Michael Schemmann (Hg.)

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International Yearbook of Adult Education

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Researching Participation in Adult Education. An Introduction to the Topic

Michael Schemmann

Volume 46 of the International Yearbook of Adult Education is dedicated to researching participation in adult education. Participation is one of the long-standing research areas in adult education and also a long-standing central topic of adult education policies.

Within the German-speaking context it can be traced back to the university extension movement in Vienna where Ludo Hartmann gathered basic data about participants in the lectures in a statistical data set (Wittpoth 2018, 1150). Shortly after, these kinds of surveys were extended by data on sex, age and occupation and were also carried out in other cities. Originally designed to justify the university extension activities, the statistics were theoretically based, methodologically improved and used for researching participation. It is remarkable that first steps towards qualitative studies on participation were already taken in the 1920s by Gertrud Hermes in order to understand participation motives of workers (Faulstich & Zeuner 2011).

Adult education research, practice and policy has never settled for meeting the demands of groups who are willing to participate but has always aimed at awakening the needs of groups that are more distanced to participation (Siebert 2001). Thus, the focus on participation in adult education is complemented by the focus on non-participation. In 1964, Tietgens published a study which asked the question why workers in industry do not participate in adult evening institute courses (Tietgens 1978). A provocative reply asking why workers should participate in adult evening institute courses was not seriously discussed, but rather strategies on how to identify and activate target groups of adult education were developed (Siebert 2001, 295).

But despite all efforts ever since to widen learning opportunities, to address new target groups and to institutionalize adult education a large share of adults still does not participate in adult education. It is mostly adults with better educational background and higher social status who participate in adult education activities, whereas those who Tietgens might have seen as more in need when asking about the workers do not participate.

However, explaining participation is not that simple. It is rather a complex decision-making process influenced by interacting internal and external factors that are found on the individual, organizational and societal level. To better understand this decision-making process for participation and non-participation is one reason why researching participation in adult education is still an ongoing endeavor.

With this volume, we want to contribute to this debate. This introductory article will start off by briefly focusing on the development of the international policy initiatives as well as the research activities on participation in adult education. Next, the concept of this year's volume and articles will be presented. The article concludes with some remarks on our own account.

1 Participation in Adult Education in Policy and Research

As regards international adult education policy, the interest in participation goes back to the promotion of the concept of Lifelong Education in the 1960s and 1970s. In particular, the Faure Report, which captured and analyzed educational reform tendencies worldwide and drew conclusions from it, brought the idea of learning as a lifelong process to the fore:

"We should no longer assiduously acquire knowledge once and for all, but learn how to build up a continually evolving body of knowledge all through life – learn to be" (Faure et al. 1972, vi). But next to the Faure Report there were numerous other approaches to lifelong learning and the learning society which contributed to the development of the concept of lifelong education and thus the demand of participation in adult education (e. g. Dave 1973; Dave 1976).

A particular focus was again put on lifelong learning as an educational policy concept as of the 1990s. Compared to the concept development of the 1970s, there were significant differences as regards e. g. the goals and means, but the general demand of a necessarily high participation in adult education was kept up (Rubenson 1996). What is more, several other international organizations like the European Union, the OECD and also the World Bank joined in and promoted lifelong learning policies as well (Schemmann 2007).

Yet, the political demand of lifelong participation in learning is still present in contemporary documents. The seventh international conference on adult education by UNESCO (CONFINTEA VII) adopted the so-called "Marrakech Framework for Action" in which the prominent role of participation was confirmed. It states:

> "We reaffirm that ALE is a key component of lifelong learning, noting that ALE policies and practices apply to a wide range of ages, education levels, learning spaces and modalities, and recognizing that lifelong learning is the major engine of the learning society at different levels, involving individuals, families, organizations, workplaces, neighbourhoods, cities, and regions" (UNESCO 2022).

As mentioned above, research on participation in adult education is one of the research strands in adult education with a long tradition. Furthermore, studies on participation and participants are often of outstanding importance for adult education research. As Zeuner (2019) points out for the German context, the so-called "Göttingen Study" carried out during the 1960s in Germany had a tremendous impact on research in adult education in Germany and is still considered as a "core study" today. Research on participation in adult education was also at the core of the discipline in general and in other countries. As such, a journal analysis of Adult Education Quarterly carried out by Taylor (2001) for the years 1989 to 1999 presented as one of the major findings that the research field was not as broad and pluralistic as assumed. More than two thirds of the submission could be subsumed under only five out of twelve categories. Needless to say that "participation" was one of those five. In addition, other analyses of a similar type (St. Clair 2011, Rubenson & Elfert 2014) saw research on participation as one of the central areas, too.

Another important development regarding research is the establishment of international or national studies which provide surveys with large data sets that can be used for analysis. As Boeren points out, these studies like PIACC, AES, the European Social Survey, the Adult Education program and Learner Survey in the US and many more are carried out all over the world (Boeren 2016, 42–54). Even though especially the international studies might also be seen as instruments of governance (Field, Künzel & Schemmann 2019), they still provide an enormous amount of data open for research. Consequently, the analysis of influential factors is becoming more sophisticated and our understanding of the determinants and of the complex phenomenon of participation in adult education is getting better and better.

2 On the Concept and the Individual Contributions

Designing the content structure for volume 46 of the International Yearbook of Adult Education is driven by three main goals. The intention is to make a contribution to methodical questions of research on participation in adult education by firstly displaying articles which discuss the currently dominant research paradigm and the high rated data from large scale studies such as PIACC, IALS and the Adult Education Survey as well as articles employing qualitative methods to analyze participation. Secondly, the phenomenon participation is to be analyzed in an international comparative or cross-national approach as well as on a national level as in a country study. And thirdly, the volume is also meant to cover and stimulate reflections on current research trends in participation and future needs on a theoretical level, also discussing cornerstones of a prospective research program.

In detail, volume 46 of the International Yearbook of Adult Education comprises the following articles:

Ellen Boeren's article "Conceptualizing Lifelong Learning Participation – Theoretical Perspectives and Integrated Approaches" brings to the fore the long-lasting research tradition on participation in adult education research. What is more, the article focuses on theoretical perspectives which were employed in this long period. As such, psychological and behavioral perspectives as well as sociological theories are discussed. Focusing on adult education organizations and the workplace, theoretical perspectives on the organizational level are taken up as well as structural theories. The paper also presents an integrated model that can guide and systematize research and finishes with recommendations to address current limitations of participation research.

The article „Haben wir die falschen Instrumente?" by Anke Grotlüschen and Klaus Buddeberg represents a critical reflection on different approaches and instruments to research participation in adult education. The authors argue that the currently dominant quantitative large-scale studies mainly focus on participation in lifelong learning as a norm. Conversely, non-participation is seen as a divergence from the norm which needs to be justified. The paper argues that large-scale studies on participation dismiss certain justifications for non-participation. As such, missing benefits as a reason does not come to the fore. Accordingly, revising existing surveys and using quantitative and qualitative methods as complementing approaches might contribute to a better understanding of participation and non-participation in lifelong learning.

Şükrü Erhan Bağcı focuses on a more comprehensive understanding of participation in adult educations in his article "Documentary Method and Biographical Narrative Interview for Understanding Participation in Adult Education". In particular, the author argues for research that helps to better understand the motives of participation as internal factors and the deterrents as external factors. In a holistic approach, he understands participation as embedded into biographical experiences of an individual accumulated during the lifespan. Consequently, he pleas for a different methodology than the current dominant one and brings the documentary method and the biographical interview to the fore as means to understand participation.

The article "Inequality in adult education participation across national contexts: is growing employer support exacerbating or mitigating inequality in participation?" by Richard Desjardins and Jungwon Kim employs a somewhat comparative approach. In a longitudinal perspective, it analyses what kind of effect growing employer support for participation in adult education has on the inequality of participation. For the analysis, the authors use data from PIACC and IALS. Their findings show that employer support for adult education might have a mitigating effect on inequality in participation.

The article "Frustration, Care Work, and the Pandemic. Reasons for Drop-out in Literacy and Adult Basic Education" by Lena Sindermann focuses on drop-out as a concept of participation. In particular, the author focuses on the reasons for drop-out in literacy and adult basic education from the perspective of teachers. The study is based on 13 semi-structured interviews with trainers and teaching staff in literacy and adult basic education which are analyzed using the method of qualitative content analysis following Kuckartz (2016). The paper shows that the reasons for drop-out in this field are manifold as are the target groups. Thus, it concludes that the phenomenon needs to be researched in a multi-dimensional way.

Finally, Jan Kalenda focuses on participation and participation inequalities in non-formal adult education in the Czech Republic. In his article, he employs a longitudinal perspective and uses data from international surveys such as IALS, PIACC and the Adult Education Survey and the CZ-ALE which is a national survey. The findings indicate a steady increase in participation between 1997 and 2016 and a sharp decline in 2020. What is more, the study also shows that participation inequality between lower and higher educated adults declined between 2011 and 2020, whereas inequality due to economic activity increased during this period. Overall, it seems that the factor employment status is of great importance regarding the likelihood of participation in non-formal adult education.

Next to the articles to the key subject section, this year's volume of the International Yearbook of Adult Education also includes one article in the section Miscellaneous.

Tim Vetter, Gwennaëlle Mulliez and Eva Bonn take the fact that systematic reviews have received more and more attention in adult research in recent years as a starting point for their article. In detail, the paper focuses on the question of how the method of systematic review, adapted from medicine, is implemented in the research field of adult education. On the basis of an integrative review, 57 reviews are evaluated, which can be attributed to the research field of adult and continuing education and which describe themselves as systematic reviews. The 57 reviews are evaluated based on overarching criteria for systematic reviews and classified in an aggregated form. The paper ends with a final reflection on consequences for adult education research.

This year's volume is completed by two reviews written by Thomas Theurer and Gwennaëlle Mulliez.

3 On our Own Account

Lastly, I would like to express gratitude to all authors of the contributions who prepared their manuscripts within the deadlines since this made sure that the Yearbook could be published in time. What is more, I am also grateful to all reviewers of the articles and to the authors of the review section.

My personal thanks go to *Eva Bonn* who runs the editorial department of the International Yearbook of Adult Education. I very much appreciate her engagement and her initiatives to improve the quality of processes which guarantee the standard of the International Yearbook of Adult Education.

Volume 47 of the *International Yearbook of Adult Education* will focus on the topic "Coordination of Action in Adult education". We welcome contributions to the key subject of this volume as well as contributions to the sections Miscellaneous and Reviews.

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I Thematischer Schwerpunkt/Key Subject

Conceptualizing Lifelong Learning Participation – Theoretical Perspectives and Integrated Approaches

Ellen Boeren

Abstract

This contribution argues the need for participation research in adult education. It reviews leading theoretical viewpoints to understand who does or does not participate in adult education including psychology, economics, sociology and organisational sciences. It then integrates these different theoretical explanations into a comprehensive lifelong learning participation model. This new approach highlights the need to study participation through the lenses of interacting stakeholders at the individual, organisational and governmental level.

Keywords: Participation; interdisciplinary theory; theoretical models

1 Introduction

The research field of lifelong learning participation has significantly moved on in the last 60 years. In its essence, participation studies engage with questions on who does and does not take part in adult learning activities and why. This chapter will shed light on the different theoretical angles that have been presented in the literature over the years. It will argue that traditionally, participation was studied through different disciplinary lenses but that attempts to come to integrated approaches have been undertaken in recent years (Boeren, 2016). It will also demonstrate that participation studies have grown from individual-level studies to the construction of wider multilevel frameworks as tools to investigate participation. As such, participation in lifelong learning has grown to be an interdisciplinary area of research.

The chapter is structured as follows. Firstly, it will provide a short account of why the study of participation in lifelong learning remains an important issue. Secondly, it will dig deeper into leading disciplinary theories that have been used by scholars to investigate participation. Thirdly, it will present interdisciplinary and integrated approaches to study participation, more specifically through engagement with Boeren's Comprehensive Lifelong Learning Participation Model (Boeren, 2016). Finally, a number of recommendations will be made on how to further expand the field of participation studies.

2 The argument for lifelong learning participation research

Lifelong learning in this chapter recognises the need to learn from cradle to grave but especially zooms in on participation in adulthood. This typically refers to the take up of learning activities after one has left the initial education system. These activities can take place in formal as well as non-formal education, including those organised in workplaces. Formal education refers to organised learning activities for which adults receive an officially recognised qualification after successful completion (Colley et al., 2003). Non-formal learning also takes place in organisational settings but is not credential-based. In recent surveys, it has been operationalised through reference to “open or distance education, on the job training, seminars or workshops and other courses or private lessons” (Van Nieuwenhove & De Wever, 2022). While informal learning on an incidental or non-intentional basis can also make a valuable contribution to adults’ lives, these types of activities tend to be less represented in participation studies (Boeren, 2016). Current educational policy discourses from leading international organisations underline the need for adults to participate in learning throughout life (see Holford et al., 2022). The European Commission’s current focus is on guaranteeing that adults have the skills to actively contribute to the labour market, especially needed in light of the transition to an increasingly green and digital economy (European Commission, 2019). Additionally, the Commission’s focus on lifelong learning participation is included in its Pillars of Social Rights. On an annual basis, by 2030, the Commission strives toward an adult participation rate of 60 percent, referring to those between the ages of 25 and 64. Surveys organised at European level to measure participation include the Eurostat Adult Education Survey and the quarterly Labour Force Survey. Participation in lifelong learning as well as the continuous focus on reskilling and upskilling are also dominant in the educational discourses of other international governmental organisations such as the OECD (OECD, 2019). Similar to the European Commission, they argue that ongoing engagement with learning activities is essential to cope with the changing demands of the labour market as well as with rapidly evolving technological advancements that have an effect on the use of skills at home. The OECD’s Programme for the International Competencies of Adult Skills measures participation in adult learning activities as well as cognitive skills in relation to literacy, numeracy and problem-solving in technology-rich environments (Boeren & Iniguez-Berrozpe, 2022). While the OECD’s and European Commission’s work has often been criticised for putting too much emphasis on the economic aspects of lifelong learning, UNESCO’s work traditionally pays more attention to the humanistic perspective as well (Elfert, 2019). In their approaches to adult learning and education, it is argued that the development of citizenship skills and social cohesion can equally function as important outcomes of lifelong learning participation. As a result of CONFINTEA VI in Belem in 2009, – an adult education conference organised roughly every 12 years – a number of leading domains of adult learning and education were highlighted that need ongoing monitoring. These were in the past decades undertaken in a series of the Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE) based on a survey with UNESCO Member

States (Boeren & Rubenson, 2022). The highlighted domains included policy, governance, finance and quality but also participation. It is important to note that participation is not seen as a sole domain in itself but goes together with inclusion and equity. Statistical data, although mainly gathered in the Global North, indicate vast inequalities in participation between adults from different socio-economic and socio-demographic groups (Desjardins, 2017). Educational attainment remains the strongest indicator with tertiary educated adults participating far more than those with no or low levels of qualifications (Boeren, 2016). Being younger increases the odds of being a participant while those who are out of the labour market, either through employment or unemployment, participate the least. The reasons for these inequalities will be explained below when dealing with different theoretical perspectives. A statistical overview is presented in Table 1 for the EU-27. Data are taken from the Labour Force Survey 2019, the last year before lockdowns because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The reference period for participation is 4 weeks prior to being surveyed.

