenge assumptions about pedagogical competence, teaching quality and lead to deeper critical reflection and innovation in teaching practices. This paper will reflect on the significant opportunity to engage university teachers in constructive dialogue about their teaching practice. Not only does peer observation of teaching offer a structured way to support their professional development, but it also presents several challenges to consider. Some of the most challenging moments in this process include overcoming distrust of observation due to fear of judgement, managing differences in teaching, and ensuring that feedback remains constructive rather than evaluative.

This paper addresses this issue through first, sociocultural learning theory and second, by internal survey that will capture the university teachers' experiences of peer observing of teaching. Data from this survey will be available during this summer and will be presented at the conference.

Attention will be given to reflecting on collaborative learning in higher education and creating an environment in which educators engage in ongoing professional dialogue, which takes the form of mutual learning in an atmosphere of trust and refine their pedagogical approaches to reflect evolving understandings of effective teaching. This discussion is highly relevant to the broader themes of the ESREA conference, which highlight the transformative power of dialogue in adult education and lifelong learning.

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Perspectives of Non-traditional Adult Graduate Students in the U.S. on their Academic Development and Time

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Keywords: lifelong learning, motivation, resilience, persistence

Abstract:

The past couple of decades have seen the emergence of non-traditional adult students in the U.S. education system. Non-traditional adult students tend to be individuals who are navigating multiple roles (i.e., having family and job-related responsibilities) while attending an academic program. Non-traditional adult graduate students face many challenges, given their multiple roles. However, more often than not, they manage to persist to overcome the challenges of time and manage to complete their programs. The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of how non-traditional adult graduate students interpret the relationship between their personal development and the notion of time, and how their meanings influence their behavior.

This study was informed by constructs from the student development theory (Abes et al., 2007; Jones et al., 2013; Long, 2012) and time perspectives (Alhadeff-Jones, 2017; Allman et al., 2014; Smith-Lauff, 2019, 2023). Previous studies have shown that time perspective has relationship with academic achievement (Gutierrez-Braojos, 2015) and other influential factors related to non-traditional adult students, such as coping strategies (Blomgren et al, 2016) and well-being (Boniwell & Osin, 2015). The occurrence of challenges that students face through their developmental process during their academic journey, as well as the experience of overcoming them, have temporal contexts that are not or should not be negligible. In other words, there is a relationship between student development and time, which this study attempted to explore. The adult learner lived-experienced exists with the contexts of universal and particular, material and spiritual, but also and especially in space and time. This study represents the heart of a Venn diagram connected with the universal vs particular (i.e., non-traditional adult graduate students), material vs spiritual (i.e., their social and psychological lived experiences), and space vs time (i.e., their perspectives on time within their own socio-cultural space). Having said that, this study focuses on the time aspect.

This study used a basic interpretive qualitative approach (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) to explore the perspectives of non-traditional adult graduate students in the U.S. regarding their academic development and time. This approach is appropriate because it helped participants describe their own experiences and understanding (Patton, 2015). As several scholars assert, given the researcher use participants' experiences to develop interpretations, they consequently serve as the primary research instrument (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2018). Two research questions guided the investigation: (1) How do non-traditional adult graduate students in the U.S. interpret the relationship between their personal development and the notion of time? (2) How do their meanings of personal development and time influence their behavior? A purposeful sampling was used to recruit the participants based on whether they meet the criteria to be categorized as non-traditional adult graduate students. A total of 15 students accepted to be interviewed virtually through a Learning Management System (LMS). The data was analyzed through first and second order of coding (Saldana, 2021).

This study reports perspectives on set times (i.e., triggering time, disruptive time, harvest time) and dynamic times (i.e., setbacks, doubts, trial and errors, victories) experienced by non-traditional adult students in graduate programs in the U.S. This study provides an understanding of how non-traditional adult graduate students interpret the relationship between their personal development and the notion of time, and how their meanings influence their behavior to persist until the completion of their degree. Recommendations are provided to use set times and dynamic times as opportunities for enhancing the intrinsic motivation of non-traditional adult students, as well as an asset for informal learning.

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Policy Learning as Dialogue: A comparative study of skills formation systems in adult education and learning

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Keywords: policy learning, educational policies, skills formation systems, adult learning systems

Abstract:

Purpose: In 2012, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) launched its Skills Strategy with the aim of providing a framework for its member states to analyze their respective skills performance with regards to the development of relevant skills over the course of life (OECD 2012). Since then, 21 economies have conducted and completed OECD Skills Strategy projects and produced country reports, ranging from assessment and recommendations, diagnostic reports, executive summaries and/or implementation guidelines.

In terms of adult education and learning, the chosen focal points in the respective national contexts reflect the cultural and societal national conditions and institutional anchoring in terms of provision and governance. A critical analysis along the typology of adult education and learning aims to provide the basis for knowledge exchange and synergies with regards to overarching and missing themes in order to foster strengthened national and international dialogue and coordination in terms of policy learning.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework: The framework used is the typology of Adult Learning Systems (ALS), which refers to “the mass of organized learning opportunities available to

adults and the underlying structures and stakeholders that shape their organization and governance” (Desjardins, 2023, p. 353). The concept of ALS enables the conceptualization of skills formation and its systems in coherence with the types of adult education, namely Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult General Education (AGE), Adult Vocational Education (AVE), Adult Higher Education (AHE) and Adult Liberal Education (ALE) (ibid., p. 356), which is embedded in the theoretical approach of historical institutionalism and the analysis of stakeholder interactions.

Methodology: A qualitative content analysis is chosen to discover structural and procedural patterns to address the questions whether all the different elements of skills system are addressed using the ALS typology and to which extent as well as the question how it was framed and approached with regards to problems identified and solutions alluded. This paper will compare and contrast the understandings and approaches underlying the conceptual framings to approaching adult education and learning policies in and across the countries in which these projects were implemented. Each country/region is conceptualized as a coherent unit and therefore individually understood in detail before contrasting and comparing them in a cross-national manner. In order to conduct a critical analysis, a coding structure informed by the theoretical and conceptual framework of ALS is developed (e.g. Desjardins & Kalenda, forthcoming in 2025) to map the various understandings, framings and interactions of adult education and learning and education stakeholders in relation to opportunities, contexts, structures which are relevant to ALS.

Outcome and expected results: The overview and critical analysis of identified overarching themes and national/regional specifics are the basis that provides a synthesis of the strategies to enhance policy learning and dialogue and coordination within and without the different types of adult education which aims to contribute to implementation of good practices and their adaptation to the respective national and regional contexts.

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Preventing Social Isolation in Older Adults through Dialogue: Preliminary Results from an Evaluation Research

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Keywords: Intergenerational Learning, Active Aging, Participatory Education, Social Engagement

Abstract:

This contribution presents the preliminary findings of an evaluation study on a network project promoting bio-psycho-social health for individuals over 65 through structured dialogue and participatory learning. Coordinated by a volunteer association in Bologna, Italy, the initiative fosters intergenerational exchange and social engagement to combat isolation and promote active aging. The

project encourages older adults to engage in meaningful conversations, share experiences, and co-construct knowledge while enhancing their sense of agency and belonging. The dialogical dimension is a key element, fostering intergenerational exchange, social learning, and community empowerment.

The project integrates physical activities with sensory stimulation, music and peer learning, alongside experiential and cooperative learning-based workshops. The communal lunch serves as an opportunity for socialization and health education, while seminars on civic education address topics such as health prevention, cultural enrichment, and awareness of the local territory. These activities contribute to learning as a transformative process and support age-related cognitive and emotional development.

The evaluation research follows the principles of Educational Evaluation Research (Scriven, 1999, 2003; Kellaghan & Stufflebeam, 2003; Stake, 2003), in which evaluation is conceived as a reflective process leading to informed decision-making based on collected research data. Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative exploratory design.

Content analysis identified key themes, which were used to refine program activities. The research process involves iterative feedback, redesign, and re-evaluation to ensure effectiveness. This approach ensures that the intervention remains responsive to the evolving needs of participants, maximizing its impact on their well-being and social participation.

Findings suggest that structured learning activities enhance self-efficacy, strengthen social connections, and support socio-emotional well-being (Carstensen, 2021). Participants reported increased confidence in daily interactions and greater community involvement, highlighting the program's role in fostering individual and collective empowerment (Zimmerman, 2000). Gender dynamics also emerged as a relevant theme, with women benefiting from peer support and recognition of their life experiences (Friedan, 1993). Additionally, participants expressed a greater sense of belonging to the community, demonstrating how structured social learning environments can counteract isolation and enhance well-being.

Moreover, by incorporating an intergenerational dimension (Jarrott & Scrivano, 2021; Whear et al., 2023), the initiative aims to bridge gaps between younger and older generations, creating opportunities for knowledge exchange and mutual understanding. The project's characteristics align with transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1991), emphasizing reflective processes that drive personal and social change. Learning is approached as a means of fostering agency, empowerment, and well-being.

The findings underscore the role of structured social learning environments in reducing isolation and promoting well-being, reinforcing the importance of inclusive, community-based educational initiatives. Furthermore, they highlight the potential of intergenerational approaches to counteract ageism (WHO, 2023), strengthen community bonds, and create more inclusive learning environments.

Moving forward, the project aims to expand its reach by incorporating additional evaluation phases, further refining its methodologies, and developing new partnerships to enhance its long-term sustainability. This study underscores the value of integrating educational research with community-driven initiatives, demonstrating how participatory learning can serve as a powerful tool for fostering well-being and empowerment in later life.

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Psychological Safety and Open Dialogue in Organizations: The Key to Preventing Workplace Violence

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Keywords: psychological safety, workplace violence, open dialogue, organizational culture, adult education

Abstract:

Workplace violence, including mobbing, bossing, and gender-based violence, remains a persistent problem in organizations. Traditional prevention approaches often focus on group trainings and surveys; however, these frequently do not lead to deeper changes at the level of organizational culture. This paper examines the role of psychological safety and open dialogue in co-creating an organizational culture that can help prevent the occurrence or persistence of workplace violence.

The aim of this paper is to analyse the significance of open dialogue as a factor in preventing workplace violence and to propose tools through which dialogue and training can overcome the barriers that hinder open communication about psychological safety. The paper emphasizes the need to equip managers with the competencies required to create psychologically safe environment. These competencies include, among others, self-reflection for identifying one's own biases, the ability to support for inclusion and respect in the workplace, transparent communication, and social perceptiveness to group dynamics within the work team. A culture of open and respectful communication enables organizations to overcome entrenched stereotypes and myths regarding

victims, perpetrators, manifestations of workplace violence, and the possibilities for victims to defend themselves — misconceptions that often lead to the trivialization of even serious socio-pathological manifestations in the workplace and to downplaying the necessity of adopting comprehensive and systemic measures. An important factor is also the absence of partnership and dialogue with external organizations that specialize in violence prevention and can assist with implementing effective preventive measures.

Based on the analysis of research and insights gained during the implementation of preventive programs against various forms of workplace violence, the paper will demonstrate how, in addition to gathering data on the occurrence and prevalence of socio-pathological phenomena within an organization, the implementation of internal institutional policy tools, the implementation of internal reporting systems, and traditional educational methods, open dialogue can play a role in primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention of workplace violence as well as in building psychological safety within organizations. The discussion will focus on dialogue-based interventions in their various forms — for example, dialogue with victims of violence, with departing employees to identify the reasons behind their departure, or with management for interventions.

By integrating psychological safety into the work environment, organizations can shift from a reactive to a proactive approach in addressing workplace violence. This paper contributes to the broader debate on adult education by emphasizing the transformative potential of dialogue in professional settings and its role as a means of learning.

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Public Sphere as a challenging pedagogical tool for promoting University students conscientization

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Keywords: HRM and recruiters, critical emancipatory paradigm, public sphere, conscientization

Abstract:

The aim of the paper is to share with the scientific community the results of an educational experience that will take place from 9 to 11 June 2025, involving students pursuing an Italian Bachelor's degree in ""Training and Development of Human Resources"". These students may become trainers, Human Resources Managers (HRM) or recruiters in employment agencies and companies and will therefore have to deal with insurance and welfare system as well as pension funds management, which are undergoing rapid change; they will also have to deal with the increasingly competitive atmosphere of work contexts.

The didactic experience we are planning emerged from the apparent lack of reflexivity, dialogue and empathy that characterized our competitive world, where young people are expected to perform at the highest level, both personally and professionally. On the other hand, the increasingly visible dismantling of welfare in Europe and the privatisation of health and insurance services in favour of the private sector are fuelling the exclusion of many vulnerable people from access to fundamental rights. These students, who will have to face all this, may fear the lack of security that characterises the context in which they will live and work. For this reason, it is important to explore what they think about the implications of these changes for their future professional employment and what kind of role they could play in these scenarios.

According to Giroux, we have to start from the fact that our students are young people who have lived through the covid pandemic which has damaged the network of solidarity between communities and people; in fact, our students often seem incapable of making their voices heard, as if they were afraid, passive or sad; the increasing diagnosis of anxiety and depression among young Italians could partly explain their silence. Nevertheless, according to the critical emancipatory paradigm theorised by McLaren and Giroux, the process of conscientization about the relevance of the future role of HRM and recruits as democratic citizens before professionals must be stimulated in

young people who are often influenced by the Social Darwinism that emerges from the Protestant religious and neo-liberal ideology. This kind of perspectives widespread a narrative about the guilt of those who haven't been able to express their merits.

The Ken Loach film *Daniel Blac* (Palme d'ore at the Cannes Festival in 2016) and the *Before.Your.Eye.co.uk* video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bu-N8uv4jn8>) are two of the triggers we will use to stimulate dialogue among students during a workshop in which, (possibly) students will be sitting in a circle in a university garden, in a comfortable situation without, from our perspective, any will of evaluation. Our intention, in fact, is to inform the dialogue according to the idea of the public sphere developed by Habermas and concretised in the reciprocal maieutic of Danilo Dolci. In addition, we will have the chance to understand the extent to which students value and engage in activities away from traditional frontal lectures.

The expected results of this unusual didactic experience are to make the students reflect on the dark side of neo-liberalism and the dramatic and inhuman consequences of indifference towards those who, in the arena of competitiveness, can lose first their jobs, later their dignity as human beings and sometimes even their lives. Young people who will be HRM and recruiters should know how their decisions can make a difference to the lives of poor people, and they should learn that sharing their thoughts with others is the only way to clarify their will and give themselves the chance to make a difference in a challenging and complex world.

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Reflections on the Dialogical Roles of Learning Cities and Communities in the Making of Innovative Learning Ecosystems

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Keywords: dialogue, adult learning, community, collaboration, learning ecosystem

Abstract:

This paper and its presentation will examine and discuss the dialogical roles and potentials of learning cities and communities in the making of learning ecosystems. These roles, according to Longworth (Longworth, 2006) depend on a strong focus be paid to learners' needs and claims to be involved in the formation of learning communities as foundations of learning cities.

Since dialogue is a fundamental principle of learning cities and learning communities, the paper will not only underline the dialogical roles of learning cities and learning communities by framing them into a matrix of choices and limitations, but it will also argue, according to the main focuses of ESREA 2025-triennial conference, that learning cities have both a direct potential and responsibility to build their actions of effective knowledge transfer together with participating citizens, adult learners amongst them, on dialogical settings, mutuality and collaborations in the process of learning.

This paper will highlight that community learning can be turned as a strong body of learning cities and neighbourhoods, according to O' Tuama (2020) in the making of learning ecosystems where stakeholders, like higher education institutions, may form a characteristic role-model to bridge in between the economic, the social and the environmental for a good balance and humanistic turns in accordance with UN SDGs (UN, 2015) In such an evolution of participatory models dialogue and reflective learning pursue and strengthen trust and identity as necessary components of active citizenship which, according to Jarvis (2004), is an exercise of responsibility to collect and share knowledge within the learning ecosystem.

Another layer of this paper is the intergenerational scope which claim a particular scope of dialogue not only amongst adult learners, but also amongst various generations. Bajusz has reminded in her paper with the author (2024) that senior academies and other forms of Third Age Universities can be recognised as platforms of dialogue in which a special form of university lifelong learning can be seen as a potential building block for a learning ecosystem to share experience and form mindset amongst generations for identity-building and a collaborative society as inclusive community. (Németh, 2022)

The paper and its presentation, therefore, will demonstrate that learning cities may rely on dialogical learning and knowledge transfer as reliable path to inclusive and sustainable learning ecosystems as one key attribute of such a format is collective aim to be turned into action of partners as stakeholders to stand for values, exchange and mutual benefits through learning. (Bakker, 2024)

Another key aspect the paper will reflect upon is a set of conditions which strongly influence the choices and limitations of forming an effective dialogue since collaborative partners need trust, motivation and curiosity for change and for quality development so as to start moving towards

effective knowledge transfers framed into learning ecosystems having to clear potential to balance in between the social, the economic and the environmental. (Osborne, Kearns and Yang, 2013.)

The paper will put and answer few basic questions on the topic itself:

- What are the attributes of dialogue in a Learning City/Learning Community represented by adult learners?
- What are the choices of developing dialogue in a Learning City to raise participation?
- What are the limitations of dialogue in a Learning City?
- What lessons we may learn from this topic referring to the quality development of adult learning and education?
- Is there a role for adult learning and education in building learning ecosystems?

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Revisiting Knowles and Freire: reflections on the dialogic ethos of andragogy and (social)pedagogy as an essential theoretical framework for current critical educators

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Keywords: Andragogy; (Social)Pedagogy; Socio-pedagogical mediation; Dialogic; Critical Educators.

Abstract:

This paper of a theoretical and essayistic nature, seeks to retrieve basic ideas of two key-authors in the theoretical-scientific-field of adult education, namely: Malcolm Knowles (1913-1997) and Paulo Freire (1921-1997), with the aim of rehearsing a discussion that identify clues, of a theoretical-conceptual and theoretical-pedagogical nature, that can (re)illuminate the potential role of dialogue

(as a complex concept with ethical, methodological, theoretical, political and pedagogical dimensions) for the contemporary educator aiming to work critically in the current (un)communicative society.

If the quality of deliberation is the basis for democracy, as the conference theme claims, then democratic pedagogical relationship between the adult educator and the adult learner, is of almost interest because it allows to value contextual and experiential learning of the adult learners, with a respectable listening as a departing point attitude for recreating (critical) knowledge through collaborative reading of the world.

The methodological approach for revisiting the conceptual foundations of Andragogy and (social)Pedagogy, accordingly with these two seminal authors, has been outlining the epistemological lines and key aspects of each theoretical reflexions and methodological proposals and then, highlight through comparison the main convergences and divergences between these two contributions.

The outcome of this theoretical exercise¹ bring fundaments that are pertinent for a critical and humanistic educator, dealing with current global radicalised treats by means of educational praxis. Results shows a set of theoretical commons, autonomously developed by the authors studied, like the basic-constructs in theirs key-concepts of socio-pedagogical mediation and dialogicity. We argue, in favour of the need for further disseminate and recover the dialogic ethos, inherent to both contributions, in order to re-found central assumptions of social citizenship, with an expectation it can serve as roadmap for emancipatory educational intervention in today's word.

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The Rhythms of Utopian Education: Fostering Democratic Futures Through Utopian Dialogue

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Keywords: utopian dialogue, utopian education, future-ing, rhythmanalysis, adult democratic education

Abstract:

General description: This paper investigates how a folk high school for adults in Flanders (Belgium) can give shape to democratic futures by fostering a collective dialogue about the imaginary constitution of a new utopian society. It does so by conducting a 'rhythmanalysis' of the Flemish educational project Utopegem. Primarily influenced by the work of Henri Lefebvre (2007) and Dawn Lyon (2018), the notion of 'rhythm' is used in this paper to access and investigate the dimensions of time and space shaping the different phases of Utopegem. We show how these phases consist of different kinds of 'utopian dialogue', characterized by different temporalities (in terms of length, pattern & pace) and taking place at different locations (at marketplaces, in libraries, in a nature reserve...). We understand 'utopian dialogue' in this paper as a distinctive, pedagogical practice because it cultivates collective critique and attention to how the present might be different (Levitas (2013)). Through the analysis of the different 'rhythmic' interventions the educators undertake to

initiate this utopian dialogue, we discuss how Utopegem contributes to a democratization of the future.

Theoretical framework: The theoretical framework of this paper thus builds upon the multidisciplinary method of 'rhythmanalysis' as developed by Lefebvre (2007) and Lyon (2018). This framework has been applied in various ways within educational research (e.g. Alhadeff-Jones (2017), Dakka et al. (2024), Hartong et al. (2024)). This paper, however, combines this 'rhythmanalytical' lens with contemporary scholarship about utopian education (Levitas (2013), Webb (2016), Papastephanou (2024)) and about the role of 'the future' within both education (Facer (2019, 2021)) and democratic politics (White (2017, 2024)). As we outline in the paper, the combination of these frameworks offers us an array of conceptual tools suited to empirically investigate education as a 'future-ing practice', i.e. as a practice that co-shapes the future through the installation of different rhythms.

Methodology: We used two methods through which we identify and conceptualize the rhythmic interventions of Utopegem's educators: participatory observation and a focus group interview. We chose these methods to establish a fruitful dialogue between us and the educators of Utopegem, working outside the university, in the attempt to co-create a kind of 'living knowledge that can both inspire further academic research and inform adult education organisations (Facer & Enright (2016)).

Research goals and expected outcomes: The overarching goal of this paper is thus threefold: firstly, (1) we identify and describe the different rhythmic interventions the educators undertake to establish a 'utopian dialogue'. Secondly, (2) we outline both the possibilities and the limits of these rhythmic interventions to democratize the future. Thirdly, (3) through this 'rhythmanalysis' of Utopegem, we argue that the 'rhythmic constellation' of an adult democratic educational project plays a key role in fulfilling its ambition to democratize the future. As we show, then, the design of this 'rhythmic constellation' should not be focused on cultivating individuating processes of 'learning' or 'emancipation', but rather on the facilitation of sustainable, collective action.

Relevance to the conference theme: The project Utopegem comprises different phases in which a dialogue about a new, utopian society is initiated. In our paper, we show that the democratizing potential of 'utopian dialogue' can be strengthened through different rhythmic interventions educators undertake ('pop-up' interviews at public spaces, three-hour long workshops at different locations, an intensive weekend-long workshop...). What this paper then hopes to contribute to the conference and research about the role of 'dialogue' in adult education, is a focus on the different 'rhythmic' features that 'utopian dialogue' can consist of, and to highlight that the study of these 'rhythmic' features can offer us insight into the future-ing potential of this pedagogical practice.

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The Role of learning and education in trade union efforts to organise young and precarious workers

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Keywords: radical adult education, workers education, trade unions, young and precarious workers

Abstract:

Growing precarisation and linked challenges for organising young and precarious workers have become an increasingly important priority for trade unions worldwide. While a growing industrial relations literature examines union strategies to organise young and precarious workers and has identified innovative union strategies to organise these workers (Keune and Pedaci, 2020; Samaluk and Greer, 2021; Vandaele, 2019), there is a gap in understanding how trade unions actually learn to enter in dialogue, engage with young precarious workers and achieve their active participation within trade union movement. This paper addresses this gap by leaning also on radical adult and workers' education literature (Elias and Merriam, 2005; Samaluk and Kunz, 2022; Kump, 2012; Holst, 2018; Sauviat, 2015) to explore the role of learning and education in trade union efforts to organise young and precarious workers. It focuses on a case study of innovative Trade Union Youth Plus (TUYP) that emerged as a response to the effects of the 2008 global economic crisis and has since 2011 operated within the largest Slovenian trade union confederation. The analysis is based upon in-depth, also several follow up, interviews with TUYP activists and confederation and affiliated union's officials, which were carried out in Slovenia between 2015 and 2024, as well as organisational documents and material available on TUYP's and confederation's web and social media sites.

Findings show that education and learning played a crucial role in the establishment and development of TUYP and was happening both through informal dialogue, more formalised internal and external trade union education, as well as through their actual (field)work, where activists gradually developed their expertise and know-how on how to engage and organise young and precarious workers. Their innovative proactive fieldwork and communication tactics involved dialogical approaches to education in youth spaces and places with no trade union presence, which increased trade unions' dialogical capacity to promote a public pedagogy that enacts new concerns related to precarious work and youth precarity and to effectively engage with young and precarious workers. These dialogical approaches sparked mutual learning amongst youth, precarious workers and trade unions and brought to new effective tactics for changing youth and precarious workers' consciousness that ultimately led to their organising and unionisation.