Table 1: Participation rates (in percentages) in adult education and training (LFS 2019)

Overall participation	10.8		
GENDER		ACTIVITY STATUS	
Male	9.8	Employed	9.5
Female	11.9	Unemployed	10.5
		Inactive	7.6
AGE		EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	
Age 25–34	17.8		
Age 34–44	11.0	ISCED 0–2	4.3
Age 45–54	9.0	ISCED 3–4	8.5
Age 55–64	6.2	ISCED 5–8	18.7

To conclude, participation in adult learning is perceived as important as it can help stimulate employability as well as social cohesion and thus relates to human capital as well as social justice perspectives. Given its broad aims, it is important to fully understand which underlying dynamics contribute to the (non)participation of adults.

3 Theoretical perspectives used to study lifelong learning participation

3.1 Psychological and behavioural perspectives

Psychological studies underlining the motivation of why adults do or do not participate in adult learning have been important throughout the last century (Boeren, 2016). These studies tended to put a strong emphasis on the needs of the learner and thus followed a rather individual perspective approach. An example of a leading reference in this field is Houle's "The inquiring mind: a study of the adults who continue to learn"

(Houle, 1961). Based on a small-scale qualitative study with 22 learners, Houle arrived at a three-category typology of adult learners: (1) those who participate for their intrinsic joy of learning something new, (2) those who are motivated by external forces such as wanting to obtain a degree or a better job, and (3) those who participate in learning because of a social need to meet new people. Houle's typology has been empirically tested through large scale survey data, notably through the Education Participation Scale by Boshier (1973). Additional work was undertaken to better understand attitudes towards participation in adult education by Blunt and Yang (1980) resulting in three overarching attitudinal components: (1) enjoyment of learning, (2) importance of adult education and (3) intrinsic value. Reasons to participate in adult learning or not have also been explained through engagement with Vroom's expectancy-value theory (Vroom, 1964). Expectancies refer to the judgement on whether efforts will likely lead to expected benefits. If yes, the adult might decide to undertake actions to perform well. Values refer to whether these benefits are being perceived as desirable and valuable and whether the effort is seen as worthwhile by the individual itself. An adaptation of the expectancy-value theory in the field of lifelong learning participation was designed by Rubenson (1986), who highlighted the intrinsic motivational forces at play in relation to becoming a participant. The Theory of Planned and Intended Behaviour has also been used in participation research, especially given its focus on the role of the development of an "intention" to engage with certain behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1980). Applying this theory, an intention to participate in an educational activity can be predicted through the adults' attitudes towards learning, their subjective norms towards it and the level of control they experience from others, for example employers, to take part (Van Nieuwenhove, 2022). These mechanisms seem relevant for low- as well as high-educated adults although highly educated adults feel more pressure from others to participate.

From a behavioural perspective, psychological mechanisms can also be explained in the light of economic judgements. A theoretical approach to a cost-benefit analysis underlines the need for individuals to arrive at a balance between the costs and sacrifices they have to make versus the benefits they expect to get out of their initial investment (see Boardman et al., 2018). For example, participation in an adult learning activity might be financially expensive. The time the adult has to spend in class or on engagement with self-study cannot be used to earn additional income. As such, there is an opportunity cost too. If the expected outcome is not going to reach a certain return on investment threshold, the adult might decide not to participate. The reasons why some of these cost-benefit analyses tend to differ between adults from different socio-economic and socio-demographic groups will be explained in the sociological section below. Cost benefit analyses can also be applied by employers or policy makers influencing adults' participation. For example, Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964) claims that levels of knowledge and skills accumulated through the education and training system can help to achieve higher levels of economic productivity and organisational access. These observations can be used by these employers and policy makers as an argument to invest in the stimulation of lifelong learning among their employees or citizens, or to prevent them from participation if they perceive the benefits to be lower than the costs.

3.2 Individual group perspectives: dominant sociological theories

As mentioned above, statistics on participation in lifelong learning demonstrate ongoing inequalities between adults from different socio-economic and socio-demographic groups (Boeren, 2016). Linking back to cost-benefit analyses, this might be the case because the costs are greater for some which makes it more difficult to come into balance with the perceived benefits. In fact, these benefits and rewards typically remain uncertain until received in practice. For example, starting a learning activity might not automatically lead to gaining the qualification in case the adult does not succeed in the assessments.

The literature on inequalities in lifelong learning often references the highly influential work of Bourdieu (1984). His focus on social, cultural and economic capital is used to underline the differences in tools that are available to adults belonging to different groups. Those with high levels of social capital might have strong networks with people who can introduce them to the best learning offers and who can help them to open doors. The importance of social influences through, for example, parents has been labelled as "the long arm of the family" (Rubenson 2007). Cultural capital is often discussed in relation to taste and habits of people and is often used to describe how education and training establishments tend to cater for the tastes of middle-class people leading to the reproduction of class differences and higher levels of participation among the already highly educated population. Economic capital is important as activities in the post-initial education and training sector might come with a financial investment, either direct in terms of enrolment fee or indirect as a result of loss of paid working time. Given the persistent inequalities in participation, the topic is often discussed in terms of the Matthew effect (see Boeren, 2016) underlining the cumulative nature of education and training over the lifespan. This runs the potential to in fact widening instead of narrowing gaps between different groups over time. While adult learning can be engaged with in terms of compensating for earlier missed educational opportunities, it is more likely it will attract those who have already achieved a positive and successful educational trajectory. This leads to reversed effects on how education should be supporting the change in individuals' status over time, a core concern of social mobility theories (see Elliot Major & Machin, 2020).

The inequalities for different groups can be further unpacked by engaging with the core determinants of participation at the individual level (Boeren, 2016). Educational attainment is by far the most important one. Those with no or low levels of qualifications need a longer time to achieve the same level of educational credentials as those who finalised tertiary studies during initial education. Their investment in learning can therefore be very time consuming. Additionally, they are more likely to be in jobs for which they carry out more repetitive skills and receive less incentives to upskill or reskill, especially if they are working in shortage occupations. While the unemployed might profit from participation, for example in training as part of Active Labour Market

Policies (ALMPs), data in several countries demonstrate that those in the typical knowledge intensive jobs are more likely to participate in adult education activities. The cost benefit logic says that the fact that they already have a job makes their expected benefits more likely and thus more attractive for employers to invest in them. The same logic applies to the participation of younger adults compared to those in the older age groups (Findsen & Formosa, 2011). Someone who is 25 years of age is likely to spend the next 40 years in the labour market while someone aged 55 only around 10 years. Thus, there is a longer time span to profit from the initial investments made in younger employees. Older adults can of course also participate in lifelong learning for leisure purposes but we know from the statistics that around 75 percent of participation tends to be work-oriented. While educational attainment remains the most significant predictor of participation, the work-related focus also explains ongoing fluctuations in participation rates of women (EIGE, 2019) and migrants (Boeren, 2019). Given their higher likeliness to work below their qualification level or in case of women in part-time positions, they tend to receive fewer incentives from their employers to engage in learning. Data from the Adult Education Survey demonstrated that, on an annual basis, 75 percent of men in Europe received training during their working hours. For women, this percentage was found to be 64 (EIGE, 2019). Feminist theories' core aim is to further explore these gender inequalities (see Leathwood & Francis, 2006; Fraser, 2003) while migration studies have an ongoing focus on language related barriers as well as practices of potential discrimination in the workplace. While migrants are more likely to participate in formal learning activities such as basic education and language courses, analyses by Boeren (2019) on OECD data revealed they are underrepresented in work-related learning.

3.3 Organisational perspectives: workplaces and education and training institutions

Organisational theory is relevant to the study of participation in lifelong learning. It deepens our understanding on the organisational structures and cultures of institutional settings and can also be used to further knowledge on efficient and effective leadership and management styles of those in charge. One complexity in relation to the study of participation in lifelong learning is that learning activities can in fact take place in a wide variety of settings (Boeren, 2016). Typically, these are adult education centres, community centres or other organised settings that organise formal and/or non-formal education and training (Boeren & Whittaker, 2018). Additionally, workplaces are also a massive provider of lifelong learning activities and can include offers for apprenticeships or dual learning in cooperation with providers of formal adult education.

One reason why organisational structures are important is because they can generate a whole set of barriers on their own (Cross, 1981). Constraints to participation in lifelong learning for adults are often studied in relation to situational, dispositional and institutional barriers. Situational barriers refer to adults' life circumstances. For example, mothers might struggle to attend classes if they are under pressure to juggle work and family life. Dispositional barriers tend to refer to issues such as lack of confidence and can also be labelled as psychosocial barriers (Van Nieuwenhove, 2022). However, Cross (1981), as part of her Chain of Response model, also highlighted the issue of institutional barriers. When adult education centres decide to charge very high enrolment fees, organise their learning activities during inconvenient hours or offer their courses at places which are hard to reach, they are in fact generating some barriers themselves. Darkenwald (1986) mentioned the danger of having informational barriers, claiming that many adults are simply unaware of the adult learning structures that are in place. While originally designed to study the changing landscape in higher education, Schuetze and Slowey (2002, p. 324) discussed an interesting shift from “traditional” modes of post-compulsory education to “lifelong learning” modes. In the latter case, institutional barriers can be lowered through implementing a number of organisational adaptations. In a “lifelong learning” mode, the core question is not on what institution you attended as a student but on what you learned through the activity of taking part. Another important organisational change, which has picked up over the past 20 years, has been the shift from linear structures with assessments at the end of the programme to modular structures that can be taken as separate credits. This has generated more opportunities for flexible learning instead of requiring to sit through strict timetabled sessions at once. The choice between learning at academic level without it necessarily having to lead to credentials has been facilitated by MOOCs. Apart from higher education institutions, a shift to more tailor-made flexible learning structures has also taken place in education and training initiatives for low-qualified adults (see Boeren et al., 2022).

In relation to workplaces, statistical data, for example from the Eurostat Vocational Education and Training Survey, indicate that larger businesses tend to invest more in lifelong learning activities. Their employees get more chances to participate because they have more structured human resources units that might have staff whose core job is the organisation and follow-up of training activities (Hefler & Markowitsch, 2013). The cost of running training will be more expensive for self-employed adults or those running small and medium-sized enterprises. Additionally, the learning culture of workplaces can differ, too. Some employers might want to stimulate an expansive learning climate in which employees get the chance to develop themselves in a way that goes beyond their job tasks (Fuller & Unwin, 2004). This might give them the opportunity to develop transversal skills. These workplaces tend to be employee-driven, show high levels of trust in their workers and tend to have an internal policy or action plan on the facilitation of workplace learning. They also tend to stimulate collaborative learning. Other employers might decide to pay for restrictive learning activities only. This would only include education and training that increases skills directly applicable to an employee’s job. Workers are thus seen as those who are paid to carry out certain tasks and who are not necessarily committed to learning new skills. Employers’ interest in their wider personal development is thus limited. In these workplaces, necessary training is also more likely to be offered by external partners.

3.4 Structural theories explaining variation in participation between countries

Sociological theories of the welfare state have been applied to participation research in lifelong learning. This type of research has been undertaken to further investigate the strong differences in participation between different countries. In Europe, there is massive variation in participation rates although some patterns can be recognised. An overview of these differences is presented in Figure 1.

Work by Esping-Andersen (1990) is often used for this type of research and has included additional references to gain insights in the heterogeneity of the Eastern European countries who joined the European Union at a later stage (see Fenger, 2007). Esping-Andersen's work initially distinguished between the Nordic welfare state, the Anglo-Saxon welfare state and the Conservative-Corporatist welfare state. The Nordic welfare state, which in the EU-27 includes Denmark, Sweden and Finland, is characterised by strong levels of decommodification, ensuring immunization of market dependency, and by lower levels of social stratification. This is reversed in the Anglo-Saxon countries such as the Republic of Ireland, the United Kingdom – which is no longer part of the EU – but also the United States. These countries feature stronger systems of neo-liberalisation and the provision of services operated by private providers. Conservative-Corporatist countries, like Germany and Belgium, have stronger levels of decommodification but especially protect those in employment. They tend to have stronger levels of social stratification, already visible at a young age through school systems underpinned by early tracking (Bol & van de Werfhorst, 2013; Strello et al., 2021). Esping-Andersen's initial work has been expanded to include Mediterranean countries who have stronger culture traditions of providing social support within families. Eastern European countries have in the literature been labelled as dependant market econo-

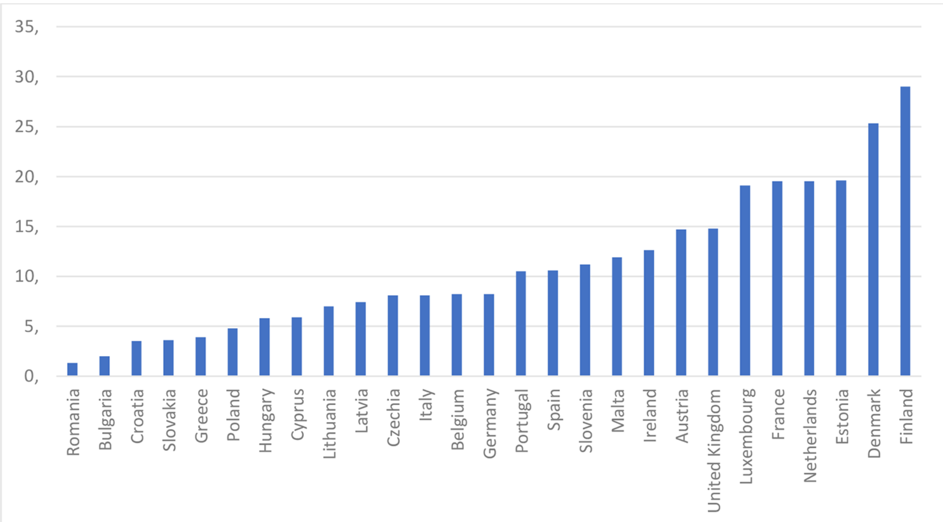

Figure 1: Participation rates (in percentages) in the EU-27 countries and the UK (LFS 2019)

mies who cooperate with larger cooperations elsewhere although contrasts between countries within the region exist (Nölke & Vliegenthart, 2009). For example, Estonia has accelerated its technological infrastructure while economic progress catching up with the West is still a relevant issue in Balkan countries such as Romania and Bulgaria. Participation rates in these countries remain low.

Data collection on participation in lifelong learning tends to be more structured in the Western contexts, especially through the work of Eurostat and the OECD. Insights in the situation across the world have been gathered by UNESCO as part of the monitoring of the Belem Framework of Action. The latest GRALE report, GRALE 5, included data from 155 countries across the world (UIL, 2022). In asking whether their participation rates had decreased, remained the same, or increased compared to what they reported for GRALE 4 in 2018, just over half of all countries (52 percent) stated that it had increased. A total of 28 percent of countries said it had stayed the same versus 13 percent said it had decreased. The remaining 7 percent of countries did not provide an answer. While the reliability of these responses is difficult to trace, the report provides separate answers for regional as well as income groups. Based on their responses, participation had increased stronger in Asia and the Pacific and Sub-Saharan Africa as was more likely to stay the same in the Arab States. The Latin American group had the highest percentage (21 percent) on decrease in participation. In terms of income groups, lower middle-income countries reported the strongest increase (67 percent) versus 50 percent in low-income countries, 48 percent in high-income countries and 41 percent in upper middle-income countries. While these GRALE statistics give us a first flavour of potential differences in participation rates going beyond the typical Western focus of countries in participation research, more in-depth studies in this area are needed to fully understand the impact of structural determinants of participation.

4 Integrated approaches to the study of lifelong learning participation

As demonstrated in the text above, participation in lifelong learning has been discussed in terms of adults' individual motivations, their socio-economic and socio-demographic background characteristics but also in relation to the wider structures in which they are embedded. The combination of these different forces resembles theoretical advancement that sits with structure and agency approaches (see e.g. Giddens, 2013). Two notable outputs underlining this renewed way of thinking were published in the international literature in the years 2009–2010. The first one was a paper by Rubenson and Desjardins (2009) in Adult Education Quarterly in which they presented their Bounded Agency Model. The second one was a lifelong learning participation model developed around the same time as the Rubenson and Desjardins model. Boeren published her theoretical advancement to the field of participation studies in the International Journal of Lifelong Education, together with her doctoral supervisors Nicaise and Baert (Boeren et al., 2010). Later on, Boeren (2016) further developed this area of research as part of a new Lifelong Learning Participation Model, published in a monograph for which she won the Cyril O. Houle Award for Outstanding Literature in Adult Education in 2017. The Bounded Agency Model strongly starts from the variation in types of welfare state regimes and confronts broader structural conditions and policy measures with adults' dispositional barriers. Throughout this work, Rubenson and Desjardins (2009) underline how perceived realities are socially constructed within the welfare context in which the adults live. The mediation between the individual and the structures can therefore result in 'bounded agency' to participate in adult learning.

The 2016 Lifelong Learning Participation Model by Boeren is built around three major players and incorporates the level of the education and training providers. She argues that these actors need to cooperate with each other in order to reach satisfactory participation rates in adult lifelong learning. The model intentionally moves away from the traditionally strong focus on the individual's responsibility to take initiative to participate but incorporates the actions of education and training providers as well as responsible governments. As discussed above, actors at the systematic levels can make a positive contribution to lowering the institutional barriers and make entry into learning opportunities more accessible. At the individual level, the model represents both psychological-behavioural characteristics as well as sociological ones. These correspond to the mechanisms explained earlier in this chapter, for example the differences in costs and benefits for those who are low or high qualified and in knowledge-intensive jobs. The block on education and training providers is divided into two as well to represent the typical adult and lifelong learning centres versus workplaces as generators of training activity. These blocks incorporate the issues discussed in relation to the shift from traditional modes of education and training to more flexible lifelong learning systems. Additionally, it zooms in on the differences between restrictive and expansive learning environments at the workplace. The country level refers to a wide range of social policies that governments can implement to stimulate participation and are in line with typical differences one would find in the variation of welfare states. The model as a whole is intentionally represented through cogs. Like in the interior part of a watch, the cogs need to move around simultaneously and support each other to become efficient and effective. Applied to the case of lifelong learning participation, it means that a 'dysfunctional cog' will make it more difficult for the other cogs to move around. While an individual might be highly motivated to participate, if they live in a country that does not have lifelong learning policies high on the agenda, their citizens might struggle to take part.

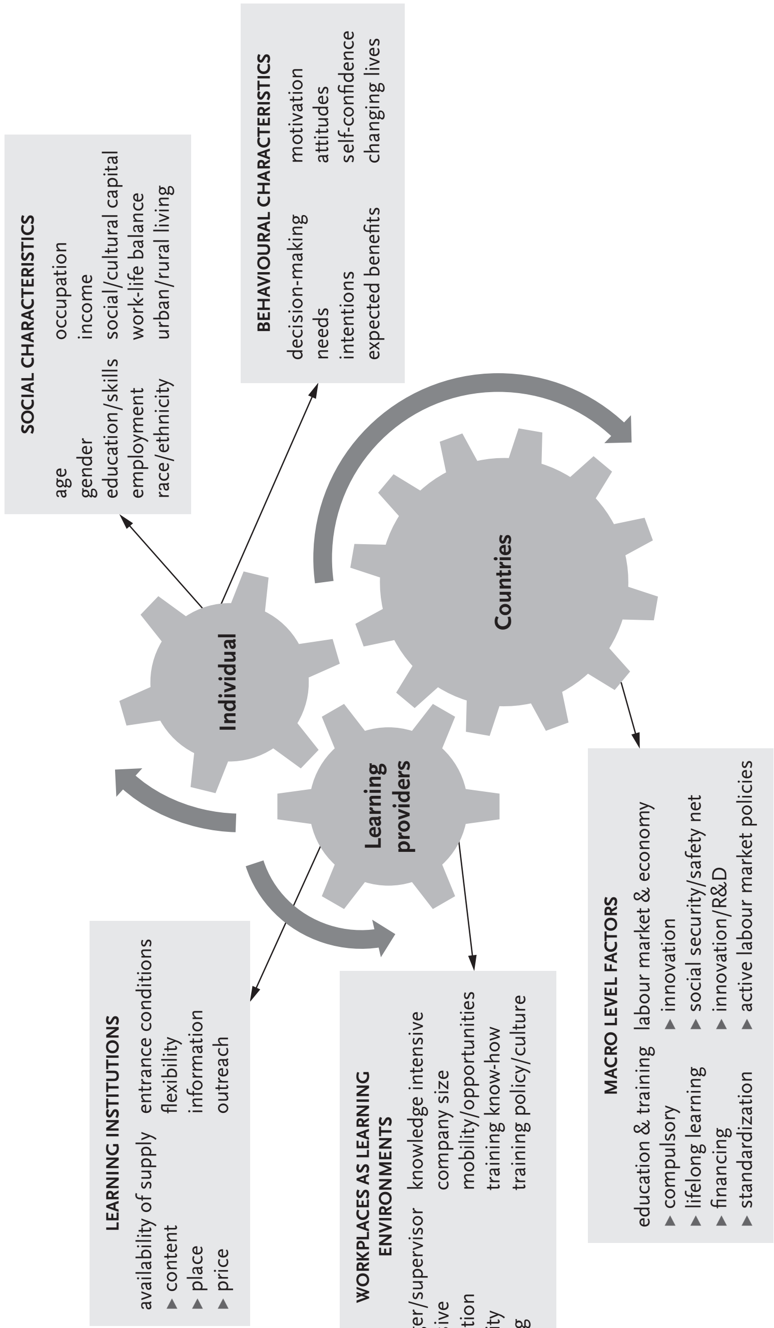

Figure 2: Integrated Lifelong Learning Participation Model (Boeren, 2016)

5 Recommendations to address the ongoing limitations of participation research

This final section of the chapter is used to highlight some of the ongoing limitations of the field and how these can potentially be addressed.

Furthering our understanding of cost benefit and expectancy value theory approaches is recommended through the collection of more advanced longitudinal data. Currently, most European countries have access to participation statistics through the Eurostat Labour Force Survey or the Adult Education Survey as well as through OECD's PIAAC data. However, in the vast majority of countries, these data tend to be cross-sectional. While these are useful data to track participation patterns over time, they fall short in following up on potential successes at the individual level. To be more specific, we have very little information about people's achieved benefits in, for example, five years after they finished a course. As researchers, we might want to engage in working with the large international organisations such as Eurostat to implement more longitudinal follow-ups. Self-organised surveys can be expensive, especially if they want to achieve a sample representative of the population.

Providing more insight on the expected benefits and values of participation in lifelong learning might also help to further unpack one of the main reasons for non-participation: the lack of interest or absence of any intentions to participate. On the one hand, this might be the case because adults' needs are already satisfied or because they do not perceive participation in lifelong learning as the pathway to fulfil these needs. It might also be the case that adults are unaware of the benefits lifelong learning participation can bring. Advancements in the measurement of intention are needed and might be employed through quantitative as well as qualitative research approaches (Van Nieuwenhove, 2022).

Research that focuses on the practices and processes of adult learning institutions in attracting adult learners, for example through reach out activities, often remains small scale (Boeren et al., 2021). These studies often follow case study approaches but are not as systematic and representative in comparison to the data we hold at the individual level. One avenue might be to explore more opportunities for mixed methods studies and to apply multilevel models to study variation of participation behaviour between and within educational settings. This approach has been applied to for example the OECD's PISA data. However, PIAAC data do not provide opportunities to engage with these types of analyses.

Additionally, while research on the different types of welfare states has been published in recent years, it might be valuable to further unpack the reasons why there seems to be little progress in increasing participation rates in the different countries. While GRALE 5 data seem to suggest that participation in adult learning is increasing, this is not very obvious from the European micro-data that are available through the Labour Force Survey. Previous research found that some of the adult education interventions in the Eastern European countries might over-rely on European incentives such as the European Social Fund instead of governments making a longer-term investment in post-initial education and training infrastructures. Additional research could potentially shed light on the lack of advancements in building these national infrastructures on their own.

Finally, in a world that becomes increasingly global, researchers might want to undertake more participation research in countries in the Global South and further advance theories and knowledge in this area through engagement with contexts that differ from the traditional Western approaches. This type of work could draw on – for example – existing scholarship in the field of higher education exploring capability theories in the South African context (see Walker & McLean, 2013). Adding onto this knowledge base could potentially lead to novel insights on how we currently conceptualise participation in the field of lifelong learning.

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Haben wir die falschen Instrumente?

Anke Grotlüschen & Klaus Buddeberg

Zusammenfassung

Vor dem Hintergrund quantitativer Großstudien als dominantem Forschungsparadigma drohen differenzierte Befunde qualitativer Forschung zur Nicht-Teilnahme an Weiterbildung aus dem Blick zu geraten. Dadurch, so die Kernaussage dieses Beitrags, erscheint Weiterbildungsteilnahme im Diskurs als begründungspflichtige Abweichung vom Normalfall der Teilnahme an Weiterbildung im Rahmen lebenslangen Lernens. Einschlägige Großerhebungen berichten regelmäßig von einem hohen Anteil von Personen, die für ihre Nicht-Teilnahme „sonstige Gründe" anführen. Diese hohen Anteile schränken die Aussagekraft ein und blenden bestimmte Motivlagen aus. Dazu zählt vor allem die Begründung eines fehlenden Nutzens von Weiterbildung für die Individuen. In qualitativen Studien wird diesem Aspekt breiter Raum gewährt, in den aktuell dominanten Richtungen hingegen, gerät er aus dem Blickfeld.

Schlagworte: Weiterbildung; Nicht-Teilnahme; Erhebungsinstrumente; quantitative Studien

Abstract

Against the backdrop of large-scale quantitative studies as the dominant research paradigm, differentiated findings of qualitative research on non-participation in continuing education are in danger of getting out of sight. As a result, according to the core message of this article, participation in continuing education appears as a deviation from the normal case of participation in continuing education within the framework of lifelong learning. Relevant large-scale surveys regularly report a high proportion of people who cite "other reasons" for their non-participation. These high proportions limit the validity of the information and exclude certain motivations. These include, above all, the justification of a lack of benefit from continuing education for the individuals. In qualitative studies, this aspect is given wide scope, but in the currently dominant directions, it is lost from view.

Keywords: Continuing education; non-participation; survey instruments; quantitative research

1 Einleitung

Die Teilnahme an Weiterbildung ist genauso wie die Nicht-Teilnahme spätestens seit dem Beginn des vergangenen Jahrhunderts Gegenstand der Erwachsenenbildungsforschung. Dieser Beitrag geht der Frage nach, ob die Gründe der Nicht-Teilnahme an Erwachsenen- und Weiterbildung im Kontext des Diskurses um Lebenslanges Lernen durch die gegenwärtig im Forschungskontext dominanten quantitativen Großstudien adäquat dargestellt werden.

Unsere Grundannahme lautet dabei, dass sich eine defizitorientierte Lesart von Nicht-Teilnahme durchgesetzt hat, die sich aus dem in Richtung Humankapital zugespitzten Diskurs speist (Felden, 2009, S. 159; Hof, 2022, S. 26–27) und die durch die gegenwärtige Forschungspraxis weiter verfestigt wird. Der Diskurs zum Lebenslangen Lernen hat sich aus seiner Mehrdeutigkeit eines *Umbrella Terms* (Felden, 2020, S. 2), unter dessen Dach verschiedene teilweise nur schwer zu vereinbarende Bedeutungsvarianten nebeneinander existierten, über die Jahre zu einem eher eindimensionalen an Humankapital orientierten Konstrukt entwickelt (ebd., S. 18; vgl. auch Wittpoth, 2010). In dieser Lesart ist Weiterbildungs-Teilnahme als der Normalfall markiert, während die Nicht-Teilnahme faktisch als begründungspflichtige Abweichung von diesem Normalfall gelesen wird.

Die Forschung zur Weiterbildungsteilnahme ist seit den 1990er Jahren geprägt durch quantitative Großstudien (Addey et al., 2017; Gorur, 2015; Hamilton, 2018). Dazu zählen der *International Adult Literacy Survey* (IALS), der Adult *Literacy and Lifeskills Survey* (ALL), das *Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies* (PIAAC), der *Adult Education Survey* (AES). In Deutschland führten Grotlüschen und Buddeberg (2020) bezogen auf die Lese- und Schreibkompetenz der erwachsenen Wohnbevölkerung die LEO-Studie durch, die sich ebenfalls mit der Teilnahme an Weiterbildung befasst. Die Studien IALS, ALL und PIAAC sind Studien zur Messung von Kompetenzen verschiedener Domänen bezogen auf die erwachsene Bevölkerung der teilnehmenden Länder. Alle drei Studien wurden unter Beteiligung der OECD und – im Falle von IALS und ALL – auch von Statistics Canada durchgeführt. Die Teilnahme an Weiterbildung wurde in diesen Studien erfragt, sie bildete jedoch, im Gegensatz zur europaweit durchgeführten Befragung des AES nicht das Zentrum der Befragung. Die LEO-Studie schließlich ist eine auf Deutschland bezogene Kompetenzstudie, die die Beteiligung an non-formaler Weiterbildung erfragt, wie im Falle von IALS, ALL und PIAAC jedoch ebenfalls nicht als zentralen Untersuchungsaspekt (Grotlüschen & Buddeberg, 2020).

Diese Studien erfassen zwar im Falle der Nicht-Teilnahme an Weiterbildung die Gründe, die gegen eine Teilnahme gesprochen haben, sind hierbei aber möglicherweise nicht differenziert genug, um subjektiv plausible Gründe in ihrer Breite beschreiben zu können. Gegenpositionen, die mögliche Lernwiderstände verdeutlichen würden, also Situationen, in denen Lernen nicht rein positiv als entfaltende Kraft, sondern als unangemessene Zumutung interpretiert wird (Ludwig & Grell, 2017), werden im Forschungsprozess meist übersehen. Daraus resultiert – so unsere Beobachtung – eine Zementierung des Diskurses.

Nach einer exemplarischen Darstellung zum Forschungsstand werden ausgewählte Erhebungsinstrumente hinsichtlich ihrer Fragen zur Nicht-Teilnahme an Weiterbildung untersucht und einer abschließenden Diskussion unterzogen. Dabei wird dem Nichtteilnahmegrund des „fehlenden Nutzens“ für die potenziell Lernenden besondere Bedeutung zugemessen.

2 Einblicke in den Forschungsstand

In diesem Kapitel werden die Forschungsstände zu den drei distinkten, im Kontext dieses Beitrags aber verwobenen Themenbereichen Lebenslanges Lernen, quantitative Großstudien und Nicht-Teilnahme an Weiterbildung angerissen, denn der Beitrag will darstellen, inwiefern die quantitativen Großstudien es ermöglichen, die Gründe der Nicht-Teilnahme im Kontext des Diskurses um Lebenslanges Lernen adäquat darzustellen. Die Ausführungen sind jeweils nicht erschöpfend, sondern eröffnen – wie die Kapitelüberschrift verdeutlicht – jeweils Einblicke in den Forschungsstand.

2.1 Lebenslanges Lernen

Das Konzept des Lebenslangen Lernens ist seit den 1970er Jahren ein bedeutendes Leitbild in der Diskussion um Erwachsenenbildung. Im Jahr 2000 wurde es auf europäischer Ebene durch das Memorandum über Lebenslanges Lernen in einem überstaatlichen Dokument als Leitbild für die europäischen Bildungspolitiken niedergelegt (Kommission der Europäischen Gemeinschaften, 2000, S. 6). Im Memorandum ist die Interpretation dessen, was unter Lebenslangem Lernen zu verstehen sei, noch formal offengehalten. Dort werden als „gleichermaßen wichtige Ziele lebenslangen Lernens“ benannt: „Förderung der aktiven Staatsbürgerschaft und Förderung der Beschäftigungsfähigkeit“ (ebd., S. 6).