Moreover, TUYP's dialogical approaches to education also exposed concerns and needs within the wider trade union movement to learn new approaches to organise young and precarious workers. TUYP consequently became recognised as an expert within the wider trade union movement, transferring its knowledge and know-how onto confederation, affiliated unions, as well as trade unions in other European countries on how to enter in dialogue and engage with young and precarious workers and increase their general dialogical capacity towards existing and potential members. TUYP is however not only an incubator of new knowledge and an advocate of critical pedagogy, but also acts as an entry point for new generation activists and is producing trade unions' next generation union leaders. TUYP's innovative practices grounded within radical adult education traditions thus also had significant transformative and revitalisation effects on the confederation, its affiliated unions, as well as the wider European trade union movement. This paper thus points to essential role of radical adult education in contemporary workers' education that should also cater for adults in their future capacity as workers and potential union members, with whom unions must first engage in dialogue in order to organise and unionise them. This paper thus contributes by showing that dialogical approaches to education are a necessary precondition for organising and unionising young and precarious workers and for revitalising trade unions.

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The SEED project - Dialogue, learning and knowledge transformation amongst universities, communities and policy groups

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Keywords: Dialogue, Capacity-Building, Epistemological Colonisation, Transformative community development

Abstract:

This paper presentation will explore the work of an Erasmus + capacity building in higher education project called SEED, Capacity building for Sustainable community-basEd Enterprise Development (2025-2027). SEED is a collaboration of universities, communities, civil society and local enterprise partners in Belgium, Ireland, Italy, Malawi and Zambia. SEED focuses on developing our capacities to work between communities, universities and policy-makers to better serve the needs of smallholder food producers and local enterprise within vulnerable communities in Malawi and Zambia as they cope with the challenging and complex challenges of global climate change, food insecurity, migration and extreme events. In so doing, we are engaging intercultural and interdisciplinary ways of communicating, learning and sharing knowledge through dialogic means, which is the focus of this paper. We give an overview of the aims and methodology of SEED, followed by an overview of the theoretical thinking and key issues emerging from this work.

The project seeks to develop innovative learning partnerships who will co-create and pilot new microcredential outreach courses on transformative community development, climate change and sustainable enterprise development for those working with and in smallholder communities and local enterprise in Malawi and Zambia. The microcredentials will be developed through ongoing collaboration and knowledge sharing, and mapped through a series of research and needs analysis within communities in Malawi and Zambia (conducted in 2016, 2023 and 2025). This mixed methods casestudy research tracks the ongoing collaboration and partnership building between four local universities, their communities and local enterprises as we seek to understand each other's worldviews and build shared knowledge and learning through dialogic means. We use transformative community development and participative research approaches based in community engagement, and informed by emergent research about climate change impact and responses. This process aims to enable deep collaboration between HEI researchers, community, policy and local enterprise partners in a specific local context, using a community of practice approach (Cundill et al. 2015; Ryan & Murphy, 2018).

As we work together, we have become aware of key issues in working across geographic, disciplinary, institutional and epistemological boundaries. As adult educators, we are interested in this paper in exploring the role of dialogue in enabling, revealing and silencing these issues as we learn to work together. A core dynamic is the pervasive power of structures and cultures associated with western knowledge, institutions and epistemologies (Yacob-Haliso et al 2021). We critically reflect on the institutional and epistemological colonisation occurring in higher education, international development and research due to the dominance of western scientific and

organisational discourses about performativity and growth. As we - as educators, researchers, policy actors, community and local enterprise partners - work together to consider the impact of complex global challenges for our communities and identify possibilities to build transformative capacity to respond (Kinol et al., 2023), we consider what it means in a research project such as this to create the conditions, relationships, time and space for critical reflection. Speaking across different continents, environments, knowledge bases and ways of being in the world, we wish to explore the role that dialogic approaches of adult and community education can play in revealing and exploring how epistemological colonisation operates (Freire, 1972; Falola, 2022).

We contend that there is an unprecedented opportunity for adult educators to highlight how epistemological and performativity colonisation contributes to global inequality but also how epistemological diversity can contribute to global cohesion.

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Self-Efficacy in Adult Learning: A Multidimensional Perspective

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Keywords: Self-efficacy, determinants of adult education, dimensions of learning, participation in adult education

Abstract:

Adult education is a multidimensional and complex phenomena that can be examined from various perspectives, encompassing micro-, meso-, and macro-level determinants (Boeren et al. 2010). Engagement in learning is a demanding process, requiring individual resources, substantial physical and psychological effort. Research shows that there are many factors fostering, as well as hampering participation in educational activities. In the presentation we would like to focus on readiness for action, which can be perceived as the foundation of commitment. One of the most relevant psychological constructs in this context is self-efficacy, originally proposed by Albert Bandura (1997, 1999).

In Bandura's theory self-efficacy does not guarantee success but rather enhances readiness to act, enabling individuals to undertake challenges, even those, surpassing current skill and competence levels (Bandura, 1999, p. 29). Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in the ability to act and perform the behaviors necessary to achieve specific outcomes, exercise control over one's motivation, behavior and social environment (Bandura, 1997). If an individual experiences failure in a particular domain and struggles to overcome challenges, the self-efficacy in that area is likely to be low. The micro-analytical perspective concentrates on a particular aspect of an individual's functioning, self-efficacy varies depending on the domain of functioning and the circumstances surrounding the behavior.

Based on these premises, we define the construct of "self-efficacy in adult learning" using Bandura's micro-analytical concept as an individual's beliefs of their ability to cope with the specific learning tasks. This approach does not refer to general self-efficacy but rather to its micro-analytical application, where self-efficacy levels depend on prior experiences. To develop the Self-Efficacy in Adult Learning Scale (SEALS) three theoretical frameworks have been applied: Coombs and Ahmed's framework of formal, non-formal, and informal learning (Malewski 2001, pp. 283–285). Areas of adult learning: personal, professional, and socio-cultural development, based on the pragmatism of John Dewey and neo-pragmatism of Richard Rorty (Melosik 2003, pp. 307–323). Knud Illeris' Dimensions of Learning theory, which identifies cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions of learning (2002, 2006). The operationalization of the theoretical construct involved formulating questionnaire statements describing situations where indicators of self-efficacy appear: dimensions of learning (cognitive, emotional, social), learning areas (personal, professional, socio-cultural), and learning contexts (formal, non-formal, informal).

The aim of this presentation is to examine variations in self-efficacy in adult learning based on socio-demographic factors. Furthermore, the relationships between SEALS and general self-efficacy (GSES), self-reported learning abilities, attitudes towards adult learning, participation in non-formal education and learning intentions will be explored. This analysis contributes to the dialogue between different disciplinary perspectives, integrating various factors from multiple fields of knowledge related to adult education.

The analyses are based on research carried out in Poland. The study was conducted using the CAWI method (n=635) on the online survey panel. The sample was designed to ensure diversity in educational attainment, place of residence, gender and labor market status while minimizing the overrepresentation of easily accessible groups, such as students.

We found no differences between males and females in the level of Self-Efficacy in Adult Learning and observed very weak associations between SEALS and age or education level. SEALS was positively correlated with general self-efficacy, self-reported learning abilities, attitudes toward learning, declared learning intentions, and participation in learning during adulthood. Our results confirm that SEALS is a valuable construct for explaining variations in adults' approaches to learning. Similar to other psychological traits, it is only weakly associated with socio-demographic variables suggesting that individual differences in self-efficacy are shaped more by personal and cognitive factors than by external social characteristics.

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Street schools in Quebec: a bridge between marginalized youth and society

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Keywords: educational accompaniment, street school, young adults

Abstract:

The life paths of marginalized young adults are inseparable from the current macro-social framework, characterized by profound inequalities (Piketty, 2019) and withdrawal into one self (Rosa, 2023). In Quebec, the rate of young people leaving without a diploma or qualification in general education recently increased by 2.5 points, going from 13.8% in 2020-2021 to 16.3% in 2021-2022. Such a high exit rate was recorded 10 years ago, in 2011-2012 (ISQ, 2024). In this context, back-to-school practices have a crucial significance in meeting the multiple needs of socially vulnerable young people who dropout from school (Vidal, Grossman and Bourdon, 2022). This article presents the results of a research conducted in dialogue with stakeholders (teachers, social assistants, young adults) from a street school, which is an autonomous community organization rooted in the Centre-du-Québec region (Canada). This organization offers recognized schooling and psychosocial support to young adults (aged 18 to 35) who have dropped out of the formal school system. In addition to high school completion, this “alternative educational practice aims at harm reduction, problem solving, social skills development and the acquisition of employment skills” (Bergeron, 2020, p.5).

The theoretical framework, methodology and results of this research are consistent with the theme of the 11th conference. Firstly, the objective responds to a need expressed by practitioners so they can gain recognition of their educational outcomes: to build a theoretical model of the educational accompaniment practiced by the organization. We achieved this objective by adopting the theoretical framework of the clinical point of view in the human sciences. This interdisciplinary approach involves understanding singular cases that cause problems with a global standpoint, and doing so with a perspective of social change and dialogue with stake holders (Rhéaume and Sévigny, 2018). Secondly, relying on the model of educational accompaniment produced by Desmarais (et al., 2012), the organization's practices were analyzed inductively using material assembled from various qualitative data. We conducted three days of participant observation and collected twenty pages of

ethnographic notes. These data enabled us to observe and participate in the educational accompaniment as it unfolded, but also to build trust with the young adults in anticipation of the formal interview. We listened to three young people during a biographical interview. This activity enabled us to understand the impact of the educational support experience on their entire life course. A restitution session was held with each young person, based on the thematic and biographical reconstruction of their interview, so that they could participate in the production of knowledge. We conducted three semi-structured interviews with two facilitators and a teacher working in the organization, in order to capitalize on their knowledge of action. Thirdly, the analysis of these data enabled us to understand the concept of educational accompaniment from two major angles: the relational axis and the training content axis (Desmarais, 2012). We discovered that these young adults are looking for recognition of their lives as marginalized youth, and for repair in their relationship with school and others. Street school workers meet this need through a variety of individual, group and collective activities. In this respect, the street school symbolically represents a bridge linking a marginalized group to the macro-social framework. This social link is a very positive development in today's world. In keeping with the conference theme, this article aims to disseminate the organization's model by focusing on the educational strategies and impacts associated with the relational axis of accompaniment. We will also emphasize the dialogical nature of the research methodologies we have used as part of this project.

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Supervising for an unknown future: Continued Professional Development through dialogue

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Keywords: Workplace-based learning, Adaptive Expertise, Informal Supervision

Abstract:

Aim: The purpose of this paper is to explore how supervisors can support adaptive expertise development through dialogical supervision in workplace settings.

Theoretical framework: In rapidly evolving clinical environments doctors-in-training must develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes to navigate a rapidly developing workplace environment (Croskerry, 2012). Adaptive expertise (AE) has emerged as a critical framework in health professions education, supporting the development of critical thinking, metacognitive processing, and decision-making (Branzetti et al., 2022; Mylopoulos et al., 2018). AE balances efficiency and innovation, enabling professionals to apply learned principles flexibly. However, the interplay between workplace learning and AE remains underexplored, particularly concerning the role of clinical supervision (Kua et al., 2021).

Furthermore, AE is closely tied to professional identity development. As healthcare professionals engage in workplace-based learning, they refine their self-concept and professional values through reflective and dialogical processes. As such, workplace learning is a cognitive and social learning process, where formal and informal interactions contribute to professional identity growth and skills refinement (Brandi & Iannone, 2021).

Supervision in informal, workplace-based settings, such as clinical wards, provides opportunities for such engagement. Supervisors play a crucial role in guiding doctors-in-training through learning experiences that cultivate AE, employing strategies such as metacognitive instruction, productive struggle, and reflexive dialogue. In a social learning perspective (Brandi & Elkjaer, 2012), professional identity is co-constructed through participation in meaningful practices. This perspective reinforces the notion that clinical supervision is not merely an instructional process but a shared meaning-making activity that shapes the entangled enterprise of expertise development and professional identity formation. By fostering an environment where doctors-in-training are encouraged to question, analyze, and integrate knowledge creatively, supervision becomes a conduit for dialogue, curiosity, and critical thinking. Dialogue, curiosity, and critical thinking are essential not only for professional competence but also for understanding how individuals can live and work together in complex social environments. As such, this study sought to explore the dialogical skills that underpin informal supervising session and how these support the development of AE competencies such as critical thinking, metacognitive processing, and decision-making.

Methodology: This study employed a focused ethnographic approach (Reeves et al., 2013) in two emergency departments to examine how supervision supports the development of AE. We observed 75 supervisory interactions between 27 doctors-in-training and seniors. While senior physicians provided most supervision, other healthcare professionals also contributed, offering diverse perspectives on supervisory practices. Data collection focused on understanding how supervisors facilitated dialogical learning and adaptive expertise development in high-stakes clinical settings (Gamborg et al., 2022).

Outcome: Our findings indicate that supervision serves two primary functions: closure and discovery. Supervision aimed at closure prioritized immediate decision-making and patient safety, employing approaches such as verification and reinforcement of established protocols. In contrast, discovery-oriented supervision incorporated instructional strategies that promote AE, such as fostering productive struggle and encouraging metacognitive reflection.

Our findings showcase that informal supervision as a workplace-based learning activity is a balancing act between structured guidance and exploratory learning in. Furthermore, effective supervision is a shared professional practice, requiring reciprocal dialogue and alignment of expectations.

Learning in workplace settings often involves resolving tensions between different professional commitments (Brandt & Elkjaer, 2024), paralleling our finding that supervisors must navigate between prioritizing patient safety (giving closure) and fostering independent decision-making (encouraging discovery learning). Supervision as a workplace-based learning activity is therefore characterized by dynamic shifts between closure and discovery based on contextual demands, allowing for both immediate patient safety and the long-term development of adaptive expertise.

Relevance to the conference theme: This paper illustrates how dialogue serves as a valuable learning mode in adult education, particularly in workplace-based settings where clinical supervision fosters reflective and expansive dialogue. Supervision functions as a dialogical process extending beyond immediate decision-making to develop critical thinking, professional identity, and expertise. This study contributes to discussions on how dialogue, mutual recognition, and dynamic mastery learning (Tanggaard, 2007) support dialogical skills, critical thinking, and metacognitive processing in adult education. By positioning supervision as a dialogical process, we highlight its role in shaping professional identity and adaptive expertise, ultimately addressing how we can live and learn together in evolving professional landscapes.

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Support and control – prison teachers' dialogue with inmates

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Keywords: education in prison, lifelong learning, adult education

Abstract:

Prison populations all over the world are increasing (Fair & Walmsley, 2024). This global trend raises questions about what society can do to reduce recidivism. Education in prison has emerged as a reasonable answer in many welfare states. The imprisoned population often lacks qualified work and academic skills, suffering from social exclusion, poverty and discrimination (Behan, 2021). Education is seen as a part of rehabilitation in preventing future criminal activity by providing possibilities to acquire skills and knowledge that can improve prisoners' chances to future employment or higher education.

Even though education as a cure for crime could be perceived to be in line with a humanistic tradition, it is important to highlight some critical aspects of competing views. Education tends to be seen as a gift to the inmate, rather than a right (Higgins, 2021). And the rehabilitative intention of education in prison is primarily aimed towards the offender rather than the person (Costelloe & Warner 2014). This is problematic from a perspective in which education is seen to achieve empowerment. To overcome this discrepancy, new knowledge is needed to understand education in prison through a lifelong learning lens. One important aspect of the phenomena is communication within the educational context. Therefore, this paper investigates prison teachers' dialogue with inmates in a shared practice.

An ethnographic approach was chosen in order to seek in-depth understanding of an educational setting in a prison, and its social world. Prisons by essence are anything but transparent. There are numerous bureaucratic challenges to overcome before getting access to a prison setting. These challenges were successfully handled, and findings are drawn from ethnographic fieldwork in a Swedish prison during May and June 2024. Data was collected in field notes from observations and semi-structured interviews with personnel and inmates. Swedish Ethical Review Authority approved an application for the project and the study was designed to follow Swedish Research Council's guidelines regarding, involving informed consent, confidentiality, and data handling.

The analysis is guided by Biesta's (2012, 2014, 2018) theoretical framework. He criticizes the modern understanding of education as something that needs to be strong and secure. Instead, he writes out the need for an education that is weak. If learning is about developing creative thinking, it should always entail a risk. Dialogue in a strong and predictable education is limiting dialogue to a dichotomy of either or. A weak education enables a dialogue as "ways of relating in which justice can be done to all who take part" (Biesta, 2014, p. 3). Is this possible in a practice in which relations of power are sanctioned by an institution in the name of safety and security?

The present study has a focus on teachers' dialogue with inmates, aiming to discuss how communication in an educational practice within a prison is affected by prison context. The findings illustrate how teachers' dialogue in prison is not only a pedagogical matter, but also a way of handling challenges that are specific for the prison context, such as safety and control. Even though teachers are motivated to approach the inmates as students, rather than offenders, the dialogue with inmates is embedded in an institutional context that hinders them having communication as equals. For example, teachers are expected to collect continuous information about the inmates from prison officers. There is a tension between how teachers strive to treat inmates as self-supporting adults, and their perceptions of them as children struggling with dysfunctional school backgrounds and learning disabilities.

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Teachers' Social Representations of Folk High Schools

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Keywords: Folk High School, adult education, teacher, dialogue, social representation

Abstract:

Introduction and Aim: Dialogue — communication and interaction — is central to social representations and is constructed through interactions and communication between people (Purkhardt, 1993). Within the dialogue at Folk High Schools, various social representations about the schools and the teachers' work are shaped. This study examines the social representations held by

teachers at Swedish Folk High Schools who work in long courses, defined as programs lasting one year or more.

Folk High Schools, a form of popular/liberal adult education within the Swedish adult education system, offer a wide range of courses across multiple fields. Compared to the formal school system, Folk High Schools have greater autonomy, allowing them to adapt their educational offerings to participants with a unique course selection. According to Nylander (2014), Swedish Folk High Schools can be seen as a remarkably heterogeneous group of educational institutions.

There are no formal requirements for teacher certification at Folk High Schools; instead, the schools themselves determine the competencies required of their teachers. As a result, the educational backgrounds and previous work experiences of teachers can vary significantly. Nonetheless, Folk High Schools generally maintain high standards (Andersson, Rudberg, Rydenstam, & Svensson, 2013). Just as Folk High Schools are diverse, so too are their teachers, which raises interest in what unites and differentiates teachers' conceptions of Folk High Schools. Understanding these shared and divergent representations can enhance comprehension of Folk High Schools and what it means to be a teacher within this educational context. The purpose of the study is to contribute further knowledge about Folk High Schools, exploring both their internal similarities and differences.

The overarching research questions examined in this study are: What conceptions do Folk High School teachers have about Folk High Schools and about working as teachers in these institutions?

Theory and Method: The study employs social representations as both a theoretical framework and a research method. This theory focuses on individuals' conceptions — social representations — and the regular social interactions among people within a collective context. Through interaction, shared everyday knowledge is formed, which facilitates understanding and smooths daily life. The theory of social representations emphasizes how multiple subjects — for instance, a group of Folk High School teachers — collectively create representations about working at a Folk High School.

The study was conducted using focus group interviews with 30 teachers from five different Folk High Schools. Since focus groups are inherently dialogical, they are particularly useful for exploring socially shared knowledge, attitudes, and opinions (Marková et al., 2007). The participating teachers had worked at Folk High Schools for at least five years, teaching in one of the following programs: general courses, vocational training, or aesthetic education.

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Teaching Through the Experience and Dialogue: The Gap Between Personal Philosophy of Teaching and Teaching Style

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Keywords: adult educators, experience in adult education, dialogue in education, teaching beliefs, teaching style

Abstract:

There are two mostly unquestionable premises in adult education: the significance of experience participants bring to this process; and dialogue as a way of questioning those experiences and making connection to the prior ones, which leads to the construction of meanings and new knowledge. Looking through the lenses of different adult learning theories (e.g. experiential, transformative, socio-critical) each of them, in its own unique way, elaborates the role of these concepts in adult teaching and learning. While theoretical thought in adult education undoubtedly emphasizes the dialogue and experience, the question remains - what is happening in the practice? It is not rare that when certain concepts become established and cease to be questioned, they are taken 'for granted' and often practiced without deeper reflection on their purpose necessary for the effectiveness in their implementation. Many authors (e.g. Hiemlich i Norland, 2002; Jenkins, 2011; Pratt et al., 2016; Schonwetter et al., 2002) advocate the view that the quality of teaching depends on the alignment of what we believe in and what we do in practice. Considering that, it is not enough to apply different strategies, methods and techniques that allow us to respect the experience of the participants and encourage them to engage in dialogue. First, we must believe in their importance and effect they are making in teaching and learning process. The aim of the ongoing research within my doctoral dissertation is to examine the congruence between adult educators' beliefs system (i.e. personal philosophy of teaching) and their activities (i.e. teaching style). Following Pratt's model of teaching perspectives (Pratt et al., 2016), two scales of his Teaching Perspectives Inventory (Pratt & Collins, 2020) have been used for researching personal teaching philosophy and teaching style, along with the questionnaire used to examine various factors that may influence educators' beliefs and activities. Sample included 191 educators teaching in formal and non-formal adult education. Starting from the quantitative approach, descriptive and analytical statistical methods were used. From the perspective of dialogue and experience, several significant data were obtained and will be presented in this paper. First of all, factor analysis yielded a different five-factor structure of the examined concepts. Among the factors of the empirically obtained model of personal teaching philosophy, "Teaching from and through the experience" emerged as a new factor. Similarly, in the model of teaching styles, factor "Teaching through the experience and dialogue" was defined. The data highlights that the significance of these concepts is firmly recognized and integrated into the thoughts and actions of educators. However, respondents' assessments on these factors indicate the gap between teaching beliefs and teaching practice. While a distinct personal teaching philosophy proved to be the least dominant philosophy, a teaching style focused on experience and dialogue was assessed as one of the more dominant. The observed mismatch raises the question of how authentic and purposeful those activities are? Asking questions, evoking experiences and facilitating exchange, if not well thought out and grounded in beliefs about the importance of experience and dialogue in adult learning, can easily be reduced to form rather than purpose. Moreover, results on relation between the factors and

different educational, professional and contextual variables indicate general tendency in training programs for adult educators and in the broader educational discourse to praise the value of experience and dialogue. However, there seems to be more emphasis on providing solutions on how to apply these concepts in practice, instead on raising deeper awareness of their purpose and developing educators' beliefs regarding them. Without it, there is a risk of missing the full potential for its high-quality implementation in practice.

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Technological change and adult training participation (Technology_and_AET)

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Keywords: Non-formal learning, lifelong learning, technological change, AI

Abstract:

This study examines the relationship between technological change and adult participation in adult education and training, utilising data from the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC). Technological change is a significant driver influencing labour market dynamics, often leading to shifts in skill requirements and job functions (Acemoglu et al., 2022). As workplaces increasingly integrate advanced technologies, there is a growing need for employees to acquire new technological competencies to remain competitive. This necessitates continuous participation in adult education and training (Aitken & Singh, 2023). Through formal, non-formal and informal learning, people can train themselves to work with new technologies. However, the extent to which technological change motivates or deters individuals from engaging in adult education and training remains underexplored.

PIAAC provides a comprehensive dataset that includes information on adults' literacy, numeracy, and problem-solving proficiency and detailed background variables related to education, employment, and training experiences. Building on the work of Koster and Brunori (2021) and Hess et al. (2023), we investigate if more exposure to technological change at the workplace results in a higher likelihood of participation in training.

For this investigation, we employ objective and subjective measures to assess the impact of technological advancements on adult education and training participation controlling for factors like

gender, age and education level. The objective measure is derived from the work of Webb (2020), which quantifies the extent of vulnerability to technological change. He identifies three scores; 1) AI-exposure, 2) digitalisation exposure and 3) robotisation exposure. We use these scores to measure different types of technological development. The subjective measure captures individuals' experience of various types of technological changes, like robotisation, outsourcing and ICT, within their work environment in the past three years and is part of the PIAAC questionnaire. We derive the participation in non-formal education for work from the PIAAC dataset as well. Special focus is on the different types of adaptation to technological change, do people increase their technological skills or do they substitute by moving to more social skills?

The first results indicate that people working in occupations with more exposure to AI and digitisation are more likely to have experienced technological change in the past three years. They are more likely to participate in adult education and training. Both experienced and objective technological change increase the likelihood of participation in adult education in training. Our next step is to analyse which of the two is more important for determining the likelihood of participation, do people value their experience, or are they able to identify trends and prepare by obtaining new qualifications in time?

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Three Types of Biographical Learning: A Narrative Dialogue Between Life Experiences

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Keywords: biographical learning, learning process, biographical narrative interviews, informal learning

Abstract:

This paper explores biographical learning, the process through which adults construct knowledge and meaning from their life experiences. Biographical learning is often understood as encompassing all that occurs during biographical narration—specifically, when individuals articulate their life stories. This study critically examines how biographical learning can be methodologically identified within narration.

Biographical learning highlights the role of personal experiences and narratives in the learning process. It emerged in the 1990s as part of a broader shift in the social sciences towards a focus on subjective experiences and autobiographical storytelling (Chamberlayne et al., 2000; Alheit & Dausien, 2002). This approach is particularly relevant to adult education, where it provides a means of integrating life experiences into educational processes (Alheit et al., 1995).

Biographical learning is characterised as a self-directed, autopoietic process, in which individuals reflexively organise their experiences to generate personal coherence, identity, and meaning within their life histories (Alheit & Dausien, 2002). By examining the role of the research interview in facilitating self-reflection for the narrator, this paper aligns with a key theme of the conference's open call: "The common trend in most approaches to dialogue is the possibility and the desire to build on reflexivity, since meeting the other is a way of looking at ourselves, revealing (often by contrast) our presuppositions, narratives, and representations."

This study investigates how narrative storytelling within research interviews functions as a site of reflexivity and learning. The research draws upon two datasets. The first consists of biographical narrative interviews with non-traditional students in higher education—specifically, adult learners aged 26 and above who experienced an educational hiatus of at least one year before entering university. The second dataset comprises biographical narrative interviews with members of the general adult population, reflecting on their lived experiences in an urban context.

The biographical narrative interviews lasted between one and two hours and followed a three-phase structure (Wengraf, 2001). First, respondents were introduced to an initial narrative question, inspired by Lieblich et al. (1998) and Rosenthal (2004). This open-ended prompt aimed to encourage a narrative approach, allowing respondents to independently shape their stories and determine which aspects they deemed significant (Flick, 1998). Following the initial narrative prompt, respondents were given time to outline their stories and reflect before beginning their uninterrupted narration. Throughout the process, the researcher took notes on aspects requiring clarification, ensuring that the natural flow of narration remained uninterrupted (Rosenthal, 1993).

Through systematic narrative analysis, the study identifies three distinct types of biographical learning:

1. Learning by analogy – the establishment of connections between two experiences that are temporally distant within one's biography.
2. Learning by authority – the influence of a significant person on the narrator's life trajectory, shaping their self-understanding from the past into the present.
3. Learning by audit – the inverse process, in which newly acquired biographical knowledge reshapes the interpretation of past experiences.

The paper examines the role of these forms of learning within narration, both in the educational context and among adults who are not engaged in formal education. By verifying these findings across different learning trajectories, the study refines and expands the conceptual definition of biographical learning as the creation of meaningful connections between biographical experiences.

This process is instrumental in the continuous construction and reconstruction of personal biography and identity. Identity, in this view, emerges both as a precondition and a consequence of biographical learning, reinforcing its dynamic and dialogical nature.

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Tracing the history of humanism in international education: The role of the UNESCO Institute for Education (UIE) and the International Review of Education (IRE)

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Keywords: International Review of Education; UNESCO Institute for Education; humanism, Gottfried Hausmann, Paulo Freire.

Abstract:

On the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the International Review of Education (IRE) – the oldest comparative education journal in Europe and one of the leading journals in the area of adult education and lifelong learning –, this article looks back at the history of varied expressions of humanistic thinking in international and comparative education as reflected in the activities and publications of the UNESCO Institute for Education (UIE) (today, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning) and its journal, the IRE. This paper fits most closely within the historical sub-theme of the conference theme (“The history of adult education as a source of inspiration for the development of dialogue in and about the field of adult education and learning”) as it enters into a dialogue with the past; one of the rationales for the paper is to explore what we can learn from humanistic thinking in international education. It connects with that sub-theme also insofar as it focuses on scholars who believed in the critical importance of dialogue in education, such as Gottfried Hausmann and Paulo Freire. The paper is timely as the humanist perspective, which constituted a big part of UIE’s and UNESCO’s legitimacy, is in decline (Elfert, 2018).

The paper will be structured in four sections: It will begin by outlining the range of educational thinkers from different but overlapping humanistic traditions who have played a role in the foundation of the institute and/or have published in the IRE. The second section will introduce UIE’s policy-related research in the field of international assessments, lifelong learning and literacy during the first four decades of its existence. The third section will focus on creative, arts-based and intergenerational literacy projects initiated by UIE, emphasising the influence of Gottfried Hausmann and Paulo Freire. The final section will contrast these humanistic-hermeneutic approaches to

education and literacy with the outcome-based and utilitarian approaches that dominate today's global education discourse, and reflect on the contemporary use of ideas with a humanistic connotation re-appearing in a truncated and marketized form, such as social and emotional learning.

The first three parts of the paper draw on articles authored by Gottfried Hausmann, Paulo Freire and other humanist education scholars, with particular attention to literature published in the IRE and by the UIE. The final section, while also referring to articles published in the IRE, draws on contemporary policy reports by international organizations, in particular UNESCO and the OECD, and critical scholarly analyses of those reports.

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Transformations of the policy of education based on scientific foundation and proven experience in Swedish folk high schools, 1974-2024

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Keywords: policy, scientific foundation, proven experience, folk high school, curriculum theory

Abstract:

The idea of basing professional practice on evidence has been discussed worldwide for decades across various societal sectors, with education being a key focus (Eryaman & Schneider, 2017). Within the education sector, a prominent discourse concerns the issue of integrating research and practice-based knowledge to, among others, improve student learning. Aligning with such discourse, Sweden became the first country to mandate by Law in 2010 that education in the public school system must rest on scientific foundation and proven experience (Rapp et al., 2017). Consequently, all teachers in compulsory and upper secondary schools, as well as municipal adult education, must adapt to this law. To help teachers with interpretation and implementation, educational authorities provide guidance on how research-based methods and routines can improve teaching (e.g., Swedish National Agency for Education, 2014, 2020). However, one of the main adult education institutions in Sweden, the folk high schools (FHS), is governed by different legislation.

FHS are instead based on the ideal of "free and voluntary" popular education (Bill 2013/14:172; Laginder et al., 2013). This freedom allows schools to develop their own courses and organize teaching in ways they seem fit. No state-reinforced standardized curricula regulate these courses. At the same time, such freedom poses challenges for teachers in interpreting their teaching mission, particularly regarding central pedagogical concepts (Harlin, 2014). Although more independent than the public school system, FHS are influenced by broader societal ideas and discourses within education. Thus, for example, policies of basing teaching on scientific foundation and proven experience are picked up by FHS themselves; this is the case with those schools who provide the youth recreation leader program which prepares adults for work with children and young people. Since 1991 these schools, in collaboration with the non-profit umbrella organization Fritidsledarskolorna, state that education must build on scientific foundation and from 2010 also on

proven experience (Ruschkowski, 2020). In doing so, these schools exercise their freedom by governing themselves in line with national policies that formally do not legally regulate their activities. With such freedom of self-governing, the ways in which these policies are picked up within FHS become an interesting empirical case for further scrutiny.

This study aims to identify how key policy actors within Swedish FHS interpret and transform the policy of education based on scientific foundation and proven experience over time. The selection of actors, based on their relevance to the youth recreation leader program, includes Fritidsledarskolorna, the Swedish National Board of Education, the Swedish National Council of Adult Education, and the Swedish government. Drawing on curriculum theory (Lindensjö & Lundgren, 2014), the study enables analysis of what constitutes valid knowledge, the purpose for its selection, and who is involved in the selection process. The analysis builds on 124 policy documents, totaling 7300 pages, including annual organization reports, curricula, and government bills and reports spanning from 1976 to 2024. Preliminary findings indicate three transformations: (1) from education based on proven experience to education based on scientific foundation; (2) from education based on scientific foundation as the teaching content to scientific foundation as the teaching carry-out; and (3) from the purpose of education based on scientific foundation and proven experience being uniformity to the purpose being quality.

This study contributes to the dialogue on how policy is shaped in schools that exercise their freedom by self-governing in line with national policies that formally do not legally regulate their activities. Such contribution informs which conditions of meaning are made possible through policy, which in turn shapes/governs some of the

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Transformative learning with and through peers: the role of dialogue and reciprocity

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Keywords: transformative learning, peers, dialogue, reciprocity

Abstract:

This paper aims to explore the role of peer dialogue as a catalyst for transformative learning processes. The research is based on a study of executives who are members of the Association Progrès du Management (Apm, <https://www.apm.fr/>), a professional network which has developed a dialogical learning system to improve individuals' professional and personal development. The research highlights the importance of dialogue as a lever for transforming executives' frames of reference, thereby actualizing transformative learning perspectives (Mezirow, 1991, 2001; Hoggan, 2016). In this research, dialogue is conceived as a space for emancipation and co-construction of knowledge (Freire, 1974), and explored through the lens of peer interactions in non-formal and informal learning settings.

The research is based on different theoretical constructs. First, transformative learning is examined through the lens of critical dialogue and a conceptualization of action and learning driven by communicative rationality (Habermas, 1987). This perspective emphasizes the importance of reflexive processes aimed at questioning pre-existing frames of reference and dialogue serves as a key mechanism for transforming thought patterns by enabling individuals to confront their certainties and generate cognitive dissonances conducive to the emergence of new perspectives (Cranton, 1994; Formenti & West, 2018; Brookfield, 1995).

Second, reciprocal learning, grounded in the dynamics of peer relationships, emerges as a crucial vector for transforming professional practices. Drawing on Mauss' work (1925), this approach underscores the importance of reciprocity in exchanges, fostering mutual learning and the co-construction of meaning and knowledge (Alter, 2023; Hénaff, 2010). This contributes to the establishment of an "educational reciprocity" thereby creating favorable conditions for joint engagement and competency development (Labelle, 1996; Eneau, Bertrand & Lameul, 2012).

Finally, from a critical perspective, dialogue also asserts itself as a tool for awareness-raising, emancipation, and professional development. The dialogical approach particularly facilitates the emergence of learning communities, where interactions contribute to constructing a space conducive to personal and collective transformation (Eneau, 2005; Jézégou & Eneau, 2013).

This theoretical framework anchors learning in a collaborative dynamic, where peer exchanges act as catalysts for critical reflection and the renewal of professional practices.

The qualitative research method employed is based on thematic discourse analysis. Data were collected between November 2023 and April 2024 through semi-structured interviews with 27 executives who are members of Apm. The analysis followed three phases: (1) thematic coding of executives' discourse to identify recurrent themes related to learning and experienced

transformations; (2) analysis of dialogical dynamics among peers by examining testimonies on exchanges and their influence on critical reflection processes; (3) interpretation through the lens of transformative learning theories and reciprocal relationships.

The initial findings suggest that executives undergo three major phases of evolution and transformation in their journey with Apm:

- Integration Phase: Discovery of dialogical, interlocutive, and deliberative practices; acquisition of technical skills and initial trust-building among peers.
- Consolidation Phase: Deepening of dialogical exchanges among peers, transformation of leadership posture, and alignment between personal values and professional practices.
- Maturation Phase: Critical reflection on leadership legacy, peer mentoring, and the integration of dialogical values into corporate culture.

This progression highlights a transformation process rooted in reciprocity and dialogue, which will allow us to discuss these results regarding our multi-referential theoretical framework. The results reveal that integration into a peer network such as Apm fosters a structured evolution process. This process relies on dialogical interactions that serve as levers for critical reflection, facilitating the questioning of pre-existing thought patterns, thus enabling executives to undergo profound transformations in their frames of reference. Furthermore, reciprocity in exchanges among executives promotes mutual learning and the co-construction of knowledge, reinforcing engagement and active participation among executives. The results also show that peer dialogue provides a space for knowledge reappropriation, strengthening executives' ability to act critically and autonomously in their professional environments.

Finally, this research tends to confirm the structuring role of dialogue and reciprocity in the continuing training of executives, even if, given the limitations of the study, learning to engage in this dialogue does not seem to be not self-evident.

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Transforming care through education: developing a training model for integrating educational approaches in residential facilities for older adults

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Keywords: educational approach; dementia; training; residential care facilities; older adults.

Abstract:

In a rapidly ageing society, the increasing number of older adults, many of whom experience frailty and diminished self-sufficiency, presents critical challenges for care systems. This scenario has led to growing attention towards care models that go beyond a purely medical approach, fostering a psycho-social perspective that enhances quality of life and self-determination (Baltes et al., 1980; Coons & Mace, 1996; Cornelison, 2016; Feil, 1993; Jones, 1999; Kitwood, 1997). Within this evolving context, adult education emerges as a powerful lever for rethinking care practices through dialogical approaches that foster shared understanding and collective reflection. The training of care professionals plays a crucial role in developing skills suited to the complexity of caregiving, particularly for individuals with dementia. This research highlights the importance of promoting a dialogical learning environment within professional education, emphasising its essential role in enabling caregivers to engage with the ethical, emotional, and relational dimensions of their role. In this context, dialogue becomes a key driver in fostering competence, empathy, and critical reflection in adult learning (Sala et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the vulnerabilities of older adults, revealing the need for flexible and responsive training programmes that address not only physical needs but also psychological and social well-being (Ah et al., 2023; Altieri & Santangelo, 2021; Ayalon et al., 2021). This study aims to develop and assess a training model for professionals assisting frail older adults, integrating educational approaches into the daily practices of residential care facilities. The model is grounded in a conception of adult learning as a dialogical and transformative process, where professional growth is nurtured through reciprocal exchange, narrative practices, and critical engagement. The research employs a mixed-methods methodology (Amaturo & Punziano, 2016; Creswell, 2003; Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Study 1 is an exploratory investigation combining qualitative and quantitative components. The qualitative phase includes focus groups and semi-structured interviews with healthcare and social care professionals, which highlight the need for training tools that enhance communication, relational, and interprofessional skills (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Sala et al., 2020). Particular emphasis is placed on non-pharmacological approaches to dementia, empathetic communication, and the value of continuous learning. These findings informed the design of a pre-experimental intervention (Study 2) involving a single-group pre-test and post-test design (Gay et al., 2009), that involved approximately 200 professionals, and the effectiveness of the training intervention was assessed using the Dementia Attitude Scale (DAS-6) (Clark et al., 2023). Results indicate a statistically significant improvement in

participants' attitudes towards dementia, suggesting a shift towards more inclusive and person-centred perspectives. This study contributes to a paradigm shift in the culture of care, viewing adult education not as the mere transmission of knowledge, but as a dialogical space for mutual learning, ethical awareness, and professional transformation. The dialogical dimension emerges as central both in the training methodology, characterised by collective reflection and co-construction of meaning, and in the professional practices that participants are encouraged to adopt. Practical implications extend beyond the healthcare sector to caregiver education policies, emphasising the need for curricula that incorporate dialogue, reflexivity, and empathy as fundamental tools for high-quality care. By fostering a culture of meaningful communication and shared learning, adult education can contribute to the development of socially responsive and ethically engaged caregiving practices—aligned with the broader societal need for dialogue as a foundation for recognition, inclusion, and democratic life.

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Transforming professional practices: the role of dialogue in nursing home settings

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Keywords: Dialogic interactions – nursing homes – professional dynamics – prole definition – interprofessional collaboration

Abstract:

This communication is part of a thesis focusing on the transformation of professions in nursing homes through the adoption of digital devices for resident support. It specifically examines dialogic interactions between professional groups and their role in redefining professional practices and dynamics. In this context, this communication more specifically examines how dialogic interactions between professional groups in nursing homes influence the redefinition of roles and the adaptation of professional practices. By focusing on groups directly involved in resident support, it analyses how these dialogic interactions, whether cooperative, conflictual, or negotiated, contribute to the transformation of professional dynamics within the institutional context of nursing homes.

From a professional study approach, professional groups offer a theoretical framework that goes beyond Anglophone notions of professions and small trades (Lucas & Dubar, 1994). These groups, bearers of a collective identity, grouped under a common name (psychologist, nursing assistant, acting nursing assistant, etc.), play a role in the daily support of residents in nursing homes (Demazière et al., 2009). Dialogic interactions between these groups are marked by relationships of cooperation and conflict, shaping professional practices and redefining their roles in a process of daily adjustments (Abbott, 1988; Bucher & Strauss, 1992; Vezinat & Singly, 2016). These dialogues reflect organisational transformations where each group adjusts its practices in response to institutional expectations and technological changes.

This research relies on a qualitative methodology with differentiated data to analyse dialogic interactions between professional groups in nursing homes. It is based first on observations (16) conducted within nursing homes with professionals and residents, allowing the relational dynamics and practices to be grasped in their real context. Then, semi-structured interviews (10) and note-taking (23) were conducted with professionals occupying different roles (caregivers, activity coordinators, psychologists, managers, etc.), as well as with commercial representatives whose activity is involved in presenting technological products in nursing homes and constitutes an external viewpoint with professional groups in nursing homes (9). This data allows for the analysis of how professional groups structure themselves, interact, and redefine their practices.

Dialogic interactions between professional groups in nursing homes contribute to a constant redefinition of roles and practices. They influence organisational dynamics and the daily adaptation of professions. The collaboration between psychologist and activity coordinator groups in organising activities illustrates the importance of interprofessional adjustments to meet the needs of residents according to the professional activity territory. These cooperations allow for adaptation to institutional constraints while enriching professional practices. However, tensions emerge around

professional boundaries, such as those opposing activity coordinators and nursing assistants in the management and content of animation activities. These constant negotiations reveal issues of jurisdiction and professional recognition, characteristic of the dynamics in nursing homes. These dialogic interactions shape practices and contribute to an institutional reconfiguration, where professional roles evolve to meet organisational and technological demands.

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Transforming the approach to vulnerable adults among professionals: Results of an Italian project using dialogic methods.

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Keywords: Vulnerability; Vulnerable Adults; ALE Research; Dialogic and Communicative Methods

Abstract:

The issue of vulnerability has become a central point of discussion in the ongoing discourse on social inclusion, unemployment policies, and the well-being of individuals and communities in Italy. This topic has gained urgency due to its multifaceted nature and implications, affecting a significant number of adults who often encounter multiple challenges.

Vulnerability can be defined as the concrete and visible result of human fragility, experienced during the life course (Ennuyer, 2017). However, it is also the consequence of unworthy social contexts and restrictive personal living conditions that compromise the physical, psychological and emotional integrity of individuals, ultimately leading to phenomena of labour market exclusion and social marginalization (Butler, 2016; Garrau, 2018).

This article discusses the results of a research project carried out in the framework of the third mission of an Italian university. As a form of public engagement, the project provided socio-educational professionals with theoretical concepts and empirical evidence exploring the topic within an interdisciplinary interpretive framework. Using specific languages and multiple tools, the project aimed at transforming the approach to vulnerability in adulthood, focusing on re-establishing the communication between vulnerable groups and local communities and services (Unesco, 2013).

The aim of the article is to argue that vulnerability in adulthood constitutes a key concept for adult ALE research that can be approached through dialogic and communicative methods. Vulnerability also poses a significant challenge for ALE research as it pertains to the capacity of fragile

adults to fully actualise themselves and to thrive within empowering, supportive, and inclusive environments.

The relevance of this perspective to the conference theme is underscored by the fact that the project design is rooted on the perspective of vulnerable individuals, with the objective of equipping professionals with the competencies an inclusive, participatory, dialogic, and communicative approach (Toiviainen et al., 2019).

The theoretical framework underpinning the study is based in three main conceptualisations: the Capability Approach (Nussbaum, 2004), the Community Care approach (Tronto, 1994) and the Self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000). These constructs provided the foundations for the development of strategies aimed at enhancing the training of professionals by facilitating dialogic and shared learning approaches.

The research project was conducted with local social organisations, training institutions and collaborative partnerships, with a significant social, economic, environmental and educational impact. Networks have emerged from a new form of dialogue between social and educational services providers, communities and facilitated dialogue among the various professionals involved.

The research design combined training workshops, study visits, and other activities with the local area. It employed a mixed-method approach to data collection (Creswell, Piano Clark, 2007), using both quantitative (questionnaires) and qualitative (individual and group writings, focus groups) methods (Hesse-Biber, Johnson, 2017). Research question is: to what extent can professionals provide a quality service based on dialogue and communication to provide services focused on the empowerment of vulnerable adults? This approach was selected to gain insight of the training experience of 50 participants in understanding and acting with vulnerability from a more expansive and integrated communicative perspective, extending it beyond the limits of specific forms of fragility and encompassing the ability to navigate complex interpretative and dialogic situations.

The results show how professionals, local services, and communities have developed new and shared skills to empower vulnerable adults and address their needs for training and social support tailored to the needs of fragile adults. The project design provided the framework to develop dialogic community care networks that promote social inclusion and potentially improve the often-unexpressed voices of vulnerable people.

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The Tripple Helix: A new model for the life course in the context of greater longevity

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Keywords: Triple helix; life course model; intergenerational dialogue

Abstract:

Greater longevity calls for a rethink of the way we model the life course (Scott 2023). It signals not just a stretching out of the population and greater numbers of older people, but a change in the relationships between generations. This demands a non-linear approach to the life course. My paper outlines the case for a triple helix as just such a model, enabling a dynamic and interactive approach. The three strands of the helix are the biological, the psychological and the socio-cultural.

I will outline the triple helix model and discuss its implications for life course analysis. I give particular attention to the interactions between the three strands, and how these make simple linear approaches inadequate, conceptually and empirically. I draw on research literature from several disciplines and from interviews with some 50 people. The interviewees from several different countries, and range in age from 13 to 88. I shall give particular attention to varying attitudes to age.

The paper will conclude with some reflections in the implications for better intergenerational dialogue and the role lifelong learning may play in this.

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Turning the Tables: From Top-Down Metrics to Bottom-Up Perspectives on Quality in Folk High Schools

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Keywords: Quality assurance, Folk high schools, Bottom-up approaches, Practice-based innovation, Reflective practice

Abstract:

Quality assurance has become central to education systems worldwide (Mufic & Fejes, 2022), and Swedish folk high schools are now undergoing a similar transformation (Swedish Government Official Reports, 2024:24). As part of institutional popular education, folk high schools have traditionally enjoyed greater autonomy in teaching methods and organization than other educational institutions. Rooted in social movements and ideological heritage, they differ significantly from the rest of the education system, which is more directly shaped by government directives. Consequently, they have not been subject to the same quality assurance frameworks as other schools. However, recent governance reforms have introduced national quality indicators and expanded systematic quality work (SQW), following recommendations from the Swedish National Audit Office (2022). This shift raises critical questions about how these measures align with folk high schools' educational principles.

The introduction of standardized quality indicators has sparked debate, particularly at the grassroots level. While SQW aims to enhance educational outcomes, it increasingly relies on predefined national metrics. Scholars argue that such top-down approaches often overlook local conditions and the diverse realities of schools (Bergh, 2015; Dahler-Larsen, 2019).

This study challenges the top-down approach by exploring how quality is defined and enacted in folk high schools from a bottom-up perspective. It seeks to answer: *How does quality emerge when practitioners define and shape it in relation to their professional practice and local context?* The study is framed within practice-based innovation (Ellström, 2010), which highlights the dynamic tension between top-down metrics and bottom-up perspectives. This tension can generate innovative quality assurance approaches where local practitioners are not passive recipients of standardized measures but active participants in shaping quality within their unique contexts. This perspective offers valuable insights into how folk high schools navigate the evolving landscape of quality assurance while preserving their distinct educational principles.

Additionally, the study draws on Bornemark's (2018) concept of professional judgment, which emphasizes context-sensitive, experience-based decision-making beyond standardized procedures, integrating practical wisdom and ethical reflection. It also incorporates Schön's (2011) concept of the reflective practitioner, describing professionals who critically reflect on their actions and continuously adapt their practice through learning.