Wie von Felden (2020) bezogen auf Deutschland herausarbeitet, lässt sich der Begriff von Lebenslangem Lernen zunächst als offen und vielschichtig charakterisieren. Bezugnehmend auf Schütze (2005) benennt sie als Elemente ein sozialpolitisch-emanzipatorisches Modell, ein non-utilitaristisches, kulturelles Bildungsmodell, ein liberales oder post-modernes Modell, und schließlich ein Humankapitalmodell. Letzteres wurde bereits nach kurzer Zeit zum dominanten Modell der Diskussion und dort als Antwort auf die Herausforderungen der sogenannten Wissensgesellschaft verstanden (Felden, 2020, S. 43; vgl. auch Kade et al., 2018), in deren Kontext Bilder von Gewinner:innen und Verlierer:innen stilisiert werden, je nachdem, ob sie sich als „flexibel und lernbereit bzw. als ‚nicht anpassungsfähig‘“ erweisen (Kajetzke & Engelhardt, 2013).

International einflussreiche Organisationen wie die OECD führen die Aspekte des Humankapitals und der Employability mit Bezugnahme auf den Return of Investment im Bildungsbereich als Begründung für einflussreiche Großstudien wie PIAAC an (OECD, 2019, S. 111). Gerahmt wurde Lebenslanges Lernen von dem sich seit den 1980er Jahren durchsetzenden Neoliberalismus (Butterwegge et al., 2016; Schui & Blankenburg, 2002) und darin eingebettet von dem Appell nach Selbstverantwortung der Individuen. Lebenslanges Lernen wird dadurch

> „als Notwendigkeit und Verpflichtung konstruiert [...], der sich niemand entziehen könne. Der starke Verpflichtungsdruck, der mit dem Konzept des Lebenslangen Lernens ausgeübt wird, weist in der Perspektive neoliberaler Gouvernementalität auf ein Regierungsprogramm hin, mit dem die Bevölkerung als Träger von Humankapital regiert werden soll" (Felden, 2020, S. 16).

Dabei lasse sich beobachten, dass die bildungspolitische Debatte um das Lebenslange Lernen von wissenschaftlichen Debatten zum Thema Lernen weitgehend abgekoppelt sei. Lebenslanges Lernen wird dadurch pauschal „als Lösungsmöglichkeit für die gesellschaftlichen Herausforderungen und Probleme einfach gesetzt" (Felden, 2020, S. 3). So erscheint es programmatisch, dass Zeuner (2022) bereits im Titel der aktuellen Publikation „Bedürfnisse und Bedarfe. Gesellschaftlicher Bildungsbedarf und subjektive Bildungsbedürfnisse: Perspektivverschränkungen" gesellschaftlichen Bildungsbedarf und subjektive Bildungsbedürfnisse kontrastiert.

Mit einer expliziten Bezugnahme auf den neoliberalen Rahmen bezieht Hamilton (2012, S. 177) diese Figur verantwortungsbewusster – weil lernender – Bürger:innen auf die Debatte um Grundbildung und arbeitet die Hinwendung auf das Individuum mit seinen spezifischen Verpflichtungen der jeweiligen Gesellschaft gegenüber heraus. Tett und Hamilton (2019) konkretisieren: "Under neoliberalism, education systems have been mandated to develop efficient, creative and problem-solving learners and workers for a globally competitive economy, leading to neglect of its social and developmental responsibilities" (ebd., S. 2; auch: Vargas-Tamez & Carlos, 2019). Rubenson und Salling Olesen (2007) arbeiten heraus, dass im Rahmen des dominanten Diskurses zu Lebenslangem Lernen der fehlende Wille zur Weiterbildungsteilnahme als Verstoß gegen die implizite Verpflichtung gelesen werden kann, sich selbst zu optimieren. Individuen entwickeln in dieser Rahmung nicht autonom ihre Bildungsprozesse, sondern sie werden angehalten, sich nach gesellschaftlichen Verwertungskriterien zu richten. „Die ursprüngliche Chance zur Weiterbildung wich einem ‚kategorischen Imperativ'" (Erler, 2018).

Krenn (2015) spitzt den Verpflichtungscharakter Lebenslangen Lernens weiter zu und leitet aus den Diskursen zur Wissensgesellschaft und zum Lebenslangen Lernen die Wirkung symbolischer Gewalt gegenüber Personen, die als bildungsbenachteiligt beschrieben werden, ab (S. 55).

2.2 Quantitative Großstudien

Der zweite Diskussionsstrang, der unseren Beitrag rahmt, ist der um die Rolle von quantitativen Großstudien und international vergleichenden Large-Scale-Assessments, die gegenwärtig einen dominanten Bereich in der Forschung zur Erwachsenenbildung darstellen. Die Aufmerksamkeit der Bildungsadministrationen richtet sich auf diese Großereignisse wie die Veröffentlichung der jeweils aktuellen Studienergebnisse von PIAAC als Beispiel für eine international vergleichende Untersuchung oder

der LEO-Studie als Beispiel einer nationalen – hier auf Deutschland bezogene – Erhebung. Evidenzbasierte Politik fragt diese Art von Ergebnissen in besonderem Maße nach (OECD, 2007; vgl. Pellegrini & Vivanet, 2021).

Betrachtet man die Kräfteverhältnisse zwischen den Institutionen der internationalen Bildungsforschung, so mag es überraschen, dass nicht die UNESCO, die mit den *Sustainable Development Goals* (UNESCO, 2016) einen Rahmen für das Monitoring der Kompetenzentwicklung gesetzt hat, die treibende Kraft in diesem Feld ist. Vielmehr sind das auf wirtschaftliche Entwicklungen fokussierende Organisationen wie die Weltbank und allen voran die OECD. Zwar war nach dem zweiten Weltkrieg die UNESCO in der Tat noch die gestaltende Kraft bei der Dokumentation von Bildungsentwicklungen (Elfert, 2021). Die OECD hingegen verlor nach der Etablierung einer relativ stabilen wirtschaftlichen Nachkriegsordnung an inhaltlicher Legitimation und drang zunehmend in den Bildungsbereich ein, für den sie ein Primat der Ökonomie attestierte (Ydesen & Grek, 2019). Gegen Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts setzten sich dann unterstützt von international vergleichenden Kompetenzstudien internationale Large-Scale Assessments (Schmidt-Hertha & Gebrande, 2018) als dominantes Forschungsparadigma durch (Duckworth & Smith, 2019, S. 27) und fügten sich dadurch in die auf Humankapital fokussierende Diskussion um das Lebenslange Lernen ein bzw. verfestigten die humankapitalorientierte Lesart. Das trifft in besonderem Maße auf die PIAAC-Studie zu (Evans, 2015; OECD, 2019).

Die großen Institutionen prägen damit auch die Forschungspraxis im Allgemeinen. Jenseits der gewachsenen Bedeutung der internationalen Institutionen ist anzumerken, dass diese großen und einflussreichen Untersuchungen unseren Blick auf die beforschten Sachverhalte prägen. Bezogen auf die PIAAC-Studien der OECD (OECD, 2019) lässt sich argumentieren, dass bereits die hohe Beteiligung in der ersten Welle (40 teilnehmende Länder in drei Runden) und der aktuell erhobenen zweiten Welle (32 teilnehmende Länder) einen Hinweis auf die wahrgenommene Relevanz darstellt. Das gilt auch für eine Vielzahl internationaler Konferenzen zu PIAAC und zu diversen Sekundäranalysen und korrespondierenden wissenschaftlichen Publikationen (Maehler & Konradt, 2022). In PIAAC wird die Teilnahme an Weiterbildung vornehmlich unter dem Vorzeichen von Beschäftigungsfähigkeit (Employability) diskutiert, dabei wird Teilnahme als notwendig und richtig betrachtet, sie wird implizit positiv markiert, die Nicht-Teilnahme hingegen negativ. Es hat aber auch Auswirkungen auf die Forschungslandschaft. Wenn es um die Beschreibung der Gründe für die Nicht-Teilnahme geht, stehen auch und gerade qualitative Untersuchungen zur Verfügung (z. B. Bolder & Hendrich, 2000; Heinemann, 2014; Holzer, 2004; Mania, 2018), in denen auf die Herausforderungen der Weiterbildungsbeteiligungsforschung eingegangen wird. Eine systematische Verschränkung qualitativer und quantitativer Ansätze wird jedoch als unzureichend entwickelt beschrieben (Käpplinger, 2010).

2.3 Nicht-Teilnahme an Weiterbildung

Der Teilnahme an Weiterbildung wird in herrschenden Diskursen hohe Bedeutung zugeschrieben und zwar sowohl für die Individuen, für die Wirtschaft bzw. Unternehmen und für Gesellschaften (BMAS & BMBF, 2019). Das Ziel von Staaten ist es daher, die Teilnahme an Weiterbildung zu erhöhen. Entsprechende Zieldefinitionen – wie z. B. das vom BMBF empfohlene Teilnahmeziel von 50 Prozent (Bilger et al., 2013) – und Monitoringsysteme existieren auf nationaler und auch supranationaler Ebene z. B. im Rahmen der Europäischen Union (European Association for the Education of Adults, 2020) oder der Vereinten Nationen (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2022). Die Entwicklung der Teilnahmezahlen ist im internationalen Vergleich sehr heterogen, sowohl was die aktuellen Anteile der Teilnehmenden angeht als auch die Entwicklung im Zeitverlauf. So schwankt die Teilnahme an formaler und non-formaler Weiterbildung zwischen Bevölkerungsanteilen von unter 20 Prozent (z. B. in Rumänien und Griechenland) über Werte um 50 Prozent (z. B. Deutschland, Frankreich und Belgien) bis zu hohen Teilnahmequoten von über 65 Prozent (z. B. Schweden, Norwegen, Finnland und Schweiz) (Dohmen et al., 2019; European Education and Culture Executive Agency, 2021).

Weiterbildung wird als Antwort betrachtet auf eine ganze Reihe von Problemlagen. Erwerbstätige finden demnach bessere Anstellungen, Arbeitslose finden Beschäftigung, Unternehmen profitieren vom Kompetenzaufbau, die Sozialsysteme profitieren von sinkenden Transferleistungen, Menschen profitieren in gesundheitlicher Hinsicht (Karger et al., 2022; Manninen et al., 2014; Schuller, 2017). Die Teilnahme an Weiterbildung erscheint aus dieser Perspektive als der erstrebenswerte Normalfall und ist nicht weiter begründungspflichtig. Anders verhält es sich im Falle der Nicht-Teilnahme. Sie erscheint als begründungspflichtige Abweichung vom Notwendigkeits- und Nützlichkeitsnarrativ, dessen Unhinterfragtheit Holzer (2018) unter dem Titel „Und wo liegen die Nachteile?“ kritisch diskutiert und mit dem Aspekt der Verwertbarkeit assoziiert. Insofern ist diese Diskussion in hohem Maße normativ aufgeladen. Dem Individuum wird eine Bringschuld zugeschrieben (Bolder, 2011; Faulstich, 2006; Wittpoth, 2018), es lässt sich von einer impliziten Pflicht zur Aus- und Weiterbildung und zum Lebenslangen Lernen sprechen (Krenn, 2013, S. 9).

Gründe der Nicht-Teilnahme werden im deutschsprachigen Raum seit Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts und dann systematisch seit Mitte des 20. Jahrhunderts erforscht (Born, 2018; Wittpoth, 2018). Reich-Claassen (2010) arbeitet heraus, dass die Nichtteilnahme an Weiterbildung weniger als Resultat objektiv wirksamer Schranken zu interpretieren ist, sondern als Ergebnis von subjektiven und begründbaren Entscheidungsprozessen. Wichtige Bezugspunkte auf internationaler Ebene sind z. B. die Literaturübersichten von Cross (1981) und McGivney (1993) aber auch empirische Arbeiten wie die qualitative Interviewstudie von Beder (1990), in denen die Gründe der Nicht-Teilnahme systematisiert werden. Insgesamt resümieren Karger et al. (2022) im Rahmen einer qualitativen Untersuchung jedoch, dass die Erforschung der Gründe der Nichtteilnahme gegenüber der weitaus breiteren Forschungslage zur Teilnahme unterentwickelt bleibe. Die Studie aus der Tschechischen Republik basiert auf 53 Interviews mit Erwachsenen mit geringer Formalbildung, unter Nicht-Erwerbstätigen und Personen in Elternzeit, folglich mit verschiedenen Personengruppen, bei denen unterschiedliche Gründe der Nicht-Teilnahme bestehen können (ebd., S. 3).

Als Gründe der Teilnahme wird gemeinhin von Faktoren im Subjekt/Individuum im Sinne von Weiterbildungsinteresse ausgegangen, bei den Gründen der Nicht-Teilnahme hingegen von Barrieren, die es abzubauen gelte (Grotlüschen & Krämer, 2009, S. 19). Die Rolle subjektiver Faktoren erscheint so hinsichtlich der Nicht-Teilnahme eine wenig beachtete Rolle zu spielen. Bolder (2011) betont allerdings, dass „als hauptsächliches Motiv, sich nicht an Weiterbildung zu beteiligen (…), die Meinung gilt, dass damit keinerlei Verbesserung oder Sicherung der Erwerbssituation garantiert sei" (ebd., S. 57). In diesem Sinne argumentiert auch Krenn (2013), wenn er darauf hinweist, dass soziale Teilhabe nicht nur über individuelle Qualifizierung erfolgen kann, sondern auch gesellschaftlicher Regulierung bedarf (vgl. auch Aydt, 2011; Krenn, 2013, S. 42). Marginalisierte Gruppen, so führt Holzer (2004) aus, finden allein durch Bildung keine bessere Beschäftigung: „Arbeitslosigkeit ist ein Problem des Arbeitsmarktes und nicht der Aus- und Weiterbildung" (ebd., S. 39).

Faulstich (2006, S. 7) hebt bei der Diskussion der Nicht-Teilnahme einerseits ein „Belastungssyndrom" im Sinne mangelnder zeitlicher Ressourcen hervor und stellt diesem ein „Sinnlosigkeitssyndrom" im Sinne eines nicht erkennbaren Nutzens gegenüber.

Boeren (2017) führt aus, dass das Narrativ, jeder könne von Lebenslangem Lernen profitieren, mindestens trügerisch, wenn nicht gar falsch ist:

> „Lifelong learning participation mainly serves those who can use it to stack up cumulative advantaged and not the ones who can use it to compensate for earlier missed life chances. (…) For those who have little to start with (e. g. educational level or money), the costs might be too high and the benefits too unclear to positively decide on taking part" (ebd., S. 165).

Bolder (2011) spitzt diese Argumentation weiter zu:

> „Nicht-Beteiligung an Weiterbildung hat also weniger mit pädagogisch überwindbaren Motivations- und Lernproblemen zu tun als mit dem Stellenwert beruflicher Weiterbildung im Lebenszusammenhang der Einzelnen. (…) Menschen, die in restriktiven Erwerbssituationen leben, wird man kaum davon überzeugen können, dass über den Arbeitsalltag hinausweisende Qualifizierungsanstrengungen sinnvoll sein könnten. Tatsächlich schützen sie ja auch nicht vor der Alltagserfahrung von Massenentlassungen in einem auf den Shareholder Value fixierten Wirtschaftsleben. Warum dann die Anstrengung?" (ebd., S. 57).

Den wahrgenommenen fehlenden Nutzen als mögliche Teilnahme arbeitet Schiersmann (2006) auf empirischer Basis heraus, während Karger et al. (2022) darauf hinweisen, dass für bestimmte Gruppen informelles Lernen – zum Beispiel im Kontext der Arbeit – die plausiblere Variante des Lernens darstellt als non-formale oder formale Formate. In Bezugnahme auf die Literaturübersicht von McGivney (1993) oder auf Bremer und Pape (2017) lassen sich auch kulturelle oder habituelle Aspekte benennen.

3 Erhebungsinstrumente in großen quantitativen Studien

Es wurde bereits betont, dass gegenwärtig quantitative Großstudien als dominantes Forschungsparadigma im Bildungsbereich gelten. Insofern ist es aufschlussreich, welche Instrumente diese Studien einsetzen, um die Nicht-Beteiligung an Weiterbildung zu erfassen, und welche Schlüsse aus den Ergebnissen zu ziehen sind. Erfasst werden Nicht-Teilnahme-Gründe in quantitativen Studien zu Kompetenzen von Erwachsenen und zu deren Weiterbildungsteilnahme mit knapperen (IALS, ALL, PIAAC) oder auch umfangreicheren (AES, LEO) Kategoriensets. Während IALS, ALL, PIAAC als international vergleichende und LEO als auf Deutschland bezogene nationale Kompetenzstudien die Weiterbildungsteilnahme als einen Aspekt unter vielen behandeln, stellt die Weiterbildungsteilnahme für den AES die zentrale Untersuchungsgröße dar. Konkret untersucht wurden der Fragebogen des IALS aus dem Jahr 1994 (englische Fassung), der Fragebogen des ALL aus dem Jahr 2002 (englische Fassung), der Fragenbogen zur aktuellen Erhebungswelle von PIAAC (englische Fassung, keine Änderung gegenüber der ersten Welle), der Fragebogen des AES in der neuesten Fassung (englische Fassung 2022, leichte Änderungen bei Formulierungen im Vergleich zu 2016/2017) und der Fragebogen der LEO-Studie aus dem Jahr 2018. Eine tabellarische Übersicht über die Antwortmöglichkeiten zur Begründung von Nicht-Teilnahme befindet sich im Anhang.

Unsere Beobachtung ist, dass selbst bei umfangreichen Antwortmöglichkeiten die Items, mit denen die Gründe der Nicht-Teilnahme erfasst werden sollen, nicht alle relevanten Begründungsmuster bereithalten. Insbesondere fehlt meist die Möglichkeit, anzugeben, dass jemandem die Teilnahme keine Vorteile verschafft, weil sich daraus z. B. keinerlei Verbesserung der Beschäftigung ergibt, weder hinsichtlich der Bezahlung noch hinsichtlich möglicher Prekarität – mit anderen Worten, dass das Nützlichkeitsnarrativ bezogen auf die Weiterbildungsteilnahme in Frage gestellt wird.

Der *International Adult Literacy Survey* (IALS)[1] war eine der ersten international vergleichenden auf Erwachsene bezogenen Studien und wurde in den 1990er Jahren mit 22 teilnehmenden Ländern durchgeführt (OECD & Statistics Canada, 2000). Zunächst wurde im Rahmen der Fragen um Weiterbildung erfasst, ob die befragte Person bestimmte Lernaktivitäten hätte ergreifen wollen, das dann aber nicht getan hat. Darauf erfolgte die Nachfrage nach den Gründen der Nichtteilnahme. Nachgefragt wurde also nicht bei Personen, die per se keinerlei Weiterbildungsinteresse artikulierten. Als Antwortkategorien standen dabei zur Verfügung: a) too busy/lack of time, b) too busy at work, c) course not offered, d) family responsibilities, e) financial reasons, f) lack of qualifications, g) lack of employer support, h) course offered at inconvenient time, i) language reasons, j) health reasons und k) other reasons. Diese sonstigen Gründe wurde jedoch nicht durch eine Möglichkeit zur Freitextantwort inhaltlich weiter erfasst.

1 Fragebogen: https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ials/pdf/IALS_BQ.pdf

Im darauffolgenden Jahrzehnt wurde der *Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey* (ALL)[2] in insgesamt elf Ländern durchgeführt (NCES National Center for Educational Statistics, 2005). Wie im IALS wurden Personen, die an einer grundsätzlich gewünschten Weiterbildung dann doch nicht teilnahmen, nach den Gründen gegen die Teilnahme gefragt. Als Antwortkategorien lagen vor: a) time constraints (too busy, no time to study), b) course available did not match your needs or interests, c) lack of confidence or preparedness (e. g. felt unprepared, not confident of my learning ability), d) taking courses was not a high personal priority at the time, e) couldn't afford the costs/courses too expensive, f) personal or family responsibilities (childcare, elder care), g) personal health, h) any other reason. Hier war eine Möglichkeit vorgesehen, „other reasons" zu spezifizieren, die Befunde dazu sind jedoch in der einschlägigen OECD Publikation (OECD, 2005) nicht berichtet.

Die ersten Daten des *Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies* (PIAAC)[3] wurden im Jahr 2013 veröffentlicht (OECD, 2013). In drei Runden haben insgesamt 41 Länder an der OECD-Studie teilgenommen, für 2025 ist die Veröffentlichung der Daten der zweiten Welle angekündigt. Im Rahmen der Fragen zur Weiterbildung wurde die Frage gestellt, ob es weitere bzw. irgendwelche Aktivitäten gab, die die befragte Person hätte besuchen wollen, es dann aber nicht getan hat mit einer Anschlussfrage nach den Gründen für die Nichtteilnahme. Als Antwortkategorien standen zur Verfügung: a) I did not have the prerequisites, b) education or training was too expensive/I could not afford it, c) lack of employer support, d) I was too busy at work, e) course or program was offered at an inconvenient time, f) I did not have time because of child care or family responsibilities, g) something unexpected came up and that prevented me from taking education or training, h) other. Eine Möglichkeit, "sonstige Gründe" anzugeben oder diese sonstigen Gründe zu spezifizieren, besteht nicht.

Der *Adult Education Survey* (AES)[4] wird seit 2007 im mehrjährigen Rhythmus in den Mitgliedsstaaten der Europäischen Union durchgeführt (Gnahs, 2018). Erfasst wird die Beteiligung an formalen, non-formalen und informellen Lernaktivitäten. Im Falle der Nichtteilnahme wird bei allen Personen nachgefragt, die entweder gar nicht an Weiterbildung teilnahmen und bei denjenigen, die grundsätzlich zwar an Weiterbildung teilgenommen haben nicht jedoch an einer weiteren eigentlich geplanten Weiterbildung. Als Gründe gegen eine (weitere) Teilnahme können benannt werden: a) cost, b) lack of employer support, c) lack of public services support, d) schedule, e) distance, f) family responsibilities, g) health, h) age, i) other personal reasons, j) no suitable education or training activity (offer), k) negative previous learning experience, l) course was booked out, m) too few registrations. Eine Möglichkeit, die sonstigen persönlichen Gründe zu spezifizieren, besteht nicht.

Eine nationale Studie, in der die Teilnahme an non-formaler Weiterbildung erfasst wurde, ist die in Deutschland durchgeführte LEO-Studie[5] (Dutz & Bilger, 2020).

2 Fragebogen: https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ALL/pdf/ALL-Main_Survey_BQ.pdf
3 Fragebogen: http://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/Background%20Questionnaire%2015DEC10.pdf
4 Fragebogen 2022: https://circabc.europa.eu/ui/group/d14c857a-601d-438a-b878-4b4cebd0e10f/library/4a0cd68c-f359-4e01-9560-233e9088e132/details
5 Fragenbogen: https://leo1.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/LEO-questionnaire.pdf

Die verwendeten Fragen zur non-formalen Weiterbildung wurden weitgehend dem AES Deutschland entnommen. Hier wurde nicht nach einer konkreten Nicht-Teilnahme und den Gründen dafür gefragt (so wie in den OECD Studien), sondern ganz allgemein nach den Gründen, warum Erwachsene keine Weiterbildungsaktivitäten wahrnehmen, bzw. welche auf die befragte Person zutreffen. Als Antwortkategorien standen zur Verfügung: a) Ich hätte gern etwas gemacht, hatte jedoch nicht die Teilnahmevoraussetzungen, b) Ich hätte gerne etwas gemacht, aber es war mir zu teuer, c) Der Arbeitgeber unterstützte meine Weiterbildungsabsichten nicht, d) Es gab keine staatliche Unterstützung für meine Bildungsabsichten, e) Meine beruflichen Termine haben mir für Weiterbildung keine Zeit gelassen, f) Meine familiären Verpflichtungen haben mir für Weiterbildung keine Zeit gelassen, g) Die Entfernung zum Weiterbildungsanbieter war zu groß, h) Es gab keine geeigneten Bildungs- oder Weiterbildungsangebote, i) Ich konnte mich nicht damit anfreunden, wieder wie in der Schule zu lernen, j) Meine Gesundheit erlaubt mir solche Aktivitäten nicht, k) In meinem Alter lohnt sich Aus- oder Weiterbildung nicht mehr, l) Ich glaube nicht, dass ich es schaffen würde, die Anforderungen in einer Aus- oder Weiterbildung zu erfüllen, m) Ich bräuchte eine Beratung, um zu wissen, welche Aus- oder Weiterbildung für mich in Frage käme, n) Ich hatte keinen Computer- oder Internetzugang, o) meine Deutschkenntnisse reichen nicht aus, p) sonstige persönliche Gründe. Eine Möglichkeit, die sonstigen persönlichen Gründe zu spezifizieren, besteht nicht.

Wie aus diesen Angaben und aus der Übersichtstabelle im Anhang hervorgeht, gibt es einige Begründungen, die in praktisch allen Erhebungen als Antwortkategorien vorliegen. Das sind das Zeitargument (Arbeit, Familie, Zeitpunkt des Angebots), das Kostenargument und die fehlende Unterstützung durch Arbeitgeber und die fehlende öffentliche/staatliche Unterstützung, das Argument fehlender Voraussetzungen, die objektiver und subjektiver Natur sein können, sowie die Begründungen bezogen auf zu hohes Alter und zu schlechte Gesundheit.

Andere Begründungen stehen nur in einzelnen bzw. nur wenigen Erhebungen als Antwortkategorien zur Verfügung. Das sind die fehlende Information/Beratung (erfasst in der LEO-Studie), negative Schulerfahrungen (LEO und AES), fehlende technische Ausstattung/kein PC (LEO und früherer AES, nicht jedoch im aktuellen AES), die Begründung, Weiterbildung habe keine persönliche Priorität (ALL) und technische Gründe bezogen auf die Anmeldung oder Buchung (Kurs fand nicht statt, war ausgebucht: IALS und AES).

Aus der Übersicht wird überdies deutlich, dass auch die „sonstigen Gründe“ nicht einheitlich erfasst werden. Während im IALS lediglich die Kategorie „other“ zur Verfügung steht, bietet der ALL die Kategorie „any other reasons“ an, mit der Möglichkeit, diese sonstigen Gründe in einer Freitextantwort zu spezifizieren. Diese Spezifizierung wurde in den einschlägigen Ergebnispublikationen jedoch nicht ausgewertet. In der PIAAC-Studie wird eine etwas sperrige Formulierung als Antwortkategorie angeboten („Something unexpected came up and that prevented me from taking education or training“), die im weiteren Sinne durchaus als „sonstige Gründe“ verstanden werden kann. LEO und AES schließlich fügen das Attribut „persönlich" hinzu und formulieren „sonstige persönliche Gründe" bzw. „other personal reasons".

Die Vergleichbarkeit der genannten Studien ist sicherlich grundsätzlich gegeben, hat aber einigen Aspekten Rechnung zu tragen. Zunächst einmal wird in IALS, ALL und PIAAC nach Gründen der Nicht-Teilnahme nur gefragt, wenn die Personen grundsätzlich an Weiterbildung teilgenommen haben, aber eine weitere Aktivität dann nicht belegt wurde. Personen, die gar nicht an Weiterbildung teilnehmen, wurden zu den Gründen nicht befragt. Der AES und die LEO-Studie fragen prinzipiell auch Personen, die grundsätzlich nicht an Weiterbildung teilgenommen haben. Dieses Vorgehen erscheint mit Blick auf die Analyse der Gründe der Nicht-Teilnahme als aussagekräftiger. Zudem bieten die verschiedenen Studien teilweise sehr differenzierte Antwortmöglichkeiten zur Nicht-Teilnahme an, die sich durch systematische Aggregierung aufeinander beziehen lassen (siehe Übersichtstabelle). In der Regel aber fehlt eine Antwortoption, die verdeutlicht, dass die befragte Person in einer Teilnahme prinzipiell keinen Nutzen sieht („das bringt mir nichts"). Die synoptische Darstellung zeigt, dass dies nicht die einzige Leerstelle ist, die in der einen oder anderen Studie auftaucht, denn einzelne Kategorien werden nur in einer oder zwei Studien angeboten. Die Leerstelle des fehlenden Nutzens durchzieht jedoch alle untersuchten Erhebungsinstrumente.

4 Analysepotenzial wird in gängigen Studien nicht ausgeschöpft

Die zuvor beschriebenen Studien lassen sich auf die Gründe der Nicht-Teilnahme an Weiterbildung auswerten und zeigen in der Tendenz einen beunruhigend hohen Anteil der „sonstigen Gründe". Beunruhigend hoch sind die Anteile insofern, als sie auf Unschärfen oder Lücken in den Frageformulierungen hinweisen.

Eine Auswertung auf Basis von PIAAC-Daten[6] zeigt, dass in einigen an PIAAC teilnehmenden Ländern der Anteil derjenigen, die „sonstige Gründe" für die Nicht-Teilnahme angeben, bezogen auf alle Befragten (*all levels of education*) bei 20 Prozent oder darüber liegt. Ebenfalls bezogen auf PIAAC-Ergebnisse weisen Grotlüschen et al. (2016) darauf hin, dass sich die Begründungsmuster für die Nicht-Teilnahme zwischen Personen mit geringer und höherer Lesekompetenz partiell unterscheiden und zwar hinsichtlich der Begründung, man habe nicht die nötigen Voraussetzungen und hinsichtlich der „sonstigen Gründe", die von Personen mit geringer Lesekompetenz doppelt so häufig als Grund der Nicht-Teilnahme genannt werden, als von Personen mit höherer Literalität. „This could mean that either people could not tell what kept them from starting or they could not find an answer choice matching their reasons for not participating in the training" (ebd., S. 129).

6 Eigene Berechnungen auf Basis online generierter Tabellen: https://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx

Hovdhaugen und Opheim (2018, S. 572) untersuchen PIAAC-Daten und nehmen eine Klassifizierung der Barrieren nach der Systematik von Cross (1981) vor, arbeiten also differenziert und theoriegeleitet, erwähnen aber allenfalls beiläufig, dass 17 Prozent “other barriers” genannt haben. Patterson (2017) analysiert auf Basis der PIAAC-Daten für die USA ausführlich, welche Hindernisse der Teilnahme es für die “forgotten 90 percent” gibt, also die 90 Prozent der gering qualifizierten Erwachsenen, die nicht an non-formaler Weiterbildung teilnehmen. Sie thematisiert die Tatsache, dass „sonstige Gründe“ weiterer Erklärung bedürfen: “Future research could consider geographic differences, age and parental background, and the ‘reasons behind the reasons’ of other deterrents” (ebd., S. 60).