Empirical material comes from a series of collaborative workshops involving researchers and practitioners, including teachers, caretakers, administrative staff, and dormitory supervisors. These workshops were designed as iterative and dynamic rather than predetermined, allowing insights from each session to inform subsequent discussions. Participants engaged in collective reflection, redefining quality in relation to their lived experiences and institutional settings.

Expected outcomes include a conceptual framework for discussing quality in folk high schools that is both dialogical and context-sensitive. By centering practitioners' perspectives, this study contributes to ongoing debates on quality assurance in education and highlights how participatory approaches can be designed and implemented in institutional settings.

This study aligns with the conference theme by addressing dialogue in and through adult education, particularly in the context of quality assurance in Swedish folk high schools. It explores how practitioners and policymakers can engage in meaningful dialogue to balance top-down

governance with bottom-up professional agency, ultimately shaping quality in ways that respect both regulatory demands and the unique ethos of folk high schools.

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U

Understanding Adults Career from a lifelong perspective – In search for bridging between theoretical approaches and practices of career guidance, adult education and learning

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Keywords: learning, career guidance, social representations, biographical learning, agency

Abstract:

Although the vast majority of adults in the Western world have had or currently have a vocational life and career, the latter is not frequently analyzed as a lifelong learning experience and process. Most analyses of learning processes in careers pertain to young people (Law, 1996) and are focused on dominant policy discourses that often emphasize a simplified view of learning, primarily focusing on strategic aims of skills provisions through formal education for companies to maintain competitiveness in the market. When adult learning is approached, there is a tendency to either emphasize the process of workplace learning (Fenwick, 2010), represented by diverse understandings of learning processes and disciplines, or to emphasize adult learning as mainly occurring through formal education. Although there is existing research that addresses learning

processes in guidance activities designed to support adults in career transitions (e.g. Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2020; Law, 2017, Rose et al., 2005), career guidance practice and adult education appear not to have yet implemented knowledge from their respective research fields into their daily practice. Neither are holistic aspects of learning clearly addressed or fully implemented as a part of career guidance activities in the governance of career guidance practice in many countries. Traditionally, career guidance within adult education systems in several countries (e.g. Sweden and Poland) has been designed and governed according to supporting adults educational and vocational choices for skills development. However, the focus on choices for skills development poses a risk of lacking strategies that may embrace holistic approaches to learning. Career guidance has also been highlighted as a lost potential in adult education (Thomsen & Mariager-Anderson, 2015) as well as having the potential of supporting adults transition learning throughout life (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2020). Therefore, the aim of this presentation is to question the lack of integration between different research fields knowledge into daily practice and capture the “career” as a complex and life-long learning that requires a bridging perspective (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2024). Also, the aim is to stimulate a dialogue between diverse practices and their theoretical approaches to provide a deeper understanding of career complexity. Drawing from our previous research that underscores the growing significance of learning in peoples’ career navigation, their career transitions and throughout their vocational and educational life (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2022; 2024; Bilon-Piörko, 2022), we propose a critical approach to current perspectives, policies and practices of learning that occurs in career.

By integrating knowledge from diverse research fields (adult education and learning, career guidance, together with philosophy, sociology, social psychology and critical psychology) we adopt a transdisciplinary, and holistic approach to address adults career complexity from a lifelong perspective. We emphasize the importance of uncovering social representations of career in each context and the necessity for a transformative, biographical perspective on individual learning during transitional phases of adults’ lives and the learning support provided through career guidance. By paying attention to the role of agency in often-neglected learning domains in policy discourses, we offer a framework that transcends simplified views on learning. Adults’ agency is stressed as it is fundamentally connected to the learning processes (Biesta & Tedder, 2007; Bilon, 2020) and it is defined as the “temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environment (...) which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations” (Emirbayer, 1997). Our approach is also supported by Biesta’s (2016) three domains of educational purposes (qualification, socialization, subjectification) as we want to stress that subjectification is strongly connected to adults’ agency.

We examine and illustrate where learning takes place, what learning content is prioritized, why learning occurs, for what, and for whom learning is intended. We address the learning that occurs in the “liminal spaces” (Thomassen, 2009) as people navigate their careers and their movements experiencing the ongoing state of “being in-between” and experiencing transitions (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2024). We argue that learning in and throughout career processes requires a comprehensive and holistic approach to capture its complexity. As a result, our framework is a bridging approach, aiming at stimulating dialogue between practices with diverse approaches and assuming the relational nature of reality (Burkitt, 2015; Crossley, 2011) emphasizing the constitutive role of interconnectedness in the world.

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W

Wellbeing by knitting in study circles and in knitting cafés

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Keywords: Informal learning, lifelong learning, wellbeing, knitting

Abstract:

This paper will explore the impact of knitting on individual wellbeing, considering both psychological and physiological benefits. It will examine the findings of a study conducted on Swedish knitters, analyzing how the activity contributes to mental health, stress reduction, and social connection. Additionally, the paper will discuss the broader implications of knitting as a growing global trend, considering how it is being adopted in different cultures and therapeutic settings

Using a study of Swedish knitters, this paper will analyze the impact of knitting on individual wellbeing. The research follows the wellbeing model developed by Thompson and Marks, which builds upon the World Health Organization's (WHO) definition of wellbeing. This model provides a structured framework for understanding how knitting contributes to overall life satisfaction, stress reduction, and social connection. The model developed by Thompson and Marks was modified to specifically measure wellbeing among knitters, allowing for a more tailored assessment of the activity's impact on mental and emotional health. By adapting the framework to focus on knitting-related factors, the study aimed to capture the unique ways in which this craft contributes to wellbeing.

A questionnaire was developed in collaboration with experienced knitters to ensure the inclusion of contextually relevant and domain-specific questions pertinent to the practice of knitting. The questionnaire was distributed in paper format to knitting circles and knitting cafés and was additionally made available to knitters in a web-based version. The answers were collected anonymously, and a total of 111 individuals participated in the survey. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part gathered background information on when, where, how, and why individuals engage in knitting. The second part was designed to assess three distinct forms of wellbeing and was analyzed using factor analysis. Data analysis was conducted in SPSS, employing a rotated varimax factor analysis.

The study found that social relationships within knitting circles played a significant role in enhancing wellbeing. These groups provided a supportive environment where individuals could connect, share experiences, and build meaningful relationships. The social aspect of knitting not only fostered a sense of belonging but also encouraged informal learning, as participants exchanged techniques, patterns, and creative ideas. This ongoing learning process contributed to a sense of personal growth and accomplishment, further reinforcing wellbeing. By combining social interaction with skill development, knitting circles created a positive and enriching experience that extended beyond the craft itself.

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When does the possibility of dialogue reach its limits? About a qualitative study on the influence of the right and counter-strategies of community education centres in Germany

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Keywords: right wing populism – strategies against the right – adult education – community centres – citizen science

Abstract:

In Germany, efforts by the far right to influence the education sector in general and adult education in particular can be recognised. The qualitative study results in this contribution show that dialogue can be fundamentally successful as a counter-strategy, but that "talking to the far right" quickly reaches its limits.

Recently, right-wing influences intensify the discussion on aspects of migration because of substantial election results for the party AfD (Alternative für Deutschland / Alternative for Germany) (Hanschmann, 2024). Right-wing parties search for agreement with Conservatives (Nikolai, 2024) and gain influence by setting discourses (Hussain & Yunus, 2021). This leads to the research questions:

- What kind of right-wing influences do community education centres report?
- What counter strategies do educational practitioners apply?
- And based on this, when are the limits of dialog reached and where do clear boundaries need to be drawn?

This research employs a citizen science approach through a participatory research project (Unger, 2014). The development of the qualitative interview protocol and sampling strategy was conducted collaboratively with community education centres. This fosters community involvement and enhances the relevance and applicability of the findings to real-world contexts.

The collection of influences is organized by levels (Boeren, 2019, Lima & Guimaraes, 2011). Data was collected via an online survey gathering reports from all parts of Germany and different educational institutions. Reports stem from teaching staff as well as from persons in management positions. The collected data is subjected to thematic analysis. As examples on the micro-level, reports point to racism within integration courses, the disruption of events on political topics or the placement of right-wing positions in supposedly non-political topics (crafts, music). On the meso-level, the AfD tries to attack associations, that aim at "diversity" thus putting pressure on educational staff responsible for program planning. On the macro-level, AfD keeps using "Questions (Anfragen)" to the parliaments, e.g. discrediting integration course participants as unwilling to learn. Representatives of right-wing positions use local education committees to radicalise the political agenda in the spirit of "Moving the Overton window" and bring about a normalisation of positions of the radical right (Valentim, 2024).

In most cases, counter strategies are reported by practitioners and democratic institutions. The actors involved report on how they dealt with the disruptions and attempts to exert influence in specific situations. A continuum becomes apparent, ranging from reactions that are more of an educational nature and attempt to deal with the conflict through dialogue to massive disruptions in which the dialogue reaches its limits and disciplinary measures are taken. These counter-strategies negotiate the limits of the discourse with right-wing actors by limiting the dialogue (limited discussion, application of codes of conduct) itself.

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World War II stories for dialogue – reconciliation without forgiveness?

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Keywords: life stories, dialogue, Polish migrants, reconciliation, forgiveness

Abstract:

Polish migrants are scattered all over the world. The decision to leave their homeland was in many cases not an easy one, and many of them were forced to migrate due to political issues. Migration invariably leads to a confrontation with the boundaries of our heritage (Chambers, 1994) to seeking out roots, the migrant's place in the world, and a discovery of the migrants' limits. The migration process can be considered from many perspectives: sociological, economic, political, demographic, historical, psychological, and also from a subjective perspective. The biographical research approach is one of the powerful ways of exploring the subjective perspective of migration (Malec Rawiński, 2017). The paper aims to explore how experiences, especially unforeseen and traumatic events due to World War II (WW II), affect the narrative of the past, future and present and how the stories of WW II might be used for dialogue. By biographically analysing Polish migrants' experiences in

Sweden alongside their identity formation (Bron & Thunborg, 2015), such as constant negotiation of belonging (Malec-Rawinski 2022, 2021, 2017), floating (Bron, 1999, 2000) and anchoring (Thunborg & Bron, 2019; Thunborg et al. (2021), we discovered how they deal with being at a crossroads in life. Although the crossroads of life and the sense of potentiality for unlived life (Alheit, 1995, 2005) are the core concepts of our analysis and discussion, we take into account the full story told by migrants to understand how often painful experiences can be significant for the present. Migrants often struggle with dreadful experiences from the past. In order to understand in depth the way migrants negotiate their past with themselves, our analysis is guided by the question: is reconciliation with past oppressors possible without forgiveness? Is dialogue with the second and third generations possible without forgiveness? The paper focuses on two case studies of Polish migrants, who have lived in Sweden for many years and have been actively involved in the dialogue about their past to tell the stories while navigating cognitively and emotionally between different cultures. Data analysis is performed abductively.

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Symposia

Active citizenship and the university - Symposium of Active Democratic Citizenship and Adult Learning Network

Diana Holmqvist, *Linköping University, Sweden*

Fergal Finnegan, *Maynooth University, Ireland*

Maja Maksimović, *University of Belgrade, Serbia*

Keywords: active citizenship, academia, critical adult education, social movements

Abstract:

Introduction of the topic and its relevance for the conference: In this dialogical session, we will explore the topic of active citizenship and the university braiding together three strands of overlapping sets of professional experience and research in order to spark discussion and debate.

We are all familiar with debates over the purpose of the modern university from Humboldt, Newman and Bentham through to Martha Nussbaum and Ron Barnett. These largely philosophical debates revolve around notions of human flourishing and valuable knowledge. These themes and philosophical currents have of course played out in adult education as well with a particular focus on two themes: widening participation and fostering active citizenship. The latter issue has surfaced repeatedly at ADCAL events (digital dialogues during covid, a seminar on popular education and Freire and the conferences in Belgrade, conference in Faro). What role can, or should, academics play in fostering active citizenship through 1) pedagogy, curriculum and course design; 2) research; 3) advocacy and consultation and; 4) support for, and participation in, social movements. Of course this needs to be linked to analysis of what the university typically does, and does not, and how this is related to the politics of knowledge and education and wider secular trends (especially massification and the neoliberalisation of universities).

Format of the dialogical session: Against this background, we propose a dialogical session based on three examples, and with space for a discussion together with all session participants on this topic. The structure of the session is as follows:

Critical research and collaboration at the 'edges' of the academy

Fergal Finnegan, *Maynooth University, Ireland*

This paper will explore the possibilities and limitations of critical adult education and research for democratic citizenship in a university setting in theoretical and practical terms. It will begin by briefly outlining what is meant by critical adult education for democratic citizenship drawing on transformative education (Freire, 1978; Mezirow, 1991), critical theory (Bloch, 2009; Fraser & Jaegii, 2018; Kluge & Negt, 2014), critical realism (Bhaskar, 1979; Wainwright, 2009) heterodox Marxism (Wright, 2010; Lefebvre, 1991; Williams, 1977) and relational sociology (Bourdieu, 2000). In doing so it will return to an old debate about what constitutes 'really useful knowledge' in and through adult education linked to ongoing debates in sociology and social movements (Arribas, 2024; Bevington & Dixon, 2007; Sears, 2014). A key issue, it will be argued, is to understand the logic of social space as a whole as well the specific powers at work in a university setting (Bourdieu, 2000; Lefebvre, 1991)

and being able to reflexively work at this boundary in connection with movements and external institutions concerned with democratic citizenship. I will then reflect on what has been learnt from developing courses from this perspective, conducting research on this basis and engaging with policy makers, advocacy bodies and social movements 'critically'. Much of this activity has been fruitless, some of it has been generative and the paper will ask what this suggests about critical and reflexive knowledge in support of democratic citizenship.

Standing up for sustainable futures as state-employed academics

Diana Holmqvist & Cecilia Enberg, *Linköping University, Sweden*

Research on active citizenship in academia highlights the inherent tensions faced by academics who engage in active citizenship while fulfilling their roles within university structures (cf Flood et al, 2013; Rahbari et al, 2024; Wals & Jickling, 2002). These tensions often stem from the dual responsibilities of doing critical, emancipatory work and adhering to institutional expectations that may prioritize neoliberal values. While much of the existing research on active citizenship in academia engages with academics as researchers, we want to focus on academics as adult educators who want to teach for sustainability and how this relates to their institutional positions. Based on workshops and dialogues with Swedish academics who take a critical transformative stance towards sustainability, this contribution explores how these actors navigate institutional constraints and the inherent tensions between standing up for social justice and environmental sustainability on the one hand, and adhering to institutional commitments as public officials and university employees on the other. How do these academics view their role as teachers in HE? What challenges do they experience when balancing active citizenship and professional commitments, and what lessons do they take from such experiences?

Learning self-organization at university - critical engagement of researchers, lecturers and university staff

Nikola Koruga, Katarina Popović, Maja Maksimović, *University of Belgrade, Serbia*

The ongoing movement began in Belgrade and Novi Sad, where protests demanded political and criminal accountability for the deaths of 15 people in last November's canopy collapse at the Novi Sad train station. Demonstrators rallied under the slogan "You Have Blood on Your Hands." Soon after, a 15-minute silent protest, "Stop, Serbia," was held on major roads. Following a physical attack on their peers during this action, students from the University of Belgrade's Faculty of Dramatic Arts initiated the first faculty blockade on November 25. Similar blockades quickly spread across the university departments nationwide (Milosavljević, 2025). They are organized through direct democracy and the movement does not have leaders, which fosters solidarity throughout society. As students organized, the majority of the faculties have suspended classes and expressed support. At the Faculty of Philosophy professors and university staff formed the "Open Teachers' Office", an inclusive assembly to support students' demands. Momentum grew and led to the formation of "The University in Rebellion" uniting over 2,000 university staff who followed the students' example by avoiding delegates and representatives. The initiative has since organized large-scale protests uniting all levels of education (Education in Rebellion), issued public statements, and fostered cross-disciplinary self-organization within academia to fight for a more just society. We want to engage in a dialogue with the symposium participants about selforganization within academia in social movements,

establishing cooperation by harnessing the strengths of different disciplines, to achieve social goals through decentralized actions. How do professors and university staff critically learn to practice horizontal decision-making to effectively act?

Open discussion

Moderator: Diana Holmqvist, *Linköping University, Sweden*

This fourth and last part of the dialogical session opens up the floor to all participants in the session, to think together on the topic of active citizenship and the university. Moderator will prepare some comments/questions that can get the discussion going.

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Adult educators in the face of crises in Europe: Managing challenges, shaping identities and changing cultures – Book Launch of Adult Educators, Trainers, and their Professional Development Network

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Susanne Lattke, *DIE, Germany*

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Keywords: adult educators, adult education, crisis, challenges

Abstract:

This symposium proposed by the convenors of the ESREA/RENADET Network builds upon a dialogic and participatory work that members of the network have developed. It has taken the form of an edited book titled: “Adult Educators in the Face of Crises in Europe: Managing Challenges, Shaping Identities and Changing Cultures”. The book explores the evolving identities, practices, and challenges faced by adult educators across Europe amidst recent crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and economic and social upheavals. These events have disrupted adult learning and reshaped the educational landscape, demanding rapid adjustments from educators. The book examines how these crises impact educators' identities, agency, and professional practice, particularly considering the precarious working conditions that many adult educators face. Through empirical studies and theoretical reflections, the book investigates how adult educators navigate these turbulent times, addressing identity formation, professionalization, and adaptation, while highlighting the ethical and social dimensions of their work. It also addresses the increasing digitalization of learning environments and the emergence of new learner groups. The book consists of twelve chapters and offers diverse perspectives and research findings, contributing to understanding how to support the professionalization of adult educators and respond to crises with resilience and innovation.

Contributors of the book who will participate in the conference will be invited to participate in the symposium and at the discussion part.

The proposed symposium will be structured in three parts, which will be facilitated by network convenors in interactive and dialogical ways:

Introduction: We will start with an introduction and give an overview of the ESREA/RENADET Network. Then we will introduce the background and main topic of the book.

Discussion on the main topic of the book: We will give a short overview of the chapters. Contributors of the book who will participate at the conference will give a short overview of their chapters. Then we welcome participants of the symposium to discuss in the form of Experience Caffè with contributors of the book which allows open discussion, dialogues, sharing and reflecting thoughts and experiences.

Reflection: We will share the main reflection and highlight the main standpoints from the discussion. Finally, we pose the questions for future joint activities of the ESREA / RENADET.

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BGL-ALC Network treading a long road: coming in from the cold in dialogue for communities and adult learning - Symposium of Between Global and Local – Adult Learning and Community Network

Rob Evans, *University of Magdeburg, Germany*

Ewa Kurantowicz, *University of Lower Silesia, Wroclaw, Poland*

Keywords: dialogue, communities, movement learning, knowledge creation

Abstract:

The research network *Between Global and Local – Adult Learning and Community* comes together and discusses under the friendly roof of the European Society for the Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA). Since 2006 the network has pitched its tents in Spain and Portugal, Poland and Slovenia, Germany and Croatia, Hungary and Belgium and Turkey, and as an international network operating within a bundle of other internationally operating institutions and activities, the pitching of tents remains an important moment of *communitas*, – or *vivencia* – of physical exchange and dialogue in the spaces in which we respectively work and are active and from which we draw much of our research energy and the desire to go on (see Evans, 2009, 2019; Evans, Kurantowicz & Lucio-Villegas, 2016, 2022).

As a critical response to the contemporary mainstream discourses of adult education and learning – which all too often only focus on education and skills for the labour market – it would seem to be urgently necessary to develop counter-hegemonic research to recuperate the ideas of emancipation and personal and social development that were born from the ideas of authors such as Paulo Freire, Shirley Walters, Raymond Williams, and others (Freire, 2020; Manicom & Walters, 2012; Raymond Williams, 1958; Fals Borda, 1990), in the past century and in more recent years. These ideas were linked with decolonising processes around the world and the emergence of post-colonial theory and produced powerful concepts such as critical democracy and popular culture, popular education, and literacy movements worldwide. These ideas also promoted methodologies that embodied practices of democratic participation and critical reflexivity, such as participatory research, feminist

research and ecological research activism, to name only some, in which dialogue has a significant role to play.

As the Call makes clear, the need for dialogue in today's world is "reinforced by the growth of inequalities, the erosion of democracy, and the profound marginalisation associated with the impossibility of being heard and recognised." It points out that this need is obvious against a backdrop of growing polarisation, war, and the spread of illiberal democracy. Dialogue as a basis for better social communication, the ability to communicate and learn through dialogue and mutual recognition are prerequisites for good enough adult education. It seems important, then, to recuperate what was at the heart of adult education and learning in their connection with people living in communities. Communities, with all their contradictions, remain privileged spaces for the organisation of social relationships and, however they may be structured, they are the natural place where people live. In the all too many savage conflicts raging around us, communities have proven time and again to be the places where problems are felt most sharply and most murderously, and where some of the most creative responses are born.

Our research must explore critical approaches to adult learning and adult education that enable people living in communities to defy the challenges that people have to face in their daily life and that affect them not only at a local level but also on a global scale. By undertaking this effort to explore learning in communities in the early 21st century, it should be possible to uncover in the present and for the future what is still rich and vigorous in the tradition of community-based adult learning and to work towards recognition of new developments and new directions that learning communities can take today to confront the challenges coming from the global mainstream and facing the global margins.

The BGL-ALC Network will promote a discussion of ways to come out of the cold of illiberalism and conflict to create the conditions for dialogue for communities and adult learning.

This symposium aims to explore critical approaches to adult learning and adult education that enable people living in communities to defy the challenges that people have to face in their daily lives and that affect them not only at a local level but also on a global scale. can take today to confront the challenges coming from the global mainstream and facing the global margins. In this context, dialogue is seen as a key element which can contribute for social development and emancipation. This symposium brings three presentations, each addressing the role of dialogue as a central element in adult education. The main objective is to explore and discuss the challenges and opportunities of community dialogue from an adult education perspective.

Community education as a 'humble' contributor to social change

António Fragoso, University of Algarve, Portugal

Popular and Community education as action within and for communities, promoting the creation of new knowledge growing out of people's experience and the social interests generated within communities. The role of dialogue in popular and community education. Community education is about encouraging and engaging people through life in learning. Popular education and participation to create opportunities to engage in processes that change communities. Community education as a 'humble' contributor to social change. The other effects of macro/global processes.

Learning by Acting, Learning by Helping: Informal Volunteer Learning in the Early Days of the 2022 Ukraine Refugee Crisis

Paweł Rudnicki, *University of Wrocław, Poland*

Movement learning and informal learning in spontaneous social action. The dynamics of informal learning in spontaneous, short-term actions — often coordinated through social media—can become crucial networks for social activism, and as "crisis-driven volunteerism," characterized by its temporary nature and the fluidity of group formation and dispersal once specific tasks are completed. Actions contextualized within the broader framework of informal learning, where activists not only engage with communities but also acquire and exchange knowledge, skills, and competencies in real time, often outside formal structures. The central role of dialogue in learning processes. Positive outcomes of these spontaneous efforts and their limitations. Contribution in times of crisis.

The BGL-ALC Network and the Dialogue for Communities and Adult Learning

Network convenor

This paper presents the work of the Between Global and Local – Adult Learning and Community (BGL-ALC) network, which since 2006 has brought together researchers and practitioners from several European countries to promote dialogue on adult learning within community contexts. The central issue addressed is the predominance of hegemonic discourses that restrict adult education to the development of skills for the labour market, ignoring the dimensions of emancipation, social participation and personal development. In the face of growing inequalities, democratic erosion and social marginalisation, dialogue has emerged as a fundamental element for social communication and meaningful learning within communities. The aim of this paper is to reflect on how the BGL-ALC network promotes spaces for face-to-face meetings, dialogue and exchange that nurture critical research in adult education and strengthen counter-hegemonic approaches. The approach adopted values communities as natural spaces for coexistence and learning, where local and global challenges are manifested and confronted. Inspired by authors such as Paulo Freire, Shirley Walters and Raymond Williams, among others, the network emphasises participatory methodologies, democratic practices and the role of dialogue in creating the conditions to overcome intolerance and conflict.