Auf Basis von Ergebnissen des Adult Education Survey zeigen Erler und Fischer (2012) bezogen auf Österreich, dass in rund 24 Prozent der Fälle die Antwortoption „anderer Grund“ gewählt wurde. Ebenfalls basierend auf Daten des AES legt Boeren (2011, S. 375) die Barrieren-Trias von Cross (1981) zugrunde, um Gründe der Nicht-Teilnahme zu untersuchen. Sie untersucht also differenziert und systematisch Teilnahmebarrieren, thematisiert das Problem der “nichts davon”-Antworten jedoch nicht.

Unter Rückgriff auf die Daten der LEO-Studie[7] arbeiten Dutz und Bilger (2020) heraus, dass auch in dieser Erhebung die „sonstigen persönlichen Gründe“ mit durchschnittlich 17 Prozent der Nennungen zu den wichtigsten Teilnahmehindernissen im Bereich der non-formalen Bildung zählen, ohne dass sich diese sonstigen Gründe differenzierter auswerten ließen. Die Frage bleibt also unbeantwortet, welche konkreten Gründe in der Kategorie „sonstige persönliche Gründe“ bzw. „nichts davon“ von den Befragten angeführt werden.

van Nieuwenhove und Wever (2021) stellen international vergleichend Weiterbildungsbarrieren dar und werten dazu empirische Daten der PIAAC-Studie bezogen auf 15 Länder aus. Sie differenzieren dabei nach Bildungsniveau und kommen zu dem Ergebnis, dass gerade bei niedrig Gebildeten die Kategorie „other“ besonders hoch sei, nämlich bis zu über 40 Prozent bei Nicht-Teilnehmenden in Finnland (ebd., S. 11–12). Daraus lässt sich ableiten, dass das „other reasons“-Problem möglicherweise im Blick auf Gesamtpopulationen übersehen werden kann, wenn dort die Anteile nicht so sehr hoch sind, dass aber beim Blick auf besonders vulnerable Gruppen ein differenzierterer Blick nötig wäre.

> “Conversely and more important, we found that low-educated non-participants more often opt for the response category ‘other’ when asked for the most important barrier in participating in adult education. However, what adults precisely are referring to by choosing this option is unclear. The only information that we have is that the reasons preventing them from participating are not related to work, family, cost, inconvenient time or place of the training activity but to something else” (ebd., S. 13).

Die Autor:innen weisen auch darauf hin, dass bestimmte Ergebnisse nicht eindeutig zu interpretieren sind, da bestimmte Antwortkategorien nicht vorlagen.

7 Datensatz verfügbar unter: https://search.gesis.org/research_data/ZA6266 (deutsch) bzw. https://search.gesis.org/research_data/ZA6266?lang=en (englisch)

Während die zuvor beschriebenen Studien (Sekundär-)Auswertungen von PIAAC-, LEO- und AES-Daten darstellen, weisen auch weitere, davon unabhängige Studien auf den Sachverhalt der Nicht-Teilnahme und deren Gründe hin. Beder (1990, S. 208) referiert Ergebnisse einer qualitativen Interviewstudie aus dem Jahr 1979, nach denen nach der Kategorie „too old“ die sonstigen Gründe mit rund 18 Prozent die am zweithäufigsten genannte Kategorie ist, verfolgt diesen Aspekt aber nicht weiter. Beder befragte dazu 129 Erwachsene in den USA, die keinen Abschluss einer weiterführenden Schule aufwiesen und niemals an Grundbildungsangeboten für Erwachsene teilgenommen hatten.

Eggleston (2007, S. 28–30) liefert eine umfangreiche und ausführliche Darstellung von Studien, die sich mit Teilnahmebarrieren befassen (inkl. einer Synopse über angebotene Antwortkategorien), benennt aber die Tatsache, dass auch „other reasons“ auswählbar waren, nur beiläufig und gibt auch keine Einschätzung zur anteiligen Bedeutung der Kategorie. Und auch Schiersmann (2006) stellt bezogen auf berufliche Weiterbildung die einschlägigen Gründe der Nicht-Teilnahme dar, geht aber auf die sonstigen Gründe nicht explizit ein.

Die beschriebenen Ergebnisse zeigen, dass in quantitativen Untersuchungen anteilig oft sonstige Gründe angeführt werden, und zwar mitunter in einem Maße, dass es die Interpretation der Gesamtergebnisse erschwert. Das gilt in besonderem Maße für eher vulnerable Gruppen wie Erwachsene mit geringer Lesekompetenz (Grotlüschen et al., 2016) und Erwachsene mit niedriger Formalbildung (Patterson, 2017; van Nieuwenhove & Wever, 2021). Beides sind Subpopulationen, die von doppelter Selektivität der Weiterbildungsteilnahme stark betroffen sind. Um einen umfassenderen Blick auf die Motive der Nicht-Teilnahme zu ermöglichen, wären Erhebungsinstrumente entsprechend zu schärfen. Es sollte zudem erwogen werden, qualitativer Forschung den erforderlichen Raum zu gewähren, da sie in anderem Maße als die notwendigerweise stark abstrahierte Abfrage in quantitativen Studien subjektive Begründungen zu erfassen vermag (vgl. Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, S. 20).

5 Fehlender Nutzen von Weiterbildung ist in den meisten großen Studien eine Leerstelle

Die Literaturübersicht lieferte einige Hinweise darauf, dass für bestimmte Personengruppen die Teilnahme an Weiterbildung subjektiv keinen Nutzen ergibt (Aydt, 2011; Boeren, 2017; Bolder, 2011; Faulstich, 2006; Krenn, 2013).

Eine mögliche Interpretation dieses Sachverhalts besteht darin, dass von Individuen durchaus ein Lernbedarf gesehen wird, dass gängige Formate jedoch dafür als ungeeignet erscheinen, da das Lernpotenzial weniger in kursförmiger abstrakter Annäherung gesehen wird als vielmehr im Lernen während des praktischen Arbeitsprozesses. Karger et al. (2022) leiten aus ihrer qualitativen Studie in der Tschechischen Republik ab, dass „in the eyes of our interviewees, competence can be more effectively gained through informal learning instead of education. Education also fails to deliver other benefits“ (S. 13). Statt formaler als auch non-formaler Bildung wird learning by doing bzw. trial and error präferiert.

Eine weitere Interpretationsfolie stellt die Ebene kultureller Hürden dar, die McGivney (1993) ausgearbeitet hat.

> „As this suggests, reluctance to engage in education may have more to do with attitudes, perceptions and expectations than with any practical barriers. […] This problem may have been underestimated, partly because research instruments tend to have a bias towards situational and institutional barriers; partly because respondents may not recognize, or wish to admit to, negative feelings towards education” (ebd., S. 21).

McGivney weist hier explizit auf mögliche Schwächen von Erhebungsinstrumenten hin. Inhaltlich bietet die Bezugnahme auf kulturelle Faktoren Anknüpfungspunkte an die auf den Habitus bezogenen Arbeiten von Bremer und Pape (2017). Unter den Instrumenten der beschriebenen großen quantitativen Untersuchungen spielen diese Faktoren jedoch in der Regel keine Rolle.

Ein weiteres Element der Nutzen-Diskussion, das sich auch deutlich auf die oben referierten Beiträge beziehen lässt, ist die Tatsache, dass vulnerable Gruppen vielfach in Situationen leben, in denen Weiterbildung in der Tat keine substanzielle Änderung bewirken würde. So arbeitet Schiersmann (2006) auf Basis einer quantitativen Studie aus dem Jahr 2001 sehr deutlich heraus, dass die Kategorie „fehlender Nutzen“ in besonderem Maße relevant ist (S. 51). Demnach wählten diese Antwortkategorie rund 40 Prozent der Personen mit höchstens einem Hauptschulabschluss, rund 31 Prozent derer ohne berufsqualifizierenden Abschluss und 44 Prozent der Arbeitslosen. Dazu äußert sich Nuissl in der Vorbemerkung zu Schiersmanns Buch:

> „Es ist bemerkenswert, dass hier Belastung und Zeitmangel sowie fehlender Nutzen am häufigsten genannt werden, mangelnde Qualität und zu hohe Kosten der Weiterbildung am seltensten. Während insbesondere die besser Gebildeten einen Zeitmangel reklamieren, verweisen die weniger gut Gebildeten auf einen fehlenden Nutzen“ (zitiert nach Schiersmann, 2006, S. 6).

In dem Fragebogen zu der von Schiersmann referierten Studie (abgedruckt in: Baethge et al., 2004) wurde zusätzlich erfasst, welche persönliche Empfindung die Befragten bei dem Wort “Weiterbildung” benennen (Schiersmann, 2006, S. 70–71). Dabei gibt es die Option „bringt ja doch nichts“, die mit dem fehlenden Nutzen in inhaltlicher Nähe steht. Diese Antwort gaben rund zwölf Prozent aus der gesamten Stichprobe, rund 23 Prozent der Personen ohne qualifizierte Berufsausbildung und rund 34 Prozent der Arbeitslosen.

In den meisten Erhebungen jedoch wird dieser Aspekt nicht sichtbar. Er wird nicht gemessen und ist aus der Perspektive rein quantitativer Forschung nicht belegbar. Da er nicht berichtet wird, „existiert er nicht“ bzw. kann nicht als legitime Begründung eingestuft werden.

Quantitative Erhebungen scheinen also der Gefahr zu unterliegen, die „Unausweichlichkeit von kursförmiger Weiterbildung“ im Diskurs zu reproduzieren. Das hat zur Folge, dass Nicht-Teilnahme weiterhin als begründungspflichtige Abweichungen vom erwünschten (und nicht begründungspflichtigen) Normalfall – Teilnahme – erscheint. Wenn also Erhebungsitems insbesondere für die Erfassung von Teilnahmehindernissen vulnerabler Gruppen als defizitär aufzufassen sind, und wenn Wittpoth (2018) in der Diskussion einen „blinden Fleck des pädagogischen Blicks" darin sieht, dass Nichtteilnahme allzu schnell stigmatisiert werde, ist das unseres Erachtens ein deutliches Indiz dafür, dass zum einen die Erhebungsinstrumente quantitativer Studien zu schärfen sind, so dass sie die aus subjektiver Sicht mannigfaltigen Begründungsmuster der Nicht-Teilnahme erkennbar werden lassen und die Nicht-Teilnahme aus ihrer Position als begründungspflichtige Abweichung von der Norm interpretierbar wird. Gleichzeitig erscheint eine erneute stärkere Hinwendung zu komplementärer qualitativer Forschung (Rubenson, 2011, S. 218) und in besonderem Maße zu Mixed-Method-Studien (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) als zielführend. Der Beitrag macht deutlich, dass es sich lohnt, blinden Flecken nachzuspüren. Ob sich jenseits der in diesem Beitrag herausgearbeiteten Leerstelle im Kontext der quantitativen Forschung weitere Leerstellen finden lassen, war nicht Gegenstand dieser Untersuchung, stellt aber ein Desiderat für weitere Analysen dar.

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Anhang

Tabelle 1

	IALS (1994)	ALL (2002)	PIAAC (Zweite Welle)	LEO 2018	AES (2022)
ZEITMANGEL	• Too busy/lack of time • Too busy at work • Family responsibilities	• Time constraints (too busy, no time to study) • Personal or family responsibilities (childcare, elder care)	• I was too busy at work • I did not have time because of child care or family responsibilities	• Meine beruflichen Termine haben mir für Weiterbildung keine Zeit gelassen. • Meine familiären Verpflichtungen haben mir für Weiterbildung keine Zeit gelassen.	• Schedule • family responsibilities
UNPASSENDER ORT ODER ZEIT	• Course offered at inconvenient time		• The course or program was offered at an inconvenient time	• Die Entfernung zum Weiterbildungsanbieter war zu groß.	• distance
KOSTEN	• Financial reasons	• Couldn't afford the costs/ courses too expensive	• Education or training was too expensive/I could not afford it	• Ich hätte gerne etwas gemacht, aber es war mir zu teuer.	• cost
FEHLENDE UNTERSTÜTZUNG DURCH ARBEITGEBER ODER STAAT	• Lack of employer support		• Lack of employer support	• Der Arbeitgeber unterstütze meine Weiterbildungsabsichten nicht. • Es gab keine staatliche Unterstützung für meine Bildungsabsichten.	• Lack of employer support • Lack of public services support
FEHLENDE PERS. VORAUSSETZUNGEN	• Lack of qualifications • Language reasons	• Lack of confidence or preparedness (e. g. felt unprepared, not confident of my learning ability)	• I did not have the prerequisites	• Ich hätte gern etwas gemacht, hatte jedoch nicht die Teilnahmevoraussetzungen. • Deutschkenntnisse reichen nicht aus. • Ich glaube nicht, dass ich es schaffen würde, die Anforderungen in einer Aus- oder Weiterbildung zu erfüllen.	

(Fortsetzung Tabelle 1)

	IALS (1994)	ALL (2002)	PIAAC (Zweite Welle)	LEO 2018	AES (2022)
ALTER, GESUNDHEIT	• Health reasons	• Personal health		• Meine Gesundheit erlaubt mir solche Aktivitäten nicht. • In meinem Alter lohnt sich Aus- oder Weiterbildung nicht mehr.	• Health • Age
KEINE PRIORITÄT FÜR EB/WB		• Taking courses was not a high personal priority at the time			
KEIN PASSENDES ANGEBOT		• Course available did not match your needs or interests		• Es gab keine geeigneten Bildungs- oder Weiterbildungsangebote	• No suitable education or training activity (offer)
FEHLENDE INFORMATION/ BERATUNG				• Ich bräuchte eine Beratung, um zu wissen, welche Aus- oder Weiterbildung für mich in Frage käme.	
DISLIKE FOR SCHOOL				• Ich konnte mich nicht damit anfreunden, wieder wie in der Schule zu lernen.	• Negative previous learning experience
FEHLENDE TECHNIK				• Ich hatte keinen Computer- oder Internetzugang.	
ANMELDUNG, BUCHUNG	Course not offered				• Course was booked out • Too few registrations
SONSTIGE GRÜNDE	Other	Any other reason, specify …	Something unexpected came up and that prevented me from taking education or training	Sonstige persönliche Gründe	other personal reasons

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Documentary Method and Biographical Narrative Interview for Understanding Participation in Adult Education[1]

Ş. Erhan Bağcı

Abstract

In this article, it is asserted that researches in the field of adult education need a more comprehensive understanding of participation which goes beyond the dominant psychological theoretical framework in which the motives toward participation as internal/subjective factors on one side, and the deterrents toward nonparticipation as external/objective factors on the other, are examined. A more holistic approach to participation in adult education should consider that the decision and the act of participation do not happen arbitrarily, but as an outcome of the biographical experiences of the individual, which are accumulated through a lifelong path within a particular social field. Accordingly, it requires a better methodology which helps the researcher overcome the epistemological limits of the question-answer scheme in both quantitative and qualitative terms. Documentary Method and biographical narrative interview as discussed in this article provide the opportunity to understand participation in its contextual and relational dimensions.

Keywords: Documentary Method; biographical narrative interview; habitus, field; participation

The main problem to be handled in this article is to elaborate a methodological framework to comprehend how we can grasp participation and nonparticipation orientations of adults in education. For this purpose, deriving from my insights on my own work (see Bağcı, 2019), I am first going to present a contextual and relational theoretical approach to participation in adult education, and after that I am going to give a theoretical and practical outline on methodology for participation researches, biographical narrative interviews in Documentary Method, which provides us with the opportunity to make interpretations based on qualitative empirical data.

1 I'd like to thank Prof. Dr. Arnd-Michael Nohl, especially for his patience while I was learning about the Documentary Method, and also for his contributions to this article. And I'd like to thank Dr. Begüm Yengel as well, for her rigorous work in proofreading.