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Co-constructing Knowledge in Comparison: Transnational Dialogue About Adult Learning and Education for Immigrants' Integration

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Keywords: transnational dialogue, immigrants' integration; adult learning and education (ALE) provision, participation and outcomes; comparative research

Abstracts:

Introduction: In the 2020 OECD ministers responsible for immigration and integration in OECD countries addressed innovative approaches to immigrant integration, emphasizing partnership, coordination, and a whole-of-society approach (OECD, 2020). Since then, the world has experienced the continuous rise of populist governments and anti-immigrant sentiment, leading to shifting policies and politics of immigration and integration, with significant impacts on the provision of adult learning and education (ALE) support for immigrants and refugees.

Against this background, the panel is organized as a transnational dialogue on ALE practices across Canada and Germany, which, despite different migration and integration policies and politics (Ellermann, 2021), face common challenges in integrating immigrants. The goal of the panel is to promote a dialogue about ALE policies, practices and systems (Desjardins, 2017) that are inclusive, equitable, and accountable. We will depict the main patterns of ALE policies, provision, and governance in Vancouver, Canada (paper one), and explore the impacts of ALE on immigrant integration based on a scoping review in Germany (paper two). We also discuss the role of dialogue networks in successful knowledge transfer (paper three); and report on a reflexive dialogical process used to avoid some of the pitfalls of comparative research (paper four). The panel contributes to understanding the transformative power of the ALE for migrants and the roles that dialogue and research may play in transforming the existing system and knowledge-generation and transfer practices.

Adult Learning and Education for Immigrants and Refugees in Vancouver Canada: Actor-centered Institutional Mapping

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In Canada, a variety of ALE programs are available to immigrants and refugees, with funding from various governments and stakeholders and with different types of organizations and institutions involved in the design and delivery of the programs. Studies have been conducted to understand individual ALE programs for immigrants and refugees. There is, however, a lack of an overarching view of the field. The objective of the paper is to construct the ALE system in place to settle and integrate immigrants and refugees in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Specifically, it identifies the policy discourses, types of programs, and players that constitute the ALE system for immigrant settlement and integration. Methodologically, the study is based on an institutional mapping of policies, programs, and players in ALE in Vancouver and key-informant interviews, both informed by actor-centered institutionalism (Scharpf, 1997).

The construction of the system goes beyond the political economy of ALE, which sees the provision of ALE as an interactive outcome of state and market (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Hall & Soskice, 2001). While still keeping in view the state and the market, the institutional map is geared toward capturing the kind of ALE networks, associations, and emergent organizations in the settlement sector. The paper is significant as it will establish a dialogue between ALE provision and democratic governance, an idea at the core of new institutionalism.

Outcomes of Adult Learning Integration Programs in Germany: A Scoping Review

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In Germany, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees is responsible for conducting “integration courses” to promote the integration of adult immigrants (BAMF, 2021). These mandatory courses, implemented by ALE providers, consist of language courses and orientation courses, courses orienting newcomers to the standards and values in the host society. These nationwide, publicly funded integration courses are supplemented by other, less coordinated ALE programs that focus on promoting the integration of immigrants.

Studies on the impacts of both ALE programs for immigrants often focus on distinct outcomes such as language acquisition and social or economic integration (e.g. Marbach et al., 2025; Granderath et al., 2021). However, a systematic mapping of the impact of ALE on immigrants’ integration is missing.

To address this void, a scoping review of ALE for immigrants in Germany was conducted of related literature, both peerreviewed articles and grey literature, published after 2015, marking the high Syrian refugee movement. The review documents the multi-faceted impacts of ALE on immigrant integration, accounting for not only the different integration outcomes but also the research methodologies used. Through this review, we identify existing gaps in knowledge of ALE in relation to immigrant integration outcomes and offer suggestions for further research.

Conditions for Successful Knowledge Transfer Through Dialogue: The Case of An Institutionalised Dialogue Practice Network

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Most research knowledge remains within the scientific field with limited impact on society and educational practice. Networking is considered to foster societal impact, innovation (Alke & Jütte, 2016) and knowledge transfer (Heinze & Münch, 2012). In educational research, science-to-practice networks are increasingly being established, to foster dialogue and bridge the gap between research, policy and educational practice.

To enhance dialogue between adult education research and educational practice, the German Institute for Adult Education (DIE) founded the DIALOGUE Practice Network for Knowledge Transfer and Innovation in 2020. The network comprises leading staff of 33 adult educational institutions from across Germany, with DIE acting as the coordinating body and as knowledge mediator. Network members share a strong interest in integrating research-based knowledge into their daily practice while also facilitating research by opening their institutions to field inquiry (DIE, 2020, p. 3). This paper examines the conditions that contribute to the success of

research-practice cooperation, drawing on an assessment of past activities of the DIALOGUE Practice Network. Furthermore, it explores the extent to which these conditions can be transferred to a transnational Dialogue Network on Adult Education for Immigrants' Integration. This transnational Dialogue Network seeks to operate at the research-policy-practice interface and enable translocal and transnational knowledge generation and mobilisation on this topic by employing elements of community-based, participatory research.

Building Understanding Through Dialogue Across Disciplines, Methods and National Boundaries

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One of the primary motives for establishing the transnational research-to-practice partnership described in this symposium was to learn from one another's experience in using ALE to promote successful integration and settlement of immigrants. An inevitable consequence of transnational collaboration is "comparison" guided by questions such as "What is being done? Why is it being done? and What are its outcomes?" (Schmidt-Lauff, Breitschwerdt & Schwarz, 2023). As others have pointed out, "juxtaposing" answers to such questions from one context/case with answers from another alone does not lead to the depth of understanding—in a more causal sense—that is the primary goal of comparative research. Achieving that depth requires careful consideration of contextual factors (social/cultural, political, economic, relational, etc.) and other dimensions of the context along with the values, disciplinary orientations, linguistic skills, and methodological commitments of those involved (Goodrich, 2019).

This paper reports the initial outcomes of a reflexive dialogical process used in this project to address a series of questions we believe are helping us avoid some of the "pitfalls" of comparative research (Bron, 2008; Reischmann, 2024). The process employed was modelled on one proposed by Olmos-Vega et al. (2022) who define reflexivity as "a set of continuous, collaborative, and multifaceted practices through which researchers self-consciously critique, appraise, and evaluate how their subjectivity and context influence the research processes...." (p. 242). We present nine "guiding questions" used to structure our reflexive process and discuss how our dialogues around these questions have influenced our approaches to the research project.

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Dialogue in Adult Education in the Digital Age

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Josephine Jahn, *Ludwigs-Maximilians-Universität München, Germany*

Tomáš Karger, *Tomas Bata University in Zlín, Czechia*

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Keywords: Digitalization, Learning Inequality, AI in Education, Virtual Learning, Adaptive Learning

Abstract:

Dialogue is fundamental to adult education, fostering participation, collaboration, and critical engagement. However, as digitalization reshapes learning environments, the nature and quality of dialogue in adult education require closer examination. This session explores how digital technologies influence dialogue in different contexts, addressing issues of access, control, and interaction.

The first paper analyzes data from the 2022 Adult Education Survey (AES) across 34 European countries, revealing significant disparities in access to online learning. While digital formats can increase participation, they also risk reinforcing inequalities, raising questions about equitable dialogue in adult education. The second paper shifts the focus to AI-based adaptive learning systems, examining how pedagogical orientations are shaped through stakeholder negotiations. It critically questions whether these systems foster learner autonomy or impose external control, highlighting the importance of dialogue in their design. The third paper explores avatar-based 3D learning environments, investigating how digital spaces enable or constrain meaningful interaction. Drawing on constructivist learning theories, it examines the conditions necessary to sustain dialogue in virtual education.

Together, these studies demonstrate that digitalization is not merely a technological shift but a transformation of communicative and pedagogical structures in adult education. They emphasize that dialogue—whether in access to learning, in the design of educational technologies, or in virtual interaction—remains a crucial factor in ensuring inclusive and participatory adult learning. The session will conclude with a discussion, reflecting on the broader implications of digitalization for dialogue in adult education.

Online Learning Across Europe: Is the digital divide creeping in through online delivery of Adult Education and Training?

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Participation in online learning is steadily increasing across European countries and the COVID-19 pandemic seems to have accelerated this trend (Eurostat, 2024). However, the exact extent and implications of this shift are still unclear. Of particular concern is the introduction of the digital divide into Adult Education and Training (AET). Until recently, we have lacked international comparative data to substantiate the extent of online learning in AET. The Adult Education Survey (AES) 2022 provides a crucial development in this regard, offering systematic data from 34 European countries. This contribution, therefore, utilizes the AES 2022 data to examine the degree of digitalisation within the current AET landscape across Europe. It measures the extent to which AET is provided online across European Adult Learning Systems. It compares the degree of digitalisation between formal and

non-formal education. And it analyses the levels of inequality in participation in online AET as compared to on-site AET. The findings confirm that a significant proportion of educational activities is delivered online, but that the proportion varies significantly among the observed countries. Furthermore, digitalisation unfolds in different patterns in formal and non-formal education. Finally, the effect of online learning on inequalities is ambivalent. While some inequalities are reduced by online delivery, others increase. By providing a quantitative comparative overview of digitalisation across European countries, this contribution seeks dialogue with qualitative insights into the nature and mechanisms of digitalisation in AET.

Dialogue among Stakeholders in the Development of AI-based Adaptive Learning Systems within the Context of Adult Education

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The question of the design of learning systems that facilitate learning has been widely debated in the field of instructional design, with the focus primarily on the learning outcome (Albus, 2023; Lim, Lim & Lim, 2023). Nevertheless, the development process and the dialogue among the development stakeholders have yet to receive sufficient attention. In particular, AI-based adaptive learning systems have been the subject of criticism by Kerres et al. (2023) on the grounds that they impose external control on the learning process and prevent self-directed learning. Based on the central assumptions of the actor-network theory (Latour, 2007), this paper assumes that teaching orientations are negotiated in the dialogue among development stakeholders, which in consequence significantly shapes the design of the learning system. If adaptive learning systems follow an external control approach, this should be reflected in their developers' teaching orientations. To examine this connection more closely, 13 guideline-based interviews with development stakeholders will be collected to extract their teaching orientations using the documentary method (Bohnsack, Pfaff & Weller, 2010). The presentation will discuss how these orientations are negotiated within the dialogue among development stakeholders. In conclusion, this project shifts the perspective from a focus on learning outcomes to a consideration of development inputs.

Opportunities for Dialogue in Avatar-Based 3D Learning Environments

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In adult education, both formal and informal, meeting in person to learn together is no longer the norm. Instead, diverse online formats have become integral, offering new ways to teach and learn. Yet, these digital spaces often raise deeper questions about how authentic communication and mutual engagement can be achieved.

These challenges are especially relevant in virtual 3D environments, which are increasingly being explored as spaces for avatar-based teaching and learning in adult education. Such environments enable participants to gather and engage in dialogue beyond the limitations of physical presence or video conferencing. They hold the potential to reimagine inclusion by creating opportunities for individuals to meet on equal terms, at least theoretically. They also offer the possibility of anonymized, synchronous, and interactive educational experiences.

Still, fundamental questions remain: How do we meaningfully connect in these virtual spaces?, What new forms of expression and interaction are needed to foster collaborative and reciprocal learning communities? To explore these questions, a research project was conducted, drawing on

constructivist theories - particularly situated and experiential learning - to examine avatarbased teaching and learning in adult education. Through problem-centered interviews with both participants (N=6) and facilitators (N=8) of educational programs in virtual 3D spaces, the study employed qualitative content analysis to explore how interaction takes shape in these contexts. The findings highlight the conditions necessary to foster dialogue that supports not only teaching and learning but also genuine social communication.

This presentation will share the study's findings, aiming to contribute to broader discussions about digital, particularly avatarbased, learning environments. It seeks to foreground the significance of dialogue and interaction in creating educational spaces that are not just effective but also socially meaningful.

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Mapping Institutional Trajectories: A Comparative Analysis of Adult Learning Systems from the 1990s to the 2020s - Symposium of Policy Studies in Adult Education Network

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Jan Kalenda, *Tomas Bata University, Czechia*

Keywords: Adult Learning Systems, Politics of Adult Education and Learning, Political Economy of Adult Education, Historical Institutionalism

Abstract:

Although comparative research in the field of adult education and learning has a long-standing tradition (see, e.g., Bennett et al., 1971; Charters et al., 1989; Cookson, 1994; Jarvis, 1992), studies that explore the long-term macro-social transformation of organised adult learning and its policy frameworks remain relatively rare (Hake, 2016, 2022; Saar et al., 2013; Verdier, 2017, 2018).

One promising approach to address this gap is the Adult Learning System (ALS) perspective (Desjardins, 2017, 2023; Desjardins & Ioannidou, 2020; Kalenda, 2024), particularly when combined with insights from historical institutionalism (Mahoney & Thelen, 2015; Thelen, 2014, 2019), which emphasises the dynamics of long-term social change.

In the broadest sense, ALS refer to the institutional frameworks that underpin the provision, governance, and coordination of adult education and learning in a particular country. They are typically conceptualised as the mass of organised learning opportunities available to adults, along with the underlying structures and stakeholders that influence their organisation and governance (Desjardins, 2017, 2023; Desjardins & Ioannidou, 2020). This framework encompasses not only participants (demand side) and providers (supply side) but also a diverse array of organisations and stakeholders such as governments, unions, professional associations, and firms, as well as the policy measures that regulate their interactions. Well-developed, open, and flexible ALS that effectively address coordination challenges are considered a prerequisite for broad and equitable participation in organised adult learning (Lee, 2018; Lee & Desjardins, 2019), a core policy aim for many international organisations (e.g., EC, 2020; OECD, 2019; UNESCO, 2022) and national governments.

However, these systems are not static; they have evolved and transformed over time. Recognising that "time matters," it becomes essential to trace their trajectories and transformations. Concepts such as path dependency, intercurrency, and gradual institutional change from historical institutionalism offer valuable tools for understanding these formation pathways.

By combining the ALS framework with historical institutionalism as a general analytical approach, this symposium critically examines the institutional transformation of ALS in advanced post-industrial democracies, focusing on developments from the early 1990s to the 2020s. The symposium is rooted in findings from an international collaborative project associated with the forthcoming book *Modern Guide to Adult Learning Systems* (Desjardins & Kalenda, 2025 *fc*), which brought together a team of scholars dedicated to understanding the long-term evolution of adult education policies and provision at the national level in fifteen countries.

The primary objective of the symposium is to introduce and critically discuss the ALS approach to comparative analysis while showcasing its application across several national case studies. Recognising that neither the ALS framework nor historical institutionalism constitutes a unified grand theory, but rather a collection of concepts and analytical tools, the symposium seeks to

demonstrate their diverse applications in historical-oriented policy research in the adult education and learning field.

Apart from the introduction to the logic of endeavour related to comparative analysis of ALS, the symposium will feature four papers, each accompanied by commentary from the discussant, Dr Borut Mikulec, convenor of the Policy Studies in Adult Education network. Three of the papers will present detailed case studies examining the historical trajectories of selected national ALS – specifically, Sweden (Kjell Rubenson and Erik Nylander), Germany (Alexandra Ioannidou) and the paper covering Italy, Bulgaria and Denmark (Marcella Milana, Pepka Boyadjieva, Margherita Bussi, Petya Ilieva-Trichkova and Palle Rasmussen). The final paper (presented by Richard Desjardins and Jan Kalenda) will focus on an overview of qualitative and quantitative cross-national patterns and trends associated with ALS.

Together, these papers aim to deepen scholarly understanding of ALS by illustrating a rich variety of concepts, analytical approaches, and research questions that can be investigated within this overarching theoretical framework. By facilitating dialogue among ESREA scholars, the symposium seeks to identify exemplary research strategies for examining long-term institutional changes in ALS and to contribute towards expanding a research programme in this domain.

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Swedish adult education policy and the world of work during two generations of human capital influence

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Since the 1950s, we have identified two generations of human capital influence on adult education policies that are rooted in different understandings of the link between the economy and education. From its outset in the late 1980s the second generation has been met by a barrage of criticism from adult education scholars framing it as neoliberal. While we do not disagree with the humanistic and emancipatory ambitions underlying these critiques of 'economistic' public policies, it seems necessary to revisit some of the broader policy shifts in order to better understand what was at stake and why the world of work is such a necessary component of any comprehensive adult education system. Our paper examines Swedish adult education policy during the two generations of human capital influence, spanning the period from the late 1950s to today. Using analytical tools from historical institutionalism and Brown's concepts of pressure points, we show how an extensive public adult education system responding to both economic and social demands emerged in the post-war period and how it has remained relatively intact regardless of changes in government and the outcome of political elections. At the same time, we identify a shift in the 'human capital' oriented policies over time that have paved the way for private for-profit providers of public welfare services.

The Adult Learning System in Germany: Stakeholder coordination, institutional change and path-dependent development

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Adult education and training in Germany is a policy area of shared responsibility between state and non-state actors, with a long history of institutionalisation dating back to the end of the 18th century.

Over the past three decades, the German Adult Learning System (ALS) has undergone successive changes. The drivers of change have been rooted in critical junctures (German reunification), societal pressures (economic, demographic, technological), external influences (European integration) and exogenous shocks (COVID-19 pandemic). As well as examining the drivers of policy and change and their contemporary impact, this paper also considers the historical and institutional formation process of the system from the perspective of historical institutionalism (Mahoney & Thelen, 2012; Desjardins & Kalenda, 2025 *fc*). Factors that have shaped the ALS into what it is today include a complex governance system with a high degree of stakeholder involvement, the conceptualisation of adult education as a public good, an increasingly demand-driven adult education and training provision and coordination through long-term funding programmes to achieve societal goals (inclusion, integration, participation). The institutional development of the German ALS oscillates between gradual change and path-dependent development. Transformation takes place in accordance with the historically grown, institutionalised structures of the ALS, as well as the material and immaterial resources, specific orientations, and capabilities of the actors. The study (Ioannidou & Kohl, 2025*fc*.) identifies three phases: (1) 'In the aftermath of reunification: Transformation and self-responsibility' (1990-2004); (2) 'The lifelong learning era: Support and demand' (2005-2014); (3) 'Towards a Continuing Education Republic as a response to multiple challenges' (2015-2024).

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The evolution of adult learning systems in Europe: a comparative study of Bulgaria, Denmark, and Italy

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Abstract:

This contribution compares the evolution of Adult Learning Systems (ALSs) in Bulgaria, Denmark and Italy from the early 1990s to the 2020s using historical institutionalism (Fioretos, Falleti, and Sheingate, 2016; Thelen, 2009) and drawing from national case studies. These countries were selected based on several criteria defined in the specialised literature to maximise variation among European Union member states: accession to the EU, welfare state regimes (Fenger, 2007), typology of lifelong learning systems (Verdier, 2018), and coordinating mechanisms for adult learning

(Desjardins, 2017). Our data comprised primary sources (legislative texts) as well as secondary sources (reports, working papers, academic literature, national statistics data, and comparative statistical data compiled by EUROSTAT). We analysed historical trajectories and path dependencies and identified similarities and differences across the Bulgarian, Danish and Italian ALSs regarding key actors, institutional configurations, and critical junctures. In so doing, we shed light on whether these dynamics have influenced ALSs' inclusiveness regarding participation in adult education in the countries under consideration. Our findings confirm the relevance of the cultural, economic, and social embeddedness of national ALSs and show how country-specific path dependencies have locked in further institutional developments in all three countries. They further show that European policies on lifelong learning and adult education have accelerated existing initiatives (Denmark, Italy) or stimulated profound changes (Bulgaria). Finally, the inclusiveness capacity of ALSs differs across countries and is associated with the structure and governance of learning opportunities.

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Synthesis of qualitative and quantitative cross-national patterns and trends associated with adult learning systems

Richard Desjardins, *University of California, Los Angeles, U.S.A.*

Jan Kalenda, *Tomas Bata University, Czechia*

This presentation provides a brief overview of qualitative and quantitative cross-national patterns and trends associated with Adult Learning Systems (ALS). We consider the dynamics of institutional design/redesign of ALS in post-industrial market democracies over the last three decades, which can be discerned from 15 country case studies (Desjardins and Kalenda, in press 2025). In emphasising both shared trends and country-specific variations, our analysis reveals a simultaneous presence of both converging and diverging tendencies. Converging tendencies constitute some basic elements which we think underlie a set of configurations which we call Late Modern ALS. These elements characterize the governance, provision and financing structures underlying ALS at a synthetic level of analysis. Diverging tendencies are also observed with respect to national models of coordination and governance, including variations in provision and financing, underscoring the importance of studying institutional variation. The latter follow from context specificities and not least institutional histories along with the path dependency these imply. In addition to patterns observed from the qualitative case studies, we provide some preliminary findings on trends in cross-national patterns associated with participation in organized adult learning, which we derive from the 2022-23 OECD

Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies survey data in combination with its predecessor studies in 2012-16 and the 1994-1998 International Adult Literacy Survey. Together, these data enable an overview of participation patterns over the last three decades on the basis of high-quality comparative data, which are representative of adult populations.

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Discussant: Borut Mikulec, *University of Ljubljana, Slovenia*

MEDIAAC. PIAAC 2023 and its Impact on Adult Education and Learning

Anke Grotlüschen, *University of Hamburg, Germany*

Kim Laura Pedersen, *University of Hamburg, Germany*

Bernhard Schmidt-Hertha, *LMU München, Germany*

David Mallows, *UCL London, United Kingdom*

Margarita Caldéron Lopez, *Universidad de Chile, Chile*

Keywords: Literacy; PIAAC; Media

Abstract:

Dialogue and communication need language and literacy skills, which are often considered to be foundational for all members of a population. This kind of skills is tested every ten years with the OECD PIAAC program, covering between 24 countries (cycle one) and 31 countries (cycle 2). This symposium brings together a group of researchers who search for the problem represented to be (Bacchi, 2012) in the communication and discussion after the release of PIAAC 2023 by OECD and several countries on 10th of December 2023.

MEDIAAC – The media response to the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)

Anke Grotlüschen & Kim Laura Pedersen, *University of Hamburg, Germany*

Years ago, with the second wave of PIAAC that was released in 2016, Mary Hamilton and several researchers in the countries under consideration started a media analysis about the ways ideas travel through data (Hamilton, 2018). Hamilton applied actor-network theory and showed the powerful influence of OECD's country notes on national discourses. This time, Hamburg University collected media responses of selected countries after the PIAAC launch, e.g. Switzerland, Germany, and Israel. The data collection covers the initial press statements by OECD and the ministries, articles in major printed and online journals, media communication by key institutes, and a substantial part of social media entries on LinkedIn and Bluesky. The corpus has been collected over six weeks, and was translated into English. A discourse analysis was applied to identify key themes and "problems". The leading questions for the discourse analysis stem from the WPR-Approach (Bacchi, 2012). The first findings of the data collection show that some countries point to their stability regarding skills,

without communicating that in most countries the educational expansion goes on and could as well have led to a rise in skills like in comparable studies (Grotlüschen & Buddeberg, 2020). Regarding scientific statements, concerns about low literacy skills dominate the discussion, with numeracy as well as problem-solving being understood as less concerning.

Adult competencies in the second half of life

Bernhard Schmidt-Hertha, *LMU München, Germany*

In the second cycle, PIAAC also only looks at the working-age population (16 to 65 years). This means that data is missing for the last quarter of life (average life expectancy in OECD countries is 81 years) and over 18% of people in OECD countries (World Bank, 2024). However, with the test scores for 50 to 65-year-olds and a bundle of information on their lifestyle and activities, data is available for younger older people in the so-called third age. Using the PIAAC data for Germany, the skills profiles, as well as private, voluntary, and vocational activities of this group are compared with those of both the younger age group and the 50 to 65-year-olds from PIAAC 2012.

Gerontological and educational studies have repeatedly pointed out that individual skills development is less dependent on chronological age and more on individual lifestyles (e.g. Baltes, 1987; Friebe, Schmidt-Hertha & Tippelt, 2014). Against this background, it is expected that factors such as employment, voluntary work, care activities, and further education activities significantly influence skills in addition to the known socio-demographic predictors (school and vocational education, income, professional position). This article examines and compares these correlations for different age groups. The focus is on the question of whether various lifestyle factors correlate similarly with the skills measured in PIAAC in all age groups or whether there are differences here.

Muted reception? What key policy figures say

David Mallows, *UCL London, United Kingdom*

The results of the latest round of the OECD's survey of adult skills were launched in England in December 2024 with a press release OECD accompanied by a country specific report analyzing the implications of the results for the English education and skills systems. There was also a one-hour webinar organized by the Learning and Work Institute with a contribution from the OECD's Andreas Schleicher. There has been no official UK government statement on the results of the survey. In this presentation I will describe this extremely muted reception of the survey results in the mainstream and specialist media / social media and suggest reasons why this might be the case. Drawing on interviews with key policy figures in the UK government and its agencies I will then go on to attempt to establish why the UK government agreed to take part in this very expensive exercise and what impact it might have / have had on the development of a system to meet the skills needs of adults in England.

The release of the 2024 PIAAC results in Chile

Margarita Calderón Lopez, *Universidad de Chile, Chile*

The release of the 2024 PIAAC results for Chile follows a similar pattern to the 2016 round, coinciding with significant social movements advocating for free higher education and widespread dissatisfaction with the government. At that time, the PIAAC results received minimal media coverage and little public attention (Hamilton, 2018)). This limited interest could be attributed to the fact that

the findings reaffirmed what previous international assessments (OECD, 2016a, 2016b) and research (Bravo and Contreras 2001, Bellei et al. 2009) had already highlighted: persistently low levels of literacy skills that support a deficit narrative. The PIAAC results also reinforced a narrative, strongly amplified by the media since Chile's entry into the OECD, that the country's educational system is inadequate compared to OECD countries. However, the little impact of PIAAC data on educational policies in Chile (Calderón et al., 2024) demonstrates that these comparisons are unhelpful and can create and reproduce forms of educational colonialism (Grotlüschen, 2018, Grotlüschen & Heilmann, 2021). The inequalities and particularities of Chile's youth and adult education system are part of the findings that must be considered if we are to avoid perpetuating a form of educational colonialism that imposes external standards that neglect local contexts.

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Discussants:

Virginie Thériault, *Université de Quebec a Montreal, Canada*

Klaus Buddeberg, *University of Hamburg, Germany*

Migration, learning and social inclusion: A qualitative longitudinal study

Andreas Fejes, *University of Linköping, Sweden*

Magnus Dahlsedt, *University of Linköping, Sweden*

Keywords: Adult education, lifelong learning, migration

Abstract:

In this symposium we present recent findings from an ongoing longitudinal research program on migration, learning and social inclusion. The focus of the program is to analyse migrants' experiences of social inclusion in relation to their encounter with different actors and institutional practices, such as adult education, the labour market, public services and civil society organisations. 173 migrants arriving in Sweden in the period 2014-2017 were interviewed in 2017-2018 when engaged in different educational practices. 55 of these migrants were interviewed 2-3 years later when engaged in different educational and labour market practices, and now, 3-4 years later, these migrants are interviewed a third time. The four contributions in this symposium are based on analyses of the first and second round of interviews with these 55 migrants. However, in one of the contributions, the data is complemented with interviews with 8 migrants arriving from Ukraine in 2022.

Migration and social mobility

Andreas Fejes & Magnus Dahlsedt, *University of Linköping, Sweden*

Migration and the integration of migrants into the labor market is a major issue of our time. Historically, foreign-born individuals have had a lower employment rate compared to domestic-born individuals, and certain groups of migrants take a longer time to gain access to and build a stable relation to the labor market. In the present paper, we approach migrants' integration into the labor market as a process, investigating the experiences of migrants in their own words. We focus on their stories about their relationship with the labor market, recognizing that migrants' study and career choices, as well as their hopes for the future, can and indeed do change over time. Our analysis draws on a big data set in which we have followed 55 migrants to Sweden over time. An initial interview was conducted when they were newly arrived in Sweden, and we followed up with a second interview 2-3 years later. Our analysis identified five social mobility trajectories: mobility out of the country, stopped mobility, mobility towards the labour market, mobility on the way to the 'dream job', and well on the way to realising the 'dream job'. These five trajectories are further elaborated on in the paper.

Precarious Yet Progressing: From Asylum to Employment in a Service Economy

Nedžad Mešić, *University of Linköping, Sweden*

Migrants' path to employment is highlighted in public discourse almost exclusively as the most important route to inclusion – something that many migrants agree with. However, the possibilities to find a job are influenced by numerous structural factors. One of the most significant developments in the Western world has been the transition from an industrial to a service economy, resulting in fewer industrial jobs. This shift has especially affected migrants who previously had relatively good opportunities in the manufacturing industry. Consequently, the new economy requires services tailored to domestic conditions, where communication skills are often rewarded. This study explores

the experiences of 55 migrants seeking employment in Sweden through the theoretical lenses of societal opportunity structures and social mobility, highlighting the social, economic, and cultural conditions that shape migrants' incorporation and upward mobility. It identifies five themes characteristic of migrants' experiences in the Swedish labour market: finding work by switching tracks from asylum migration to a work visa; low-skilled jobs; work experience and language development; access to networks; and internships and further education. Taken together, these themes indicate that the path to employment is not straightforward. It often involves grey areas between recognition and exploitation, as well as transitions among temporary jobs where career prospects are limited by lock-in network effects and tasks that do not heavily rely on language skills. However, the study also shows that these precarious experiences may be viewed as beneficial for building one's CV, and that further education and internships can enhance an individual's qualifications.

The hope of returning? – a comparative interview study of migrants arriving to Sweden in the period 2014-2017 and migrants arriving from Ukraine in 2022

Andreas Fejes & Sofia Nyström, *University of Linköping, Sweden*

Migrants are often treated as monolithic entities in need of specific measures to become included in society but at the same time, different groups of migrants are treated differently. An example of is EUs temporary protection the Mass Refugee Directive enacted in 2022 in relation to the war in Ukraine, allowing Ukrainian refugees protection within the EU. However, a similar directive was never put in place related to the migration taking place in 2014-2016 from Syria and Afghanistan. In this article the aim is to problematise the different conditions of arrival based on refugees' own experiences and their thoughts about the future. The study contains two datasets, first a set of interviews with eight migrants who arrived 2014-2017 (mostly from Afghanistan) and a second set, with interviews with eight migrants from Ukraine (interviewed in November/December 2022). Drawing on Ahmed's phenomenological perspective on how bodies and individuals are oriented in time and space we discuss migrants' orientations and reorientations. Although all interviewees were refugees, the reasons for ending up in Sweden differed. In the first group, Sweden was not a pre-planned destination, while for most of the Ukraine refugees Sweden was the intended country of destination. Both groups express a life on halt, although their experiences of the migration process differ. Plans for where to establish oneself in the future, in Sweden or returning to one's country of origin, are conditioned by a range of different factors which shape the migrants dreams for the future.

Between hope and despair: Participants of adult education navigating migration, parenthood and social mobility

Sofia Nordmark & Magnus Dahlstedt, *University of Linköping, Sweden*

This paper examines the role of parenthood in shaping the experiences of migrants participating in various adult education contexts in Sweden, focusing on how they interpret their current circumstances and prospects for social mobility. The analysis is based on interviews conducted between 2017 and 2019 with 27 participants engaged in basic language training, as well as follow-up interviews conducted three years later. The interviews are analyzed with a focus on parenthood, migration and social mobility. Specifically, the discussion highlights how participants in adult education experience social mobility—understood as individuals' movement within society both

socially and spatially—through the lens of parenthood. The findings reveal that participation in adult education is largely motivated by concerns for the well-being and future opportunities of one's children, while also fostering a sense of belonging and hope for the future. However, navigating opportunities for social mobility while being a parent is also influenced by the intersecting effects of asylum processes and migration policies on family life and one's opportunities. This paper discusses the tangible consequences of an uncertain existence for both migrants and their families, influencing their experiences as participants in adult education and their prospects for social mobility.

References: Will be included in full-text papers.

The personal is political. Gender sensitive approach in adult education research and practices - Symposium of Gender and Adult Learning Network

Keywords: gender sensitive approach, intersectionality and adult education research, older adults learning, volunteering, informal learning of adults

Abstract:

The aim of this symposium is to discuss the importance of continuing to use a gender-sensitive approach in adult education research in the face of the various anti-gender movements that have been well identified in Europe and elsewhere, especially in the last two decades, which have contributed to what Norocel and Băluță (2023) have called the 'retrograde mobilisation of opposition'. Simultaneously the well-known world experiences an axiological, cultural and social shift from tradition to unknown future in face of refugee crisis, war in Ukraine and different nationalisms which are rising up nowadays. The symposium will bring together four communications and a voice of a discussant, gathering Polish and Portuguese researchers. Together they will debate and discuss issues that have been the focus of their research interests, analysed through the lens of gender and respecting an intersectional approach in the cultural and political context of above mentioned.

Challenges that researchers and practitioners in adult education may face in integrating a gender approach into their work

Cristina C. Vieira, *University of Coimbra, FPCE & University of Algarve, CEAD, Portugal*

It is unanimously recognised that the socially and culturally constructed differences between women and men characterise the fundamental organising principles of society and have historically maintained asymmetrical power relations, which tend to be naturalised, even in institutional contexts (Ferreira, Lopes, Santos, Monteiro, & Vieira, 2024). However, this recognition has not been strong enough, even in the fields of adult education research and practice, because people continue to be studied, seemingly ignoring that they may be intersected by axes of oppression or privilege that determine the place from which they make themselves heard, exercise self-evaluation and take advantage of the opportunities available to them. Gender plays a major role in defining, constructing and conditioning education and learning (Dybbroe & Ollagnier, 2003). The first imperative, therefore, should be to promote the need for those in the role of researchers or practitioners to reflect on themselves as those who design research or decide on interventions with particular individuals

and/or groups. Indeed, it is urgent to foster this process of self-inspection about one's own beliefs and conceptions that may cloud the lenses through which the world and knowledge are approached. The effects of using a gender-sensitive approach in research and practice tend to be positive and unavoidable for researchers and professionals. By bringing issues that are often private and invisible to public scrutiny into the realm of research, it is assumed that doing science and designing practices are also acts of politics and ethical imperatives.

Adult men's learning in off-road culture in the time of cultural and social change of gender roles

Olga Modzelewska, *University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, Poland*

In contemporary society, informal education has become a key aspect of individual development (Ostrouch-Kamińska, Vieira 2015), particularly in acquiring gender competencies and shaping masculinity. In a world of dynamic social transformations, men continuously reconstruct their behaviors to navigate shifting societal expectations. They must balance social acceptance while avoiding stigmatization from both women and other men. One domain where this process is particularly evident is the space of male passion—off-road and off-road culture. It is more than just an extreme hobby, it serves as a space where men learn masculinity and renegotiate its patterns.

Off-road culture is an environment where participants experience traditional masculinity while also engaging in transformations of male gender norms. During rallies, men test their limits, but they also learn from one another. In this context, off-road culture become an informal educational space where men negotiate their gender identity and redefine traditional models of masculinity in alignment with contemporary realities. Members of the off-road community undergo socialization and learning through observation and direct experience, internalizing and often reproducing stereotypical masculine norms accepted within this social setting. Participation in off-road rallies becomes a means for them to validate and express traditional masculinity. However, some men, beyond the rally environment, seek ways of fulfilling their male role that align with a new paradigm of masculinity. Thus, informal education, both within and beyond off-road culture, requires men to continuously negotiate and engage in dialogue about contextually appropriate ways of performing their gender role.

Integrating a gender sensitive positioning in research on older adults learning

António Fragoso, *University of Algarve, CEAD, Portugal*

Much of the research on older adult learning treats subjects as homogeneous across different dimensions. This turns older adults into de-classed, de-gendered, de-sexualised subjects with little voice, autonomy or dignity - as if all older adults can expect is to be objects of care. However, all the structural factors that often lead to social inequalities in the lives of adults are still important - or increasingly important - in the lives of older adults. Gendered patterns of domination and unequal power relations do not disappear with age. Not only do these patterns become more pronounced with age, as we should not forget that the majority of older people are women (Withnall, 2010), a phenomenon that is reinforced by today's demographic trends (for example, in Portugal, 2 out of every 3 people over the age of 84 are women). Age, social class and gender can explain poverty in later life and many older women who do not age 'successfully' are subject to extreme social exclusion (Westwood, 2023). A gendered approach to the study of older adult learning is therefore inescapable when analysing most issues in the field. This is the case, for example, when analysing the complex

phenomena of ageism, learning in third age universities and its gendered determinants, transitions to retirement, or the influence of masculinities on men's learning. Ignoring the gendered phenomena present in all these issues is a loss for researchers and for adult studies.

Women on the frontlines of aid: Experiences of Two Volunteers at Wrocław's Main Railway Station

Paweł Rudnicki, *DSW University of Lower Silesia, Poland & EMCE International Research Network*

This presentation focuses on the experiences of two women — Lisa and Mona (pseudonyms) — who, in the first weeks following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, became key figures in a grassroots volunteer network supporting refugees at Wrocław's Main Railway Station. Based on episodic narrative interviews (ENI) and supplementary in-depth interviews (IDI) conducted a year later, this study examines how these two women not only provided support but also shaped new dynamics of self-organization and mutual aid. The presentation highlights how informal support networks, created by women, filled the gap left by state institutions. Despite their different strategies, both Lisa and Mona experienced volunteering as a profound process of professional and personal transformation (Vandevoordt, 2019). Their narratives reveal that crisis volunteering is not just an act of care but also a space for informal learning and agency-building (Pietrzyk-Reeves, 2023). This discussion contributes to the broader debate on the role of women in humanitarian efforts and the importance of a gender-sensitive approach in research on informal learning in crisis situations.

Discussant: Joanna Ostouch-Kaminska, *University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, Poland*

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Professionalisation, structural development and advocacy in adult education: Research findings and reflections on the role of DVV International and other intermediary actors

Steffi Robak, *University of Hanover, Germany*

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Anke Grotlüschen, *University of Hamburg, Germany*

Regina Egetenmeyer, *University of Würzburg, Germany*

Tommaso Caraccioli, *University of Padova, Italy*

Katarina Popović, *University of Belgrad, Serbia*

Michael Schemmann, *University of Köln, Germany*

Keywords: intermediary actors, professional structure development, advocacy in international areas

Abstract:

Introduction: Intermediary institutions in adult learning and education (ALE) foster dialogue at multiple levels – between diverse educational traditions, within national systems, and across international networks. They develop professionalisation frameworks, advocate for ALE, and support institutional development while addressing societal and individual learning needs.

DVV International is an internationally operating intermediary actor that develops unique country and culture-specific approaches and structures for Adult Learning and Education in dialogue. It is based on broad expertise, partner networks and professionally validated curricula and tools that take into account all relevant professional levels of action in educational activities. Through this structural and globally dialogue-based professionalism, DVVI positions adult education and engages in advocacy tasks.

This symposium explores how DVV International and other intermediary actors facilitate dialogue in ALE through research, policy engagement, and structured professional development in selected countries, bridging diverse perspectives, strengthening professional and institutional structures, and fostering collaboration among key actors. Dialogue is of particular importance at various levels of action. The four papers examine key aspects of this process, where exchange, communication, and dialogue shape the development, implementation, and impact of ALE policies and practices.

Curriculum globALE – professionalisation and standardisation as a tool for dialogue between cultures

Katarina Popović, *University of Belgrad, Serbia*

Curriculum globALE (CG) is a global framework for training adult educators, originally developed in 2012/13 and revised in 2020 through an extensive consultative process involving the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), DVV International, the German Institute for Adult Education (DIE), and the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE).

CG embodies a dual dialogical function – both in its development, as a cross-cultural exchange between ALE traditions, and in its implementation, fostering dialogue among ALE actors within and across countries.

This revision process functioned as a cross-cultural dialogue, engaging experts and practitioners from all continents. Coordinated by UIL and DVV, it facilitated an exchange of experiences, perspectives, and approaches. Through this participatory dialogue, commonalities were identified, standards for professional educators defined, and pathways for adaptation to diverse cultural and institutional contexts explored. The result is a framework that integrates shared values, scientifically grounded principles, and the diversity of ALE traditions worldwide. Rather than imposing rigid standardisation, CG fosters ongoing exchange, a shared professional identity, and competencies that are meaningful across different learning cultures.

Beyond its conceptual foundation, CG creates spaces for dialogue at multiple levels. Nationally, it brings together ministries, academia, and civil society to align professional standards and enhance cooperation. Regionally, it promotes cross-country exchange, where diverse experiences contribute to joint learning and capacity-building. Globally, CG supports a professional community of practice, linking educators, institutions, and policymakers in continuous collaboration and advocacy. In this way, CG demonstrates how professionalisation, developed through dialogue, can strengthen ALE while serving as a bridge between cultures, fostering both local relevance and global connection.

Implementation of the GlobALE curricula, institutional and managerial at the AE centres in Georgia

Tommaso Caraccioli, *University of Padova, Italy*

Regina Egetenmeyer, *University of Würzburg, Germany*

Between 2021 and 2024, Curriculum globALE (UIL et al., 2021), a program designed to professionalise adult educators, Curriculum institutionALE (Denys, 2021), a framework aimed at strengthening Institutes of Adult Learning and Education (ALE), and Curriculum managerALE (Phuoc et al., 2021), a program focused on developing the managerial competencies of IALE managers, were implemented across all Adult Education Centres (AECs) in Georgia.

This study researches the impact of the three curricula on enhancing the quality of the centres, which was a key objective of their implementation. Therefore, a qualitative study was conducted. Data was collected through 14 interviews with all the centre directors and a representative of the Georgian Adult Education Network, as well as two focus groups involving 10 trainers selected through purposive sampling. The collected data was analysed using a content-structured analysis approach.

Data analysis show that the three curricula have contributed to the development of Georgian AECs. This improvement has been achieved through the strengthening of organisational processes, such as strategy and management, and the professionalisation of staff. Additionally, the trainers' enhanced knowledge and skills have contributed to improving the teaching and learning practices. However, some challenges were identified, including a perceived gap, noted by certain directors, between the established standards and their vision of non-formal education organisations. Furthermore, there is insufficient evidence regarding the curricula's impact on specific outcomes, such as participation rates. These findings highlight the need for further research to examine these areas in greater detail.

Dialogue about the Study Adult Learning and Education within the framework of Lifelong Learning

Anke Grotlüschen, *University of Hamburg, Germany*

Alisa Belzer, *Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, the U.S.A.*

Keiko Yasukawa, *University of Technology Sydney, Australia*

DVV International launched a call for tender that we answered with a research proposal by three scientists from USA, Australia and Germany. In a co-creative dialogue with researchers and DVVI partners from several regions, the countries, research questions and methods were narrowed down. One question was whether there are visible effects of Adult Learning and Education on social and labor market outcomes. This question was answered by a literature review of longitudinal studies (and found good proof). Another question was to reflect the shift in the term Lifelong Learning, which was done through desk research of White Papers (and was also confirmed). The third and most relevant set of questions asks for hindrances and strategies in implementing Adult Learning and Education. Eight country focus groups were conducted digitally. Data analyses followed grounded theory approach. From the findings, a theory of ALE in times of crisis was generated that uses Guimaraes' four-level approach. The booklet ends with recommendations, one of them is to more closely co-operate with science. Findings were launched with a press release in June 2023. The dialogue then restarted with partners in several regions (e.g. Kyiv, Bonn, Bethlehem, Cape Town, Amman, Taschkent, Ramallah). The findings of the study have been discussed in ESREA BGL and PSAE special interest group and will not be repeated. Instead, this presentation focuses on the arguments of the dialogue and its effects.

Developing and Promoting Lifelong Learning in Laos. Reflections on DVVI as a key-actor and the coordination of action

Michael Schemmann, *University of Köln, Germany*

DVVI has been active in Laos as a partner for the non-formal education sector since 2009. The regional office in Vientiane develops and implements projects in Laos and Cambodia. Following a dialogical and integrated approach, DVVI works on the macro-level by advocating lifelong learning policies, on the meso-level by strengthening the institutional capacity and on the micro-level by offering literacy courses or professional training.

The contribution will take a close look at the various activities in Laos. By employing the theoretical perspective of Educational Governance, the major actors as well as the coordination of actors will be analyzed. The contribution aims at identifying conditions that lead to success as well as hindrances that need to be overcome to be successful.

The article is based on interviews with current and former employees of the DVVI office in Laos as well as on documents that were published during the work in Laos. It shows that developing and promoting lifelong learning is a complex effort that needs professionals to achieve it. It also shows how important development assistance and cooperation is in times when it gets discredited rather easily in many countries.

Rethinking Quantitative Measurement in Adult Education and Training: Dialogue between Research Interest and Policy Interest

Bernd K  pplinger, *Justus-Liebig-Universit  t Gießen, Germany*

Jan Kalenda, *Tomas Bata University, Czechia*

Keywords: Large-scale surveys, methodology, comparative adult education

Abstract:

This symposium critically examines the current quantitative measurement of Adult Education and Training (AET), focusing on the tools and methodologies that inform both research and policy in this field. While AET research has traditionally favoured qualitative approaches (Boeren, 2018; Nylander et al., 2022), although to different degrees in different countries (K  pplinger & St. Clair, 2023), policymaking remains primarily driven by data from large-scale comparative surveys. These include the Adult Education Survey (AES), the Labour Force Survey (LFS) for measuring participation in adult education, the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) for skill assessment, and the Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS) for enterprise-provided training.

The symposium seeks to foster dialogue between researchers and policymakers, highlighting the importance of advancing and effectively utilising quantitative approaches in AET research. Central to the discussion will be the argument for developing new surveys designed to better capture the complexities of the current AET landscape, as presented in the papers by Prof. Richard Desjardins and Dr Jan Kalenda [Paper 01 – How to (not) measure Adult Learning Systems] and Dr Jan Kalenda and Ellen Boeren [Paper 02 – Beyond “triadic” conceptualisation of learning activities]. This perspective will be contrasted with a counterargument advocating for the usage and improved usage of existing surveys, as proposed by Prof. Bernd K  pplinger’s paper [Paper 03 – Exploiting capacity of the surveys on AET]. The latter argument suggests that rather than creating new instruments, using not-used data and refining the implementation and analysis of current surveys like the AES and CVTS may also be beneficial. To ensure a well-rounded discussion, the symposium will feature a discussant from the CEDEFOP (Marco Serafini) who will provide critical commentary on the positions presented from the perspective of policymaking. This approach aims to offer a balanced and comprehensive exploration of the future direction of quantitative measurement in AET, bridging the gap between the current approaches with the field of AET and policy needs.

How to (not) measure Adult Learning Systems

Richard Desjardins, *University of California, Los Angeles, the U.S.A.*

Jan Kalenda, *Tomas Bata University, Czechia*

This paper will examine the principal methodological shortcomings of the prevailing surveys on adult education and learning — namely, PIAAC and the AES — and propose an alternative framework for measuring several foundational components of contemporary Adult Learning Systems (ALS). The thematic domains addressed by PIAAC and AES, along with the survey items they employ, have been subject to sustained critique within the field of adult education. These critiques pertain to ontological, theoretical, and methodological limitations, as well as the surveys’ constrained capacity to inform more nuanced and targeted policy recommendations. In contrast to PIAAC and AES, we will present an alternative approach to the measurement of ALS, which was implemented as a pilot survey in five

European countries (Sweden, the UK, Czechia, Germany and Italy) in 2024/2025. The pilot integrates five key thematic domains that have either been under-theorised in previous instruments or insufficiently linked to a coherent conceptualisation of ALS. These areas are treated as transversal dimensions within the broader inquiry into adults' educational biographies and their engagement in both formal and nonformal learning contexts. The five thematic domains include: (1) the flexibility of educational pathways within ALS; (2) the openness of further adult education (FAE) to non-traditional learners; (3) motivations for participation in adult education and training (AET); (4) the forms of support available for participation in AET; and (5) the barriers hindering such participation.

Beyond “triadic” conceptualisation of learning activities

Jan Kalenda, *Tomas Bata University, Czechia*

Ellen Boeren, *University of Glasgow, United Kingdom*

This paper will explore the measurement of adult learning activities within the framework of large-scale international research. Since the 1990s, international surveys have systematically tracked participation in adult education and training. These efforts commonly rely on a triadic classification of learning activities — formal (FAE), non-formal (NFE), and informal learning (IFL) — to enable cross-national comparisons of participation rates. However, both historical developments and conceptual critiques have drawn attention to the intrinsic overlap among these categories, casting doubt on their analytical validity and empirical reliability. Despite such concerns, the triadic model remains in widespread use, raising questions about the accuracy and interpretative value of the data it generates. This paper critically examines the continued reliance on this classification system and calls for a conceptual reorientation that better captures the evolving nature of adult learning. In response to long-standing critiques of the operationalisation of learning types, it proposes two alternative frameworks: (1) the redefinition of learning categories as inherently fluid and overlapping; and (2) the conceptualisation of learning activities along a spectrum ranging from formality to informality.