1 Participation in Adult Education

Participation is one of the main topics in adult education. We have a vast number of studies which focus on both theoretical and practical aspects of participation from different points of view. Smith (2010) outlines the main models and theories of participation in literature, such as needs hierarchy theory, congruence model, force-field theory, life transition theory, reference group theory, social participation theory, and chain of response model. Considering the relevant literature, Henry and Basile (1994: 65) assert that the main assumptions of Houle's typology and Boshier's scale are the regulatory framework among the studies in this field. In these two studies, Houle (1961) puts adult learners into three categories as goal-oriented, activity-oriented and learning-oriented; and Boshier (1977) introduces an Education Participation Scale as an instrument to test Houle's typology.

Henry and Basile (1994), in their comprehensive inquiry, state that although there are sociologically oriented approaches which consider the social context, most of the studies to explain adult participation in education remain within a psychological framework in which the motives as internal factors on one side, and the deterrents as external factors on the other are examined. This framework presupposes that motives and deterrents are unrelated with, independent of or external to each other. However, we know that approaches such as social and human capital that focus on the relationship between decision to participate and social conditions, assert that motivation to participation is not free from the social factors in which the individuals live (Knipparth & De Rick, 2015). Likewise, Rubenson and Desjardins (2009: 197) oppose the idea that participation is a voluntary act that the individual freely chooses due to motives inside or to deterrents outside. They emphasize that the decision to participate rests on the intersection of the purposeful behavior of social agents and the constraints caused by the social and material contexts of that behavior, since dispositions and preferences are not totally independent of conditions. By implying the interrelatedness in-between, they call on a more holistic approach that situates the individual's decision-making process on participation in the social context.

The decision and the act of participating in adult education is not an instantaneous reaction to immediate stimuli, but it is rooted in the biographical experiences of the individual. Human beings are social agents that are products of history of their accumulated experience of a path within the whole social field, but not particles of matter determined by external causes, or not little monads guided solely by internal reasons (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 124–136). The idea of motivations inside and deterrents outside regards participation as an arbitrary practice that the individual conducts, depending on the clash of internal (subjective) and external (objective) factors. However, practices, such as participation in adult education, can be accounted for only by relating the subjective to the objective.

A helpful concept in situating the decision to participate in the social context, or relating the subjective to the objective, is the "milieu". In their study on types of social milieus affecting participation in adult education in Germany, Barz and Tippelt write that (2001: 1):

> "People who share a common set of core values and beliefs constitute social groups which are called 'social milieus'. As a matter of fact, each social milieu is composed of a number of persons who agree roughly with one another concerning the basic realities of everyday life, such as work, leisure, preferences, tastes, relationships, hopes, fears and dreams. Simply stated: a social milieu can be regarded as a group of like-minded people."

The authors try to demonstrate in their study that individuals of the same social milieu exhibit the same attitudes and patterns of behavior, including participation. So, the concept of milieu links the motives underlying the attitudes and behaviors of individuals to the group they belong to. Likewise, for Nohl (2009: 147), it can substitute for the concept "culture": milieu is a multidimensional social space of conjunctive experiences that connects people to each other, no matter if they are at the same place or not. It refers to the commonalities among the members. Individuals from the same milieu, or space of conjunctive experiences, talk and act similarly out of their commonly shared biographical experiences. However, a social actor's experiences cannot be reduced to a single factor, such as social class, ethnicity, religion, gender, level of education and the like; therefore, one can argue that milieus are made up of various layers of conjunctive experiences, which means they are multidimensional. They are also collective and they exist before the individual, and the individual becomes socialized in these spaces of conjunctive experiences. Frames of orientations which guide the practical action of an individual are generated among these milieus (Bohnsack, 2014: 225). The notion of milieu connects the practical actions of social actors to their biographical experiences.

On this account, in order to understand participation, we need to employ a perspective that covers and focuses on the relationship between individuals' practices and the social and historical conditions in which they live, which brings us to Bourdieu's concepts, "habitus" and "field" (see Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 94–140). Habitus is the socialized subjectivity which serves as the motivating structure of human practices through the relationship between the cognitive system of the individual and the practical world (ibid.: 126). It mainly refers to the durable, but also transposable dispositions which are produced among the interplay between social milieu and human practice (Costa & Murphy, 2015: 6). And field is a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions, which have specific and irreducible logic of its own, and in which habitus is structured, by producing practices, beliefs, perceptions, feelings and so forth. There is a number of fields in highly differentiated societies, such as the artistic field, or the religious field, or the economic field which all follow specific logics. The limits of any field can be considered as the space within which the effects of the field are exercised (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 97–100). While the field generates habitus on one side, habitus makes the field meaningful for the individual on the other. Therefore, the main point of the relationship between field and habitus is the *concordance* in-between without which habitus could not exist in that specific way, and should be transformed accordingly. However, habitus tends to resist to perpetuate structures corresponding to its conditions of production, but still it is not necessarily adapted to its situation nor necessarily coherent; habitus has different degrees of integration (see Bourdieu, 2000: 160). When the harmony between the field and the habitus is interrupted, habitus is forced to accord.

Within the field, there are asymmetries between various specific forces that confront each other (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 101) due to which social agents hold a position depending on the capital they have (Costa & Murphy, 2015: 7). Capital is any resource effective in a given social arena that enables one to appropriate the specific profits arising out of participation and contest in it (Wacquant, 1998: 221). Positions in the field are distributed among social agents according to the overall volume and the composition of their (social, economic, cultural) capital and the relative weight of those regarding the total assets in the whole field (Bourdieu, 1985: 724). Since every actor in the field tries to gain a more advantageous position, it becomes a field of conflict, containing struggles and negotiations which produce distinctive rules of its own. Each field rewards a specific kind of capital of a specific composition: a certain field may reward a certain composition of capital whereas the other may not. That is to say, entering a new field would probably change the relative value of the individual's capital, forcing them to take action if she has lost ground to others.

Consequently, since practices derive from the interplay between one's dispositions (habitus) and relative value of possessed resources in the field (capital), within the current state of struggles and negotiations in that social arena (field) (see Maton, 2008: 51), the decision and the act of participation in adult education does not happen incidentally, but as a result of the struggles in the very social and historical conditions that the adult is in. Therefore, any scientific attempt to understand participation should aim to reveal the frame of reference, or habitus of an individual, which requires employing a methodology to cover the biographical experiences of the adult, and the participation orientations in relation to the field and the possessed capital in order to grasp the reasons why an adult participates, or not, in education.

2 Narrative Interviews

Social actors narrate: we create and tell stories. The lexical meaning of the verb narrate is giving a spoken or written account of something, and it comes from the Latin verb "narrare" which means "to tell". According to the Oxford Dictionary, "narrare" comes from the word "gnarus", which is an adjective in Latin, that means knowing, or knowledgeable (Lexico, 2022). When social actors speak, they tell what they know. Narrative inquiry, as a qualitative research methodology, therefore aims to reveal what social actors know from what they speak.

We make meaning of our experience by constructing and reconstructing narratives, and speak and act upon them. Creating narratives helps us to make our chaotic experiences coherent so that we are able to make sense. Constructing and reconstructing narratives means establishing connections between and among our experiences, sometimes by locating them within a particular existing narrative, or sometimes by creating a new narrative in order to deal with them (Clark & Rossiter, 2008). This is a process of production or reproduction of narratives. Therefore, narratives are manifestations of our frames of reference by providing knowledge on how we make meaning out of our experiences.

Narrative interview as a qualitative data collection technique was introduced by Fritz Schütze (Nohl, 2010: 196; Bauer, 1996: 2) based on the idea that the narratives we tell are the stories which we figure out from our biographical experiences. Schütze (2014: 227) expresses his motivation for making an analytical methodology for narrative interviews as understanding how macro-historical processes and mechanisms are experienced and interpreted by persons and groups involved in them. The main purpose of the narrative interview is to grasp the perspective of the interviewee, called the "informant", related to the research problem. According to this main idea, the interviewer conducts the interview as an everyday communicative interaction, by asking the interviewee to speak in a spontaneous language in the narration of events. Narrations refer to personal experiences, by giving a context of the action in sequential terms which starts and ends at particular points. An adequate analysis of any narration reveals the place, time, motivation and the actor's symbolic system of orientations (Bauer, 1996).

Nohl (2010: 196) underlines that Schütze analyzed the "process structures of the life course", which can be found in any impromptu biographical narrative, in order to reconstruct the informant's explanatory models and interpretations related to their biography. These process structures can be considered as the mediators between the objectivity and subjectivity of life stories, and this is the point where narrative interviews may help understand the participation orientations of adults in education.

3 Biographical Narrative Interviews in Understanding Participation in Adult Education

Ask any participant, or nonparticipant, directly why they participate, or not. Your question may be in a form of a questionnaire that provides a number of choices for the respondent to pick, or it may be in a form of an open-ended question that informants could write whatever they want; or it may be in a form of a semi-structured qualitative interview that leaves more room than the previous quantitative forms for the respondents to express themselves. In any case, the participant would mention many reasons, such as a desire to learn, getting a new job, or finding new friends, etc. Likewise, the nonparticipant would claim reasons such as lack of money or time, long distance from the place of education, and so on.

What are the main epistemological assumptions of the aforementioned approaches to collecting scientific data on participation in adult education? Firstly, both the question-answer approaches mentioned above, no matter whether they are quantitative or qualitative, presuppose that the informant has the objective knowledge on why they participate, or not, in education, and the right answer would be provided explicitly thanks to the researcher's question. Secondly, the researcher, as the knowledgeable partner in that interaction, knows the possible true reasons for participation in fact, and tries to support or elaborate the truth with the help of selected topics in a prearranged order for the questions. And thirdly, there is an equal relationship between the researcher and the respondent, in which the respondent speaks freely.

However, there are some doubts about these assumptions: First, do informants really know how and why they participate, or not, in adult education? In an interview, they would probably claim that they do, but the nature of any habitualized human practice is generally impossible to be known by the social actor's self. We, as social actors, do not think about why and how we act in our daily lives. Therefore, in general we do not know why and how our habitual practices are in the way that they are, or why and how we act as we act, unless we reflect on them, which we do not usually do. This is why understanding the orientations that underlie social actors' practices requires reflection. An adult participates in education just because they want or have to do it, and they do not have a barrier. They do not think about what brought them to that decision and action because they do not need to. If the researcher asks them for the reason, they would probably give a "stock answer", like "I believe that learning makes me better", or "I want to find a job", and etc. These answers are not worthless; they have meaning, but they do not provide us with sufficient knowledge on the habitus/orientations of the informant. This is why we need to employ a more comprehensive epistemological approach to informants' knowledge about their own experiences.

Second, does the researcher really know how and why adults participate, or not, in education? Interacting with the interviewee through preplanned questions implies that the interviewer is already expecting some specific answers. It imposes a certain structure to the interview by selecting the theme and the topics to be handled in the interview, by providing a certain order of questions and answers, and by choosing certain terms to be used while speaking of the interviewee's experiences (see Bauer, 1996). That the research aims to reveal the informants' orientations, not the researcher's, one can claim that the question-answer scheme does not come up with the opportunity to access the frames of reference of the informants.

And third, do the informants speak freely within the context of an interview, and give the answers under no influence? By definition, scientific questioning should exclude any effects on the informant from the researcher. However, there is always a symbolic violence within the interview, in which the interviewee feels dependent on the researcher. Although the research relationship somehow differs from everyday life, it still remains a social relationship and contains the effects of a social structure that is hierarchical (see Bağcı, 2019). The symbolic violence of the interview may cause several problems, such as the informant may assume that the researcher already knows something about the topic, so they do not have to talk about everything, or the researcher expects a specific answer to the question, so they have to guess what it is (Bauer, 1996). The fact that the researcher sets up the rules of the interview creates an asymmetry between the ruler and the ruled, which causes the symbolic violence within the interview (Bourdieu et al, 1999). It is the researcher who is responsible for and capable of overcoming this adverse effect, both through the interview and the interpretation phases.

Biographical narrative interviewing claims to help the researchers overcome the epistemological limits of the data collection techniques provided by quantitative or (semi-)structured qualitative procedures, so called question-answer schemes (Bauer, 1996) when trying to understand participation orientations of adults in education comprehensively. It seeks to reveal the tacit meaning beyond the utterance of the informant by sticking to the data provided within the very interview, not within the theoretical structure framed before the interview, and by leaving the informant free to speak about the topics in a self-selected order. Consequently, regarding the researches on adult participation in education, the epistemological framework of narrative interview enables the researcher to move beyond the biased data from question-answer scheme by relying on life-stories and/or biographical narratives for understanding the orientations of adults on participation, or nonparticipation.

4 Documentary Method and Biographical Narrative Interviews

The Documentary Method was originally used to analyze group discussions but later on was also adopted for the interpretation of biographical interviews, semi-structured interviews, field notes from participant observations, pictures and videos, and so on (Bohnsack, 2014: 217–218). Main assumptions of the Documentary Method and narrative interview associate with each other, especially in two terms: the commitment to stay within the limits of the informants' points of view; and the problem of the dual nature of knowledge produced through the interaction of the researcher and the informant.

Biographical narrative interviews give us the tacit knowledge on how informants connect their experiences and make them cohere; namely how they make meaning. Therefore, they are convenient to capture the informant's sense of self, since meaning making is a narrative process by storying experiences to establish connections between and among them (Clark & Rossiter, 2008: 62). Using a biographical approach in researching participation in adult education provides material for analysis related to education, and also gives the opportunity to theorize processes of education in the context of learners' life histories (West et al, 2007: 11), which is also an essential point in Documentary Method. In a biographical narrative interview, the researcher is able to record the biography of the informant in sequential terms by allowing them to speak off the cuff about their life story and experiences. This helps the researcher to stay with the point of view of the informant by considering their knowledge as an empirical basis (Nohl & Ofner, 2010: 242; Nohl, 2010: 196).

The other significant issue in Documentary Method and biographical narrative interviews is the dual nature of knowledge produced within the research interaction. In this regard, Nohl (2010) mentions that what is significant in Documentary Method for empirical analysis in interviews is not the explicit verbal communications by the informant, but the meaning that underlies that utterance. In narratives, there is a meaning beyond the articulated of which the informant is not necessarily aware. Documentary Analysis puts that there are two kinds of meanings, immanent and documentary, in a narrative. Immanent meaning consists of direct, literal, simple and open meanings expressed in the narrative. The same narrative also has a documentary meaning which implies the underlying knowledge, in other words, the tacit or the atheoretical knowledge, from which the actor's orientations stem (Bohnsack, 2014: 220–221). By distinguishing between these two levels of knowledge, Documentary Method formulates priorities for interpretation, as Nohl and Somel argue (2016: 75):

> "The 'documentary' meaning then gauges the action or text according to the process by which it surfaced; that is, by its 'modus operandi' (Bohnsack, 2010b, p. 101). By drawing on other actions or texts by the same actor or author, documentary interpretation sees the modus operandi 'as proof' of a 'synoptical appraisal' undertaken by the researcher, which 'may take his global orientation [in original: 'habitus'; the authors] as a whole into its purview' (Mannheim, 1952a, p. 52). The important point here is the way in which a text or action is constructed, or the limits within which its topic is faced, that is 'the framework of orientation' (Bohnsack, 2010b, p. 107) within which a problem is handled… This is done by falling back on practice. In this practice, a 'tacit' (Polanyi, 1966) or 'atheoretical' knowledge (Mannheim, 1982, p. 67) exists …"

Hence, the researcher draws the Documentary meaning, namely the framework of orientations, patterns of behavior or habitual actions, out of the practical aspects of the narrative. This is how Documentary interpretation works, leaning especially on the implicit meaning of the narrations, concerning the dual nature of interview knowledge. That is why practices stay at the very heart of Documentary understanding and interpretation. The interview should be designed and managed according to this very purpose to obtain the habitual practices of the informants.