Exploiting capacity of surveys on AET

Bernd K  pplinger, *Justus-Liebig-University Giessen, Germany*

The paper will discuss the research-related values of the Adult Education Survey (AES), which has existed since 2007, and the Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS), which has existed since 1993. Firstly, access to national and European microdata will be an issue and a point of major critique. Secondly, the frequent focus mainly on the labour force (e.g., https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/5548_en.pdf) will be explained and problematised. Thirdly, the contribution will highlight the unused potential for analysis since analysis often does not go beyond table reports and is predominantly descriptive analysis. Fourthly, already existing studies with AES and CVTS data will briefly help to demonstrate the possibilities and insights generated. Overall, the paper will end with encouraging researchers within ESREA to use more of this existing data but also put pressure on authorities like Eurostat or national statistical offices to make access to the microdata of AES and CVTS much easier and more affordable than nowadays.

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"SpaceTime Accents" – Complex Times and Challenging Spaces: Reflections on Dialogical Shifts in Critical Service Learning Approaches, Continuing Education Guidance, and Hybrid Learning Spaces - Symposium of S.T.R.E.A.M (Spaces, Times, and the Rhythms of the Education of Adults and its Movements) – Network

Sabine Schmidt-Lauff, Marie Rathmann, *Helmut Schmidt University / University of the Federal Armed Forces Hamburg, Germany*

Badokufa Bulugu, *St. Augustine University, Tanzania & University of Duisburg Essen, Germany*

Marie Rathmann, *Helmut Schmidt University / University of the Federal Armed Forces, Germany*

Christina Hümmer, *Julius Maximilian University, Germany*

Lisa Breitschwerdt, *Julius Maximilian University, Germany*

Michel Alhadeff-Jones, *Institut Sunkhronos, Switzerland*

Keywords: Time, Space, Learning, Digitalization, Interculturality

Abstract:

This symposium explores the intersection of adult education and learning in the context of dialogical shifts within our mediatized, global communicative society (cf. Lundby, 2014). Contemporary diagnoses underscore two significant phenomena for adult education: a) globalization, characterized by intercultural and international influences (e.g. UIL, 2022), and b) mediatization, evidenced by the digitalization of education (Kühn, 2022, 56). Both phenomena have led to transformative changes, encompassing issues of power, solidarity, community, identity, and virtuality. These transformations are crucial for understanding the nature of dialogue in its 'relational' sense (cf. Simão, 2023). The symposium aims to address these phenomena by focusing on temporal and spatial analyses (e.g., topological dynamics, Decuyper et al., 2022; chronotope power, Ritella et al., 2017). Time, space, and rhythm are fundamental in human processes and movements (cf. STREAM Network), deeply embedded within the cultural norms of interaction, practices, and dialogue in education, also shaping "Educational Research and the Questions of Time" (Cole et al., 2024). The rhetoric surrounding digital learning often emphasizes its potential enabling learners to engage at their convenience. However, this flexibility also poses challenges related to maintaining a sense of community and dialogue, which is critical for connection, understanding, interrelation, and commitment among learners and educators. Key questions to be addressed include: How are dialogues multilayered and influenced by intercultural temporal dynamics (e.g., accents; Levine, 2006) and the pervasive digitalization of

education (Stalder, 2021)? How can different cultural conceptions of time, rhythm (Alhadeff-Jones, 2023), or digital chronotopes (Schmidt-Lauff et al. i.p.) deepen our understanding of the dialogical impacts (Simão, 2023, 137) on adult education? Time and space emerge as pivotal lenses for interpreting how dialogue in and through learning and education is shaped by intercultural and digital influences. Contributions will examine these dynamics through various perspectives:

Time and learning among adult learners: a perspective from the context of Africa

Badokufa Bulugu, *St. Augustine University, Tanzania & University of Duisburg Essen, Germany*

The African perspective on time and temporality, for adult learning process, is substantive in connection with events (Mbiti, 1969) as it intertwines the present, past, and future through reflection on experiences to transform previous knowledge. Similarly, the Western conception asserts that time “is a relational concept that depends on a frame of references such as situation and historical context, personal experience and behaviour, social and cultural practices, norms and other similar factors” (Schmidt-Lauff, 2023). The guiding questions, 1. what is the time in relation to adult learning? 2. how does this conception contribute to adult learning process? helped to scrutinize the learning process of students in the St. Augustine University of Tanzania Service-Learning program (SAUT S-LP) through an interpretive analysis approach (Rowlands, 2005). SAUT S-LP is a replica of service-learning, a teaching and learning strategy that integrates community service with academic study, reflection, and analysis to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility and strengthen communities (National Commission on Service-learning, 2002). Through interpretive approach I contextualize Mbiti’s concept of time to identify and analyse students’ service-learning processes: identify and engage in community services, take notes of experiences, and carry-out critical reflections to develop new perspectives. The approach facilitates adult education and learning process (Mitchel, 2008). Similarly, SAUT S-LP witness that “service-learning offers a concrete example from the field of higher education and its embeddedness in the glo-cal community as well as its facilitation of adult learners” (Schreiber-Barsch et al., 2023, 92). Therefore, use of time through organized events and reflection leads to learning.

Exploring the Temporal and Spatial Dimensions of Digital Continuing Education Guidance through the Lenses of LifeDeveloping Bildung

Marie Rathmann, *Helmut Schmidt University / University of the Federal Armed Forces, Germany*

Digital continuing education guidance, as a specific form of dialogical guidance practice, aims to address biographical challenges and subjectively significant problems through reciprocal learning processes (Kinshuk, 2016; Schmidt-Lauff & Rathmann, 2024). In doing so, such dialogical practices contribute to life-developing Bildung (Lerch & Weitzel, 2023) by targeting specific groups within digital environments (Käpplinger, 2020). Through media-mediated formats such as chat and telephone guidance, forums, or information platforms, advice seekers engage in ‘access-expanding’ (Robak, 2022) dialogues with both themselves and advisors in a relational manner. This potential is made possible by low-threshold, flexible, and ondemand access at any time and location, facilitated by a single click or easy termination of use (‘easy in-easy out’; Engel, 2019). As such, both spatiality and temporality are valuable resources for digital guidance. This presentation will discuss findings from a past digital continuing education platform, which was operated by Germany’s Federal Office

for Education and Research. From a document-analytical perspective on digital documents (Wein, 2020), this digital guidance platform was analyzed in relation to life-developing Bildung. Specifically, I will examine the results of temporal and spatial dimensions of digital continuing education guidance through the lens of life-developing Bildung. Furthermore, these findings are interpreted as dialogical relationships between advice seekers and digital mediatization. The outcomes demonstrate and offer an outlook on how digital guidance addresses individuals' biographical development and lifeworlds, fostering self-reflexivity and offering new perspectives on one's relationship with oneself and society through dialogical guidance practices.

Time phenomena in synchronous hybrid learning spaces: Design implications for higher and adult education

Christina Hümmer & Lisa Breitschwerdt, *Julius Maximilian University, Germany*

The thoughtful integration of digital technologies in the design of educational formats is becoming increasingly important in international adult education (UIL, 2022). Hybrid learning spaces as one format, in which learners participate in educational offers online and on-site synchronously, have so far been discussed primarily in the context of spatial approaches (Bülow, 2022; Hümmer et al. i.p.). However, there appear to be specific specialities in synchronous hybrid learning spaces in connection with the subjective perception of time of online and on-site participants and the collective time practices of learners and lecturers that have yet to be researched (Schmidt-Lauff et al., i.p.; Schwarz et al., 2020). Accordingly, the presentation addresses the questions of how time is perceived in synchronous hybrid learning spaces by learners and the lecturer and how collective time practices are negotiated in dialogue between the lecturer and the learners. Using an explorative praxeologically oriented approach (Bohnsack, 2018), perceptions of time and collective time practices are explored in the course of a secondary analysis (Hughes & Tarrant, 2020) of interview data with learners and lecturers in different (international) synchronous hybrid learning spaces in higher education from the German research project DigiTaKS* collected between 2023 and 2024. The analysis can provide orientation not only for higher education, but also for adult education, in which synchronous hybrid learning spaces are gaining importance (Nørgård, 2021; Echarti et al., 2023), as to how these can be designed and conducted successfully from a temporal point of view.

Discussant: Michel Alhadeff-Jones, *Institut Sunkhronos, Switzerland*

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Temporalities in dialogue: a stake for education in environmental transitions

Elisa Thevenot, *University of Tübingen, Germany*

Michael Håkansson, *Stockholm University, Sweden*

Jerome Lafitte, *Tours University, France*

Keywords: sustainability education; socio-ecological transitions; temporalities; rhythms; biographical learning

Abstract:

Environmental transitions, understood as socio-ecological processes, require that the sustainability of ecosystems be integrated into all human projects. Such a normative horizon has an impact on educational projects and calls for careful consideration of the diverse temporalities involved—ecosystemic, educational, formative, as well as many other temporalities embedded in specific socio-ecological contexts. Addressing these layered temporalities necessitates an epistemological openness and a dialogue of knowledge that often crystallises in complex territorial situations in search of elucidation.

This symposium brings together three papers that explore the dynamic interplay between learning processes and the ways in which the temporalities involved can be discussed and articulated to best support learning in times of environmental transitions. The exploration of rhythm analysis in terms of the different methodologies developed in educational and formative projects and in research, and the approach based on biographical narratives or life histories relating to the environment proposed in the three papers offer avenues for discussion in terms of the relationship between learning and temporality. By re-appropriating lived experiences through narrative and/or analytical lenses, the contributions critically examine the modalities of learning in the light of the socio-ecological temporalities at play, including educational and formative temporalities. The symposium thus aims to deepen our understanding of how educational initiatives can support meaningful engagement with environmental transitions, highlighting the vital role of learning in navigating their inherent temporal complexities.

Using rhythm analysis to understand the temporal disharmony of environmental transitions issues faced by adult learners

Elisa Thevenot, *University of Tübingen, Germany*

Sustainability has become a central guiding principle of social change, yet its pace is perceived differently—some find it too slow, others too rapid—highlighting the diverse ways individuals experience and negotiate sustainability transitions. This temporal disharmony creates tensions that individuals in Western societies must continuously (re)negotiate as they navigate environmental challenges in daily life. To address the challenges of adult learning in sustainability transitions, this presentation draws on biographical narratives as both a research and training method. Using a rhythm analysis theoretical lens (Alhadeff-Jones, 2017; 2019), it explores how individuals experience and negotiate the timing of their engagement with environmental issues. Understanding the world through the lens of rhythms provides a means to examine the complexity of temporal experience and its implications for social action. Two empirical examples, drawn from the Working Out Sustainability in Transition project, illustrate how individuals determine the right moment to engage with

sustainability. These findings will serve as a foundation for the symposium's discussion on the relevance and limitations of biographical narratives in addressing temporal challenges in sustainability transitions.

Establishing a dialogue between a pragmatist and a rhythm analytical to identify different temporalities in transformative Environmental and sustainability education (ESE)

Michael Håkansson, *Stockholm University, Sweden*

Transformative approach has become one of the most prominent learning theory in Environmental and sustainability education (ESE). scholars claim it offers significant potential for understanding and supporting learning processes related to processes of transformation for sustainability, when it comes to challenges fundamental shifts in learners thinking and action and developing new understandings and ways of being and taking action based on these new insights (Singer-Brodowski 2023). This paper explores a transformative teaching approach (ESE), integrating Östman et al (2019) pragmatist teaching theory, Klafki's didactical questions, Biesta's (2020) subjectification concept, and a rhythm analytical perspective. It addresses the need for a nuanced understanding of temporality in transformation, discussing Chronos and Kairos (Wildemeersch et al 2023). Building on Mezirow's transformative learning theory (1997), the paper emphasizes the emotional aspects of transformation and the importance of disorienting dilemmas. The study argues for rethinking education towards transdisciplinary, transformative, and action-oriented approaches to foster deep, lasting changes in learners' mindsets. By establishing a dialogue between pragmatist understanding of rhythm (Dewey 1934/1987, 2008) and Alhadeff-Jones' (2017) rhythmological perspective, the paper offers insights into managing the challenges of developing teaching activities that put learners' habits and values at stake. This approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of educational temporalities and transformative experiences in ESE. The results will provide a foundation for the Symposium's discussion on the relevance related to temporalities in transformative changes of learners present assumptions and worldviews regarding (un)sustainable habits.

Relevance and limits of the life history approach in formation and research on temporalities linked to environmental issues

Jerome Lafitte, *Tours University, France*

This presentation will address the stake of mobilising the life history approach in adult education (Pineau and Breton, 2021; Pineau and Marie-Michèle, 1983; Slowik et al., 2020) in relation to environmental issues at the heart of environmental transitions (Lafitte and Berryman, 2021; Lebrun-Paré, 2018). The presentation will be based mainly on two examples: one from Quebec in a course entitled 'Environnement: savoirs et stratégies' in environmental sciences as part of an environmental education programme; and one from France in a bachelor's degree in scientific mediation and environmental education. In both cases, the research-formation design was used. In addition, two important issues at the heart of the formative stakes were associated with it: that of the dialogics of environmental knowledge and that of taking account of ecoformative temporalities. By anchoring aspects of environmental life histories in research, it will be possible to consider their value in research, in the light of a reflection on the effects produced in research participants, without such effects having been measured or targeted by the research (Lafitte, 2019). We will be looking at the place of the (non-) consideration of environmental temporalities in the participative approaches of

'sustainable development' territorial projects studied and the avenues for reflection that this opens up in terms of research and echoes, from a formative point of view. These examples will enable us to examine the relevance and limits of the educational strategies implemented as part of the environmental life history approach, with regard to the stakes involved in environmental transitions.

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Workshops

A re-imagined academia: A Benedictine community of learning

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Keywords: Benedictine, Community, life maps

Abstract

Experiential Session - objective: The aim of this session is to imagine how academia might look for adult educators if themes from the Rule of St Benedict were applied to Higher Education Institutes (HEIs). From their establishment in C.500 CE Benedictine Communities had a strong focus on adult education. Benedict explains his desire to, 'establish a school for the Lord's service' (Benedict 2008). Teaching was a crucial part of the monastic day yet, whilst learning was a central theme, it was not the only focus of the monastery.

The day was structured to create a rhythm for daily life. These included personal and collective prayer, labour, and hospitality. This ensured that no single element dominated, and that appropriate time and value was given for the completion of each. Whilst individuals may have had differing roles, they were within a framework of a shared communal life. This created a sense of social cohesion as, 'The workshop where we diligently work on all these tasks is the enclosure of the monastery, in the stability of the community' (Benedict 2008).

If we compare this to a modern landscape of academic life in an HEI, we find often stark differences. Many academics face competing demands and pressures (Yildirim and Senel 2023). This includes pressures such as pastoral care for students (Brewster, Jones et al. 2022) and increased accountability and competition (Olssen 2021). These create settings that are less focused on building community but instead focus on marketisation (Alajoutsijärvi, Alon et al. 2021) or capitalist forms of knowledge production (Ouellet and Martin 2018). It often focuses on the needs of one part of the system viewing students as consumers of a product (Mintz 2021). Whilst a modern HEI may look like a community focused on learning, it is often far from it in practice.

This session seeks to create a space to pause and reflect on what kind of academia we want to work in and what we can learn from the Rule of St Benedict to support us. It will be an opportunity to reflect on different ways that HEIs operate internationally and what common experiences we share working in a modern system. It will explore a historical way of sustaining a community of learning and invite participants to creatively imagine what such a system could look like today in a secular HEI.

Relevance to the conference theme: The history of adult education as a source of inspiration for the development of dialogue in and about the field of adult education and learning

Session outline and relevance for participants

- Participants would be invited to draw an island map of their academic 'world' using examples from table-top role playing games and fantasy genres as stimuli (Woodley 2024).
- They would be asked to discuss their map and how they conceptualise academia with the rest of the group.

- The session lead would then introduce and explain some of the key themes from the Rule of St Benedict and locate them within a modern secular understanding:
 - Work
 - Community
 - Obedience
 - Wellness
 - Hospitality
 - Respect
 - Stewardship
 - Prayer (reflection)
 - Love of learning
- Participants would be asked to imagine how they might see the themes applied to their academic 'world' and draw an updated map.
- They would then discuss their new map specifically focusing on and what benefits there might be for their academic life if such a landscape was possible.
- The session would conclude with discussing some practical ways that the Benedictine themes could be applied within the constraints of a modern HEI setting.

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Enhancing pluralistic participation in and about biographical research. A dialogic session with the Life History and Biography Network

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Keywords: biography; participation; pluralism

Abstract:

In March 2025, the Life History and Biography Network organized a research retreat on “Participation, beauty, and meaning” to reflect on the past, present and future of biographical inquiry. For some years we have explored new collaborative, transformative, and aesthetical ways of writing, meeting, and sharing research on narratives and biographies in adult lives and learning (Formenti, West, Horsdal, 2014; Formenti, West, 2016; Evans, 2016; Bainbridge, Formenti, West, 2021). By emphasizing networking and reciprocal knowledge, we have fueled dialogue among researchers and with practitioners, artists, and activists, and worked to re-invent the rhythms, organization, and purposes of our international meetings.

In Trondheim (2023), Newcastle-on-Tyne (2024), and Costarainera (2025) we put aside the classical organization and presentation as the unique way to communicate at conferences, not to refuse it completely, but to explore more possibilities. Biographical research in adult education seems to call for a dialogue where researchers and participants try to achieve authentic conversations and deep reciprocal learning. The structure of time and space that characterizes conferences can hinder dialogue, at least in the more formal parts.

Our exploration also brings risks. Pluralism is a value for adult education and learning, as well as for democracy. Some researchers have an embodied, emotional, and value-laden approach to biographical inquiry; others have a more structured and social perspective; there are even quantitative ways to analyze biographies, and different epistemologies have characterized our network since its very first conference on “Structures and subjectivities” (Geneva, 1993; see Alheit et al., 1995). The relationships that adults can have with oneself, the Other and the World can be narrated in different ways, all valuable for some reason.

There is a risk in the new trend of the LHBN: it has attracted to the network new colleagues, scared out others, and created discussions within and outside the network. We are facing challenges: a renovation of the convenors’ team, a growing difficulty of some to participate for lack of funding, a push to academic performance over quality. Presenting at conferences and publishing has become an obligation, more than a way to grow within a community. The possibility of living informal relationships and learning from each other is becoming rare also in workplaces, and the standardization of conferences mimics rituals of positivist science, objective, controlled, formalized, and generalized knowledge. To nurture experience-based, biographical human knowing and learning, we need good relational collaborative spaces where all researchers working with biographical methods can grow and share critical feedback.

So, in the dialogic session we want to reflect with colleagues who use – or are interested in using – biographical methods. We will share with the participants some “results” from this year’s research retreat on participation, beauty, and meaning, then we will propose a short activity aiming at writing down some answers to our questions and support a dialogue – in small and/or larger group depending on numbers.

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Fostering adult education through dialogic participatory partnerships: A workshop with representatives of ESREA, CASAE, SCUTREA

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Keywords: adult education, workshop, dialogic participatory partnerships, collaboration, ESREA, SCUTREA, CASAE

Abstract

As dialogue in society in general and in the field of adult education, in particular, is the central topic of discussion of this conference, this proposed dialogic workshop brings together representatives from CASAE, SCUTREA, and ESREA to explore the shared histories, challenges, and opportunities of

transatlantic partnerships in adult education research and practice. As adult education continues to evolve across diverse spaces and places, participatory partnerships across national and institutional boundaries become increasingly vital. By reflecting on past collaborative initiatives and engaging in participatory discussions, we aim to strengthen the field's collective capacity to advocate for and shape the future of adult education. We will also generate actionable strategies to sustain and expand these collaborations beyond the conference setting. This workshop will follow on the conversations that will be initiated at the SCUTREA and CASAE conferences. Its objectives are to explore the shared histories, challenges, and strengths of CASAE, SCUTREA, and ESREA in shaping the field of adult education; to engage conference participants in a participatory dialogue on the evolving nature of adult education and the roles of scholarly societies; and to identify strategies for strengthening cross-border collaborations in adult education research and advocacy.

The workshop will take the form of a participatory dialogue amongst the presenters and other participants in the room, evolving around some of the following themes: an introduction to the three organisations (CASAE, SCUTREA, and ESREA) and their historical and contemporary roles in advancing adult education research and practice; their shared histories and future directions; the legacy of past transatlantic dialogues; contemporary challenges in adult education, including the closure of university adult education programmes and the shift towards vocational and skills-based training; strengths and opportunities within our field, including the potential for collective advocacy and inter-organisational collaboration; global trends in adult education (shifts in policy, institutional structures, etc.) and their implications for scholarly societies; strategies for fostering new researchers and ensuring intergenerational continuity; strategies for enhancing partnerships, advocating for adult education, and sustaining international networks for knowledge exchange. The workshop will conclude with some reflections and ideas/suggestions to continue the dialogue and reinforce the collaboration of the three organisations (ESREA, SCUTREA, CASAE) and maybe of others (e.g. AAACE, etc.).

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- SCUTREA <https://uall.ac.uk/scutrea>
- CASAE <https://www.casae-aceea.ca/>

Philosophical questions of transformative learning: a dialogic exploration of the way forward

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Keywords: dialogue, transformative learning, ontology, epistemology, axiology

Abstract:

Implicit in most conceptions of transformative learning is a vision for what constitutes a good transformation or a better meaning perspective. Mezirow famously pointed to “more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective” meaning perspectives “that will prove more true or justified to guide action” (2000, p.7-8). Kegan (2000) argued that transformative learning (ideally) yielded “changes in the learner’s form of knowing” that are “more complex, more expansive” (p. 53-54).

But when we, transformative learning practitioners and researchers, discuss what “better” entails, do we define what we mean or do we assume that it automatically means, for example, a free liberal democratic society? What if, to someone else, “better” means authoritarian leadership or extreme ideological values? How about if one defines “transformative” an embodied experience of (re)connection to the world, oneself, and the other, while another sees it as rational critical reflection (see e.g., Formenti & West 2018, Hoggan 2016, Taylor 2008)?

These are fundamental philosophical questions on transformative learning. To be more precise, they are ontological (regarding on being/existence), epistemological (regarding knowledge/knowing) and axiological (regarding values/valuation) questions that are rarely explicated in e.g., research articles or even in what is aimed to be transformative education. In a sense, the way they are answered (implicitly or explicitly) define our whole understanding of transformative learning.

There will inevitably be differences in the way scholars define an instance of transformative learning, but it is important to be explicit about the embedded epistemologies, ontologies, and axiologies in those conceptions of transformation. Important differences within our community are blurred when these issues remain implicit and unclarified. In our portrayals of transformative learning, what are the bases and paths to knowledge creation that are privileged (epistemology), which ways of being in the world are assumed or prioritized (ontology), and what are the implicit values manifest in those portrayals (axiology)?

One could define dialogue as a deep and thorough conversation about presuppositions - a philosophical, existential, and political way to engage with the “other”. Differences are precious. They form the basis for a common understanding, which need not be a shared understanding: the end result may be an understanding that we understand the issue in a fundamentally different way. However, if we do not explicate and define our epistemological, ontological, and axiological commitments, we may talk past each other and the possibility of a real dialogue and advancement in theory and practice becomes more difficult. We believe that genuine dialogue can thrive on the reciprocal engagement in these philosophical underpinnings, rather than aiming for a “shared definition” or “master story”, but in recognizing and legitimizing differences among the speakers.

The workshop will invite the participants to engage reflexively on these topics. The facilitators will begin by offering personal experiences to ground this discussion in real, lived experiences. Then, participants are invited to join in by offering metaphors, images, or other forms of aesthetic language to explore distinctions in epistemological, ontological, and axiological dimensions of transformative learning. The group will then have a dialogue about the various ideas and themes that arose: What are the differences, tensions, dilemmas, emotions, and so forth? The session will end with explorations of possible paths forward for the theory and practice of transformative learning theory.

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Researching into transformative dimensions of learning in adult basic education

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Keywords: Transformative learning, adult basic education (ABE), community-based participatory research (CBPR), holistic assessment, emancipatory education

Abstract:

Transformative learning is a crucial but often underexplored dimension of learning in adult basic education (ABE) (King & Heuer, 2009; Reder, 2020; Kim & Belzer, 2021; Kastner & Motschilnig, 2022). Learner-centered, emancipatory ABE programs, based on Freire’s (1970) liberating, relational and dialogical conception of alphabetisation, foster social participation and personal development. Yet, dominant approaches emphasize summative, standardised learning outcomes, often overlooking deeper and highly individual transformative processes. Cranton and Hoggan (2012, p. 520) asked “how do we know when transformative learning has occurred” and suggested methods to explore this.

Analytic tools for understanding transformative change were proposed (Stuckey et al., 2013; Hoggan, 2016; Hoggan, 2022). Pang et. al. (2023, pp. 84-85) critiqued instruments grounded in cognitive approaches, advocating for extra-rational dimensions in assessing transformative learning. Validation of learning processes and outcomes, placing the individual at the center (Villalba-García, 2021, p. 357; Cedefop, 2023), can empower vulnerable adults. This highlights the importance of advocating for alternative pedagogical approaches where assessment and validation of learning are seen “as a learning process” (Andersson, 2017). This is in line with the core concept of andragogy, which sees adult learners as agentic subjects rather than passive recipients. Looney and Santibañez (2021) argue that “alternative assessments [...] which favour a more holistic approach to assessment of learner achievements are supported by decades of critical theory on adult learning and social justice” (p. 442).

Against this backdrop, by means of a community-based participatory research (CBPR) project, funded by the Erasmus+ program, a university and three ABE providers are working towards a holistic assessment framework for ABE, integrating summative, formative and transformative dimensions (Kastner & Motschilnig, 2022; Kastner, 2024). Data is generated by research groups

consisting of ABE learners and facilitators who reflected and analysed their expertise on existing assessment procedures and (co-)experienced transformative change.

This dialogic session provides a structured yet interactive space where participants engage in methodological exploration and dialogic knowledge exchange based on the case example of the CBPR project. Although presentations serve as inputs to frame and anchor the discussion, they are purposefully kept brief to maximize interaction.

We will address how transformative learning fosters agency in marginalized groups by integrating social critique and problem-posing education (Freire, 1970). This perspective is in line with the broader discussions on social justice in adult education. Guided discussions will facilitate knowledge exchange and encourage critical reflection on theory-practice integration in ABE, emphasizing the role of emancipatory and social critique elements in transformative learning. Furthermore, we will highlight the benefit of researching into transformative dimensions of learning in ABE in a participatory way aiming at the coproduction of knowledge and solutions (Hall, 2005; Call-Cummings et al., 2024).

Specifically, methodologies to engage participants include:

- Structured dialogue and reflection: After brief presentations (CBPR methodology, findings, assessment framework), significant time is dedicated to structured discussions through plenary dialogues, think-pair-share exercises, and small-group discussions. These formats are intentionally selected to promote interactive engagement.
- Interactive activities: The session explicitly integrates 'think-pair-share' discussions to facilitate peer interaction, knowledge exchange, and small-group dialogues aimed at synthesizing perspectives and co-creating insights. These activities are based on material generated by the participatory research group.
- Co-creation and exchange: Interactive segments leverage participatory methods from CBPR, facilitating critical reflection and mutual learning based on participants' expertise and experiences. To this end, examples of collaborative meaning-making in the participatory research groups and data analysis in the project steering committee will be shared.

Thus our workshop employs dialogic and collaborative methods to actively involve participants in critical examination and co-construction of knowledge, balancing informative input with structured interaction and ensuring genuine dialogue and shared learning.

Objectives are to critically discuss:

- a CBPR approach to research into transformative learning outcomes in ABE based on the experiences and expertise collected in the project research groups.
- the role of transformative learning process and outcomes in ABE.
- an assessment framework for ABE that integrates summative, formative and transformative dimensions.

Target group: Researchers, adult educators and practitioners, interested in holistic assessment of learning or researching with vulnerable adults.

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Towards temporalities for utopian dialogue in Higher Education? Suspending conference time in a civic sanctuary

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Keywords: Temporalities; Conference fringe; Civic Sanctuary

Abstract:

A shepherd's hut is installed on campus during a conference. As a pop-up encounter space, the hut's presence invites the curious to take time off. In parallel to busy networking indoors, there are storytelling sessions taking place around this outdoor venue. The shepherd's hut is 'scheduled' differently. The flexibility of this caravan offers an intriguing retreat venue which escapes the need for room bookings and linear management of space/time. The vehicle plays with temporalities of departures, returns, and unavailabilities in a distinctly vagabond way. Hut sessions are situated at timetabling margins in their liminal extracurricularity, but they are also centrally visible in the fast-paced campus zone.

The public visibility of this 'conference fringe' asks questions about the civic dimension of experiencing time in society and particularly in Higher Education. How can we 'secure a democratic accommodating of multiplicities of times' (Valkenburg, 2022: 449) which can be immersive, full of wonder and surprise? For dialogue to become an open-ended encounter rather than instrumental purpose (Shor & Freire, 1987), a crucial enabling or disabling factor is the time available to meet in improvised and flexible formats. This arts-based workshop will open up the space for an experiential discussion around the temporalities necessary so that a dialogical stance can flourish in adult education.

The session is proposed in the hut as a concrete 'dream tank', an alternative to think tanks. The utopia of dialogue is hosted in this unusual travelling venue which will be driven to Prague (and which has previously been used and/ or presented at conferences of the ESREA networks Migration, Transnationalism and Racisms / Life History and Biography). The suggestion here is to invite delegates of the ESREA conference into a space for suspended time (Baraitser, 2017) in the midst of internationally witnessed higher education pressures to make time productive through faster and faster innovations (Facer, 2022). Together we discuss to what extent adult education institutions allow access to temporalities through which individuals can be existentially held by care and attunement (Bergdahl & Langmann, 2022).

The opening of the hut as a civic sanctuary, a neurodiversity-affirming "sensory safe space" without constant input, also invites to think about the accessibility of large-scale conferences for neurodivergent adult education stakeholders. Through the installation of the hut as a quiet conferencing location, stillness and silence as agentic neurodivergent forms of dialogue become publicly visible at events which are generally framed by the extravert standard of a neurotypically wired educational system. The concrete arts of collective retreat and introvert conviviality in the shepherd's hut can then inspire the adult education sector to move towards an andragogy of shared and dialogic shelter in a world that may be increasingly perceived as overwhelming.

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Utopian Dialogues: Challenging Ageist Narratives and Imagining a “Good Life” in Old Age

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Keywords: Utopian Dialogue, Ageing, Ageism

Abstract:

Background: Ageing and learning in old age, particularly at an advanced age, are commonly framed within a narrative of loss and decline (Higgs & Gilleard, 2016). However, the classification of individuals into the "third age" (often defined as over 60-65 years old) or "fourth age" (over 80 years old), and the perspective of deterioration, fail to capture the diversity of older adults' experiences, encompassing heterogeneous socio-economic conditions, health, education, attitudes, needs, national origin, and more.

The challenges for adult education in the context of ageing extend beyond designing appropriate learning programmes for older individuals. It is equally essential to promote educational processes in an ageing society, addressing ageism, discrimination, and marginalization. The concept of “active ageing”, as advocated by European Union policies, holds the potential to counter the prevailing narrative of decline. However, it also carries the risk of reinforcing a neoliberal notion of lifelong 'usefulness' and consumption, potentially excluding those who do not meet these demands.

Critical Educational Gerontology (e.g. Formosa, 2011) emphasizes the importance of critically examining power dynamics, the diversity of ageing experiences, and ageist discourses. In the predominantly negative view of ageing in many societies, adult education plays a crucial role in challenging uncritical notions of usefulness and capability in older age. In our workshop, we will especially address the potential of learning through dialogical approaches.

Aim and target group: The proposed workshop aims to foster critical reflection on the described issues. It seeks to deconstruct the prevailing narrative of decline and loss in old age, and instead, envision old age as a “good life” by utilizing utopian thinking and thus referring to utopias as promoters for change (Sargisson, 2012). Especially by emphasizing the process-related aspect of utopias, they can be viewed as a means of contemplating the actual world and envisioning a potential alternative, perhaps better, world (Holzer, 2021). The workshop is open to all conference participants.

Concept and structure of the workshop: We are building on insights from previous action research projects (Active Urban Citizenship, 2020-2021, and Caring Living Labs Graz, 2022-2024), where we already tested utopian thinking and reflection within so-called experimental living labs and analysed the observed learning processes (Kainradl et al., 2023; Kukovetz et al., 2025). In these settings, the utopian ideas were discussed with the participants in workshop settings, but also during

walks through different environments. The workshop at the ESREA conference will utilize "utopian dialogues", guided by the concept of thought experiments (gedankenexperiments) (Engels, 2015).

The workshop will follow a structured approach:

1. We will start with providing a theoretical foundation on narratives of ageing and old age, as well as introducing the concept of "utopian dialogues".
2. We will create a conducive environment to inspire utopian reflections and inviting participants to engage in utopian dialogues on the theme of "Good life in old age" in pairs
3. Afterwards, we will share and discuss the experiences of the participants.
4. Finally, we will engage in collective reflection on the workshop and the stimulated learning processes.

The specific details and required equipment for the workshop will be communicated closer to the conference date. We anticipate that standard equipment such as computers, projectors, and flipcharts will be sufficient.

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Working the discomfort: challenges and possibilities of multi-racial co-facilitation to confront racism in adult education.

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Keywords: Anti-racism, multi-racial co-facilitation

Abstract:

In this dialogic and interactive session we (a Black female and a white male) will reflect on our racial identities and our experiences as a pair of educators and co-directors of an initial teacher educator programme for further and adult education in Ireland. Drawing on values, concepts and practices associated with critically reflexive pedagogy (Brookfield, 2017; hooks, 1994; Nwanze, 2024), Critical Race Theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017), Black Feminist Thought (Hill-Collins, 2000), and critical

duoethnography (Mulvihill & Swaminathan, 2022), we will lead a facilitated and workshopped discussion between ourselves, and with participants, on ways in which critical multi-racial co-facilitation, where practicable, can be one way to interrupt racism in, and across, educational spaces. Through this dialogic encounter, we attempt to both illuminate and model how such a practice has, and is, evolving for us in our work in teaching, professional and social spaces across adult, further and higher education and how that resonates with participants experiences in their learning and working lives.

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Poster Section

Adult Education and Empowerment: A multi-level perspective approach

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Keywords: adult learning and education, empowerment, multi-level perspective

Abstract:

Empowerment as a goal of adult education aims to enable people to lead self-determined and self-directed lives and thus contribute to equal opportunities (Boyadjieva & Ilieva-Trichkova, 2021; Kröner, 2020). However, the relationship between empowerment and education is „neither simple nor clear“ (Unterhalter 2019, 75). With reference to Bronfenbrenner's (1981) ecosystemic approach, the poster presentation differentiates empowerment and adult education into a micro, meso and macro level and tries to approach the complex interrelationship emphasized by Unterhalter (2019). The basic assumption of the presentation is that empowerment at the various levels cannot be viewed in isolation from one another. With reference to Sen (1993) and Freire (2014), it is described how empowerment can be promoted through adult education at the three levels. The multi-level perspective on adult education towards empowerment allows the interdependencies between the levels to be addressed. Against this background, a heuristic model is proposed which describes the promotion of empowerment through adult education and identifies eight characteristics. It is among others shown that dialogue, and in particular egalitarian dialogue (Flecha 2000), is a central component. Through an egalitarian dialogue, all voices are considered, and appreciation is expressed, which enables a further deepening of the underlying communication and reflection processes (ibid.) which are with reference to Freire (2014) crucial for empowering adult education. This must be seen in the context of the pedagogical self-image of adult educators and the creation of spaces for dialogue, which open opportunities for people to engage in learning. The presented heuristic model is the base of a dialogue-oriented study which will be carried out in cooperation with adult education organizations.

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AI in Educational Guidance: Implications for Quality Standards in Counselling for Career and Lifelong Learning

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Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Educational Guidance, Quality Standards, Career Counselling, Digital Transformation

Abstract:

The rising individualisation of educational and career pathways, accompanied by the digital transformation, poses major challenges for career and educational guidance (Lerch & Weitzel, 2024). There is a need for new approaches towards counselling which may be suitable to a more dynamic context of work and life in a globalised world (Bassot & Reid, 2013). The increasing integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in counselling and guidance settings presents both opportunities and risks for the quality and effectiveness of guidance services. This study examines how the AI-driven digital transformation affects the quality of counselling and guidance in adult education. There are no generally recognised and binding quality standards in educational and career counselling in Germany (Weitzel, 2024). Therefore, a particular focus is placed on the possible expansion of the so-called "BeQu-standards for quality assurance in educational, career and employment counselling (Schiersmann & Weber, 2013; nfb, 2014). These were developed by German scientists and researchers and offer 19 comprehensive quality standards for guidance based on a systemic understanding of counselling. The study is therefore based on a systemic understanding of counselling that takes into account the interactions between counsellors, clients, organisations and the social context (Schiersmann, 2018). Digital and AI counselling services are becoming increasingly important (Rott & Stanik, 2023), which is why an international scoping review of German and Englishlanguage literature will provide an initial overview. The international discourse is particularly relevant in the context of digitalisation research. Outside of German-speaking countries, research on digital transformation and AI is more intensive. This will be followed by qualitative expert interviews with various actors in the counselling landscape in order to investigate the effects of AI-supported consulting. The poster will focus on the methodology of the scoping review, which is currently still in the survey phase. The review aims to provide a structured research overview of the potential uses and impacts of AI in educational and career guidance. AI plays a role at different levels, both as a source of information and as a means of communication. The use of AI can also have different effects on both the person seeking advice and the advisor. For example, AI has the potential to support advisers by automating routine tasks, improving information accessibility, and enabling data-driven insights (Majjate et. al., 2023). However, there are also significant challenges, particularly around transparency, accountability and the relationship aspects of counselling, which remain critical to effective guidance (Murdan & Halkhoree, 2024). There is a need for a critical discourse on the

presence of AI in educational and career guidance, where human interaction is central and should be complemented by AI technology, not replaced (Stanik, 2023; Moustaghfir & Brigui, 2024). This research contributes to the wider discourse on the intersection of digitalisation, quality assurance and professional standards in lifelong learning guidance. In line with the conference theme, it addresses the role of dialogue in adult education and discusses how AI is changing counselling situations. On the one hand, the role of mediated communication as meaningful interaction in counselling contexts is central. On the other hand, the focus is on communication about the use of AI in counselling. The findings provide implications for policy makers, educators, and practitioners, and advocate for frameworks to ensure ethical and high quality integration of AI into counselling practices.

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Dialogue as a key method in adult education: From the autobiographical reconstruction of the past of one's own miner family to the exploration of one's own self

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Keywords: dialogue, life history, social class, education, fate

Abstract:

Context, goal, and theoretical framework: This study from the field of adult education reconstructs the history of the Chreschten family in the village of Ottfingen in South Westphalia, Germany, where the men worked in mining for centuries, incorporating sociological, philosophical, historical and literary references. Relevant aspects are the precarious living conditions and the difficult access to education for the lower social classes, the often life-threatening working conditions of men in mining, and the intertwining of life stories with the political, social and economic conditions of Wilhelmine Germany, the Weimar Republic, the Third Reich and the post-war period.

Methods: Dialogue as a multi-perspective, complex method at different levels: between the two authors (this is about greataunt and great-nephew), between the authors and the people in the family and in the village, between different generations, between the authors and the ancestors, between the present and the past, between people in the scientific world and people in social life; between the different social classes, and after the translation of the results into other European languages, also between people in different countries. This in conjunction with the following methods: Narrative exploration and investigation, document analysis, cultural mapping and historical reconstruction, supplemented by the methods of conjecture and imagination, in order to be able to narrate the findings in a coherent way, because the book that was created during the project was and still is intended as a basis and medium for a collective reflection process that is still going on.

Results, discussion and conclusion: The focus is initially on Josef Eichert, a miner born in 1874, whose life ended prematurely due to his work in the mines. The study then takes a closer look at the life of his wife Maria and, representative of the family's eleven children, the life stories of Rosa and Johann. While Rosa, born in 1901, followed the path of a woman of that time, by marrying the village blacksmith and raising eight children, she gained access to other worlds by reading novels, which was rather atypical for her background. In the course of her life, Rosa developed a personality from which there is much to learn for our present day as well. Johann, born in 1905, was one of the few from his social class to attend a renowned grammar school, thanks to the support of his primary school teacher. The early death of his father put an end to his education due to a lack of financial resources. He found fulfillment in civil society leadership roles and offices, including as an honorary mayor of the municipality of Wenden. In recognition of his lifetime achievements, Johann was named an honorary citizen of the southwestern community. In the manuscript, which was created step by step during the project, these life stories are narrated in a fanned-out fashion, including their interweaving with the events of contemporary history. On this basis, a dialogue has now begun with the people in the extended family, in the village of Ottfingen, also as part of the ESREA Life History and Biography Network, where the material has been made accessible for discussion. The biographical explorations and deeper understanding of the historical, social and economic contexts from which we as authors come have also opened up an inner dialogue that revolves around our own development, our own

self-actualization and the possibilities for shaping our lives that are still to be seized, a dialogue that is far from over.

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The Dialogue between theory and practice in practice-integrated training for nursery teachers in Germany

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Keywords: vocational training, early childhood educators, interlinking theory and practice

Abstract:

The objective of the poster is to present the necessary dialogue processes in the training of early childhood educators through the introduction of practice-integrated training. The perspective of the prospective professionals is considered, and the extent to which they experience and evaluate the dialogue process in their respective training model is examined. The transfer, linkage and dialogue between theory and practice are pivotal in the training of early childhood educators. The practice-integrated training model is an approach to enhance the connection between the two learning locations of vocational school training and daycare practice, thereby bringing them into a dialogue (Jugendministerkonferenz, 2018; Kultusministerkonferenz, 2019). This reform of training to become an early childhood educator is intended not only to better prepare future professionals for the demands of practice in terms of content, but also to increase the attractiveness of the training programme (Weltzien et al, 2021). In recent years, numerous federal states in Germany have witnessed the emergence of practice-integrated, remunerated training formats for state-recognised early childhood educators (Autorengruppe, 2023). While this novel training model closely mirrors conventional training models in terms of content, notable distinctions emerge in its implementation and structural design. A salient difference is the deployment of students in practice-integrated training models as trainees in daycare centres, commencing their practical training from the programme's inception. Adult education approaches are challenged by this training model to find new dialogue processes between practice and theory. A successful integration of places of learning is central to this.

This poster presents the results of a survey on the theory-practice dialogue of students in the final year of their studies to become early childhood educators in regular and practice-integrated training models. The students were surveyed using a questionnaire in 2022 and 2023.

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Rethinking Networks in Adult Education: Exploring the Role of De-Networking in a Networked Society

Julia Koller, *Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz, Germany*

Keywords: Networks, Cooperation, social transformation

Abstract:

The discussion in adult education has been conducted for years under the principle of working in and on communication fostering networks (Beresford & Beresford 2010; Ebner von Eschenbach, et al. 2023; Watters 2005). Networks are considered both as individual and organizational collaborations, at local, regional, and transnational levels, and are examined empirically and analytically within the context of relational theory or educational governance approaches. Working in and on networks is seen as a great opportunity to react swiftly to social changes and to consolidate and shape educational activities through dialogicity.

The concept of the network society refers to the profound transformations occurring in contemporary societies, where networks serve as the primary form of organization (Feld 2011a). Introduced by Manuel Castells (2009), this term highlights the growing significance of global networks that surpass traditional hierarchies and geographic boundaries. This shift is often seen as a response to digitalization, which facilitates new forms of networking and interaction (Feld 2011a). As a framework for understanding modern times, networks provide a robust explanatory and solution-oriented communicating approach across various academic disciplines, including adult education, particularly regarding their diverse forms of organization, funding, and cooperation within Germany (Feld 2011b, p. 127). These networks are seen as essential dialogue tools for addressing social changes and integrating educational initiatives. This allows analysis and reflection on the dialogue through and within the role of adult education in social change - emphasising the link between communication and society.

In his *Sociology of De-Networking*, Urs Stäheli (2021) questions the assumption that networks and the exchanges that take place within them are the modern solution to social problems. Instead, he explores the phenomenon of network erosion and destabilization. In this regard, his work can be seen as a critique of the ongoing belief in the power of networks. Stäheli offers an analytical toolkit to expand, if not destabilize, the network discourse. In this context, the sociology of de-networking is connected to processes of social transformation and diagnoses of modernity. Fundamentally, they are crucial for democracy, equality and liberacy. Although Stäheli's work focuses primarily on providing an analytical perspective, rather than offering a societal diagnosis, it opens new ways of understanding the role of networks in contemporary society. After all, there is a cruelty in finding responsible ways to manoeuvre adult education in the midst of social change. This approach also makes it possible to highlight the role that dialogue can play for professional adult educators in times of polarising trends, reproduced inequalities and risks of marginalisation, such as political influence and the management of networks.

The poster deals with the discourse on networks as an expression of modernity and a core principle of adult education. It examines the strategies of de-networking and opting out of networks that are discussed within adult education. The aim of the poster is to develop the theoretical

framework of the sociology of de-networking and apply it to the concept of networks in adult education. This is done through a systematic review of the literature on adult education publications on networking. The results of this first exploratory approach to the practice of de-networking in adult education will be presented.

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The Role of Andragogues in Coping with Crises Through Communities of Practice: A Dialogical Approach

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Cynne Põldäär, *Tallinn University, Estonia*

Halliki Põlda, *Tallinn University, Estonia*

Keywords: transformative learning, dialogue, professional communities, crisis management, identity

Abstract:

In adult education, andragogues are crucial in fostering resilience, facilitating learning, and enabling collective coping mechanisms that may emerge during crises in society. This paper examines how communities of practice (CoP) serve dialogical spaces for andragogues to navigate crises, develop professional identity, and collaboratively develop solutions through shared experiences and reflective learning.

Theoretically, this study situates itself within transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 2000) and dialogical pedagogy (Freire, 2000), emphasizing the role of critical discourse and mutual engagement in shaping professional development (see also Brookfield, 2005). The research also discusses challenges within these communities, such as hierarchical structures and barriers to open dialogue, which can either inhibit or enhance learning experiences.

Drawing on qualitative research, including eight semi-structured interviews with practicing andragogues, the study highlights the significance of CoPs in providing emotional support, knowledge exchange, and identity reinforcement. Findings indicate that dialogue within these communities enhances professional agency, promotes transformative learning, and strengthens crisis management

strategies. CoPs function as safe learning environments, enabling andragogues to engage in critical reflection, collective sense-making, and reciprocal knowledge construction, which are essential for fostering inclusive and sustainable responses to crises.

By connecting the study to the broader conference theme, this research contributes to discussions on how dialogue functions within adult education, professional identity formation, and crisis response. It argues that andragogues, through participation in CoP, not only adapt to crises but also actively shape the field of adult education by fostering collective resilience and innovative learning strategies.

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Student attitudes towards universal access to higher education

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Keywords: universal access, student attitudes, tertiary/higher education, Martin Trow

Abstract:

The paper is based on the argument that universal access to tertiary education is not just the privilege of a minority (elite) - it is the right of the majority. It is rooted in Martin Trow's concept of the gradual transformation of higher education systems from elite to mass and universal. The universality of tertiary education changes everything: the numbers of students, their profile and motivation. Teachers no longer work only with highly motivated students, but encounter problems previously known only from compulsory schooling, especially low study motivation. This theoretical background underpins quantitative sociological research on students studying social sciences and humanities programmes in a university department. The research answers the question: What is the student in the age of universalism, i.e. what do students with universal access to higher education expect from higher education? We investigated the value students place on higher education, its organization, their own learning, teaching, teachers, and social contacts in school.

The article is divided into three parts: the introduction recapitulates Martin Trow's theoretical concept and shows the context of Czech higher education (structure of universities, numbers of students, etc.). The second part focuses on the research results. In the third part, the results are discussed.

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