5 Conducting Biographical Narrative Interviews for Documentary Interpretation

The epistemological assumptions of Documentary Method and biographical narrative inquiry require a detailed and careful approach to conducting an interview. A biographical narrative interview claims to minimize the effect of the interviewer on the process, namely diminishing the symbolic violence within the interview; and to let the informant speak freely about habitual practices, namely allowing the informant to provide data for sequential comparative analysis, which will be explained in the next section.

Symbolic violence within an interview is one of the most significant issues in a research process. The hierarchy between the researcher and the informant has quite a risk of spoiling the quality of the data. It may steer the informant to speak by limiting or shaping their narrative in a way that they consider the researcher would like. The research relationship is primarily built by the researcher, and in case the researcher does not take precautions to dismantle it, the hierarchy exists as a symbolic barrier for the researcher to access the informant's frame of reference. In order to avoid this adverse effect in biographical narrative interviews, the researcher should build an open and trustworthy climate from the very beginning of the process. It starts with the very first communication with the informant, in which the researcher gives all the information about themselves and the research. The researcher should make sure that the informant knows what is going to happen throughout the process, in terms of the time to spend, recording, anonymization, publication, and so on. The place of the interview should be comfortable and silent enough because no interruption or disorienting noise is welcomed. This rule also goes for online interviews, which are more and more common after COVID-19: the software should provide efficient communication and recording opportunities for the interview. When the interview starts, the interviewer should be careful about not interrupting anyhow, avoiding comments and judgements, and not using any special terms or concepts that the informant could have difficulties in understanding (Güvercin, 2015: 178–179). Also, Bauer (1996: 10) suggests the interviewer to apply “ignorance as a method”, pretending not to know anything about the topic, so that the informant could overcome the symbolic violence of the interview to a certain extent.

A biographical narrative interview has five main phases: preparation, initialization, questions about the initial narrative, other questions, and ending. Preparation consists of reviewing the relevant literature, finding and contacting the appropriate informants, and setting the date, time and place for the interview. Appropriate informant for a biographical narrative interview is the one who has sufficient experience related to the research problem. For instance, in my study on the participation of Turkish immigrants in adult education in Germany (see Bağcı, 2019), I started by finding informants, both male and female, who had participated in adult education. After that, in order to reveal the differences in-between, I interviewed the ones who had not participated, which provided me with the opportunity to make my comparisons richer. Then, from the Documentary Analysis of the first bunch of interviews, I figured out that the length of the period of migration could matter, and I diversified my study group with informants who had spent different time periods in Germany as immigrants. This is called a “theoretical sampling strategy” which Glaser and Strauss (2006: 45) identify as “the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes and analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges”. In this kind of sampling strategy, the initial informants are selected upon a preconceived general theory, and as the interpretation of the initial data develops, the subsequent informants are determined depending on the emerging theory. Theoretical sampling suits biographical narrative interviews in this sense.

The second phase, initialization, is of primary importance for the construction of the interview process. The researcher starts with an initial question after providing the informant with sufficient information about the research process, and obtaining the relevant permission to record the interview. The initial question should be very clear and as brief as it can be, and be free of any terms to lead the informant. My initial question for the above-stated study (Bağcı, 2019) was: “This research is about Turkish immigrants in Germany and education. I believe I need to know you for a good start.

Can you please tell me your life story, from the very beginning. I want to know everything about you, so please do not hesitate to give details."

The initial question is expected to induce the informant to speak off the cuff providing the researcher with the main narration in the interview which will be the basis of the analysis. Therefore, the initial narrative of the informant should not be interrupted or directed in any way until the informant stops. The researcher should give no comments, no verbal or non-verbal signals that would affect the interviewee. The next phase of the interview begins when the informant halts, and the researcher makes sure that the initial narration ends by asking whether the informant has anything to add or not.

Then comes the questioning phase, in which the researcher asks questions to fill the gaps in the initial narration part in the same sequential order of topics by paying utmost attention to avoid using any terms or concepts other than those the informant did. Here, questions would better be "what" questions, referring to the habitual practices of the informant, such as "what did you do when …", or "what happened after …", not "how" or "why" questions, referring to their opinions or evaluations on any issues. After the questions about the initial narrative, the researcher might introduce any other questions that they would like to ask.

At the end, when all the narrations, questions and answers end, the researcher asks the informant whether there is anything they would like to add, and if not, terminates the recording. Switching off the recorder generally triggers an informal conversation between the researcher and the informant. Bauer (1996) suggests continuing to take notes after the recorder is switched off as the so-called small talk at this phase might be helpful with the interpretation of the interview. The end of this small talk is the de facto final part of the process.

6 Documentary Analysis

The Documentary Method is an approach developed by Ralf Bohnsack, on the basis of Karl Mannheim's sociology of knowledge and Harold Garfinkel's ethnomethodology, for analyzing qualitative data. For both Mannheim and Garfinkel, documentary methodology was considered as an epistemological substantiation for qualitative research data on social issues to be scientific. Standing on their philosophical assumptions, Bohnsack was the founder of the Documentary Method as a guide to practical empirical qualitative inquiry in the 1980s (see Bohnsack, 2014: 217).

The Documentary Method relies on Mannheim, for he asserts that the normative rightness of an informant's utterances and depictions in any research interaction should be "put in brackets" in analysis. This metaphor implies that when people speak of their experiences, they do not convey the objective reality, but the way it is generated by them. Therefore, communication between the informant and the researcher could only help the latter reveal "how" the reality is generated, not "what" it is. And Garfinkel's ethnomethodology paves the way for Documentary Method by stating that the objective reality of social facts to be observed by the researcher is an ongoing accomplishment of the concerted activities of daily life, and the basis of the informant's constructions and typifications of everyday life is her/his frame of reference which cannot be observed, but should be reconstructed by the interpreter. But since the interpretation tends to depend on the interpreter's frame of relevance which derives from common-sense theories, not the "informant's empirical reality", the researcher should employ a scientific approach to analysis to avoid limiting the interpretation to reproduction of generalized knowledge in an idiosyncratic manner (see Bohnsack, 2014).

The idea of reconstructing the informant's empirical reality still neglects the epistemological nature of communication between social agents in interaction; namely the researcher and the informant. The Documentary Method turns back to Mannheim here again for he states that there are two layers of knowledge that constitute a structure of duality in everyday life, which are *communicative* and *conjunctive*. Communicative knowledge is *about* the phenomenon on which we speak, whereas conjunctive knowledge *results from* our existence in relation to that phenomenon. With reference to our topic of participation in adult education, the utterance of the informant within the interview has a communicative level, which frames participation in a generalized knowledge of the benefits and virtues of adult education. This communicative level can be explicitly found in an interview through the formal/theoretical utterance of the informant. However, there is also a conjunctive level when the informant speaks of the topic, which is not about their experiences, but derives from them. This conjunctive knowledge exists implicitly in the informant's utterance, and can only be figured out by reflecting on their conjunctive experiences, which can be reconstructed by the interpreter from the practical actions related to the research problem, which is participation in adult education in our case. This is called atheoretical, tacit, or incorporated knowledge, providing access to the informant's frame of reference which shapes their interpretations, attitudes and behaviors (see Bohnsack, 2014: 220–221).

Based on the philosophical assumptions mentioned above, the Documentary Method provides specific techniques for data analysis. The very first step to take is transcription of the interview. For narrative interviews, not only the lexical content, but also paralinguistic features throughout the conversation, such as voice tone and pauses, are important (Bauer, 1996). Documentary interpretation of biographical interviews puts emphasis on including signs to remark the paralinguistic interaction in the transcript for a broader understanding of the talk between the informant and the researcher. Below is the table of signs by Bohnsack to be used in transcription (Bohnsack et al, 2010: 365):

Table 1: Talk in Qualitative Research

(3) :	seconds of a break
(.) :	short break
No :	emphasized
. :	strongly dropping intonation
; :	weakly dropping intonation
? :	strongly rising intonation
, :	weakly rising intonation
perha- :	interruption of a word
wou::ld :	extension of a word, the frequency of ":" corresponds to the length of extension
(well) :	uncertainty in transcription
( ) :	word(s) not understood, according to length
((moans)) :	events beyond language
@no@ :	spoken while laughing
@(.)@ :	short laughter
@(3)@ :	laughter of 3 seconds
//mmh// :	listener's signal (by interviewer, may be inserted into the text of interviewee)
└ :	overlapping of speech acts
°no° :	spoken very quietly

The transcription of the interview should be rigorous, since the text is the empirical basis of scientific analysis. Documentary Analysis of biographical narrative interviews is emergent; collection and analysis of data happens through an interplay in-between; therefore, they are simultaneous. Although making comparisons is the main cognitive functional source of Documentary Interpretation, the process starts with the onset of the transcription of the very first interview, most of the time. First interpretation is inevitably loaded by the interpreter's frame of relevance, but as the analysis progresses, the effect of the researcher is diminished by Documentary Method techniques, which take a two-steps action.

The first step is *formulating interpretation* in which the researcher formulates the explicit meaning – what the participants have literally said – introducing the topical order of the interview (Bohnsack, 2014: 225). Nohl (2010) suggests three criteria for the selection of topical segments: first is the topics of interest that seem relevant to the research problem. Second is the topics for which the informant gave more details than others, namely the "focusing metaphors". And third is the topics which are iterated among the informants. Formulating interpretation is conducted by writing down reviews for each of these topical segments sequentially, in the researcher's own words. At this phase, the researcher figures out *what* was communicated and what were the significant changes throughout the interview, and takes a distance from it, which is required for the objectification of the narrative.

The second step is the *reflecting interpretation* in which the researcher is concerned with *how* the topics were handled by the informant. For that purpose, the researcher differentiates the interview text between four genres of articulation: descriptions, narrations, justifications and evaluations (see Güvercin & Nohl, 2015: 302). The framework of orientations or habitus that guides practical actions of the informant is represented in narrations and descriptions (Bohnsack, 2014: 225). In order to gain access to the conjunctive knowledge of a narrative interview, the Documentary Method offers to conduct a comparative sequential analysis (see Nohl, 2010: 202) by comparing mainly the narrations and descriptions of different informants to discover the framework of orientations by paying utmost attention to the sequency of the topical segments of the informants' utterances. Building the interpretation on the narrations and descriptions among the cases seeks to take account of the actor's experiences without being taken in by their subjective ascriptions of meaning, for overcoming the dichotomization between the subjective and the objective (Nohl, 2010: 207–208).

Informant's empirical reality is a construction by the informant, and it is communicated within the interview. What the interpreter does is to reconstruct the knowledge in that communication through sequential comparative analysis. Reconstruction of the documentary meaning aims to reveal common and specific regularities in the narrations both within and among the experiences of the informants. Experiences are presented by the informant in a specific logical order, namely in an order of narrative sequences. These sequences are made up of segments that follow each other in a framework constructed by the informant. By comparing these sequential parts, it becomes possible to reconstruct documentary meaning. Nohl (2010: 209) summarizes the practice of the interpreter at this phase:

> "... we regard the second segment as a given and adequate continuation of a first segment during interpretation and try to discover alternative versions for this second segment through brainstorming. The comprehensive class of all alternative second segments, which would be an appropriate, homologous continuation of the first segment and are equivalent to the given second segment, forms the homologous orientation framework. This framework becomes particularly evident if it can be distinguished from other non-equivalent, i. e. heterologous second and third segments, in other empirical segments."

As stated above, the order of the segments in a narrative is considered as the informant's framework of orientation, and by comparing these frameworks among different narratives, the researcher tries to figure out the homogeneities and heterogeneities. It is important here to state again that the segments that are subjected to comparison are informants' narrations on practices. By comparative sequential analysis of the practices among the transcriptions, the researcher is able to reveal empirically how the informants dealt with any situation, depending on what they did.

Thanks to comparative sequential analysis, the researcher comes to the typification phase, which includes two levels. First, the researcher reconstructs the framework of orientations or the habitus that the practical actions stem from. This is called *meaning-genetic typification*. Individuals of the same milieu, or space of conjunctive experience, talk and act similarly through their common framework of orientations, out of which the researcher can access the documentary meaning by comparisons. Nohl (2010: 211) mentions that using only subject-related tertium comparationis reveals meaning-genetic typifications which provide the reconstructed multidimensional orientation frameworks of the informants. A more complex comparative analysis with varied tertium comparationis is required for the second level, which is *socio-genetic typification*. At this level of analysis, the researcher tries to answer the question of what the framework of orientation or habitus is typical for, in other words, what the genesis of the generic principle is by comparing the social contexts of different meaning-genetic typifications. Generating socio-genetic typifications by reconstructing multidimensional typologies builds the relationship between the commonalities of the habitus of informants and the social context (see Bohnsack, 2014: 229; Bohnsack, 2010: 111–112). Documentary interpretation, therefore, stems from the informant's empirical reality by reconstructing the multidimensional conjunctive knowledge out of the communicative, related to the social context.

Here is a simplified example from my study (Bağcı, 2019). There were three female Turkish immigrant informants, one of whom attended a vocational course right after migration, and one of whom did not ever think of participating in adult education, and the other of whom attended a course to learn how to ride a bike many years after she migrated, be them F1, F2 and F3, respectively. In the formulating interpretation, I saw that F2 did not ever participate in adult education, but F1 and F3 did. F1 chose to do that right after migration, whereas F3 waited years and years for attending a course. F1 and F2 had university degrees from Turkey, and F3 came from a primary school level, which made the case complex, since taken for granted explanations for relating participation in adult education to the level of prior education did not fit the empirical context. I was unable to make a meaning-genetic typification out of these three orientations, so I had to include more informants for comparison. As I progressed with more informants of both sex, and different participation backgrounds, I figured out that level of prior education, namely cultural capital, was still a significant determinant, because the ones who had attended adult education at earlier phases of migration were only the ones with higher level of prior education, which made F2 an exception among the informants. When I progressed with the sequential comparisons over the nonparticipation orientations of more informants, gender was revealed to be an important factor, since it was significant in the construction of female immigrant habitus. Female immigrants' decisions and acts of participation in adult education were quite dependent on their gendered division of labor within their families after migration, which could also be reconstructed from F2's biographical experience. However, although F3 was a woman with quite a low educational background, she still attended a course. But unlike F1, the course she chose was not of a kind to help her ameliorate her socio-economic status, and it was many years after migration. Therefore, although F1 and F3 had similar frames of orientation, there were still significant differences that needed to be analyzed deeper. Documentary Analysis of F3's participation narrative, by comparing with other informants with similar experiences, revealed a specific kind of immigrant orientation which results with participation long after migration, but again within their limits of cultural capital (see Bağcı, 2019).

By taking a glance at the aforementioned process, one can easily claim that comparative sequential analysis is not linear, but a complex kind of spiral movement for enriching typifications empirically. It is not the same as comparing two cases with each other; it's more of a continuous series of comparisons of the cases all with each other for revealing regularities, based on the narrations of informants on their habitual practices.

7 Conclusion

We have a considerable amount of knowledge on participation in adult education. This article argues that studies on this issue should move beyond the general psychological theoretical framework since the decision and act of participation can only be comprehended by a contextual and relational understanding. Adults participate in education, or not, within specific social and historical conditions, as an outcome of their biographical experience, and upon their frames of orientation, that is to say habitus. Only if one employs an appropriate methodology will they be able to cover the contextual and relational dimensions of participation, which this article claims to be the Documentary Method and biographical narrative interview.

Documentary Method and biographical narrative interview consider the knowledge of actors as an empirical basis, but detaches from the actors' ascriptions of meaning (Nohl & Ofner, 2010: 242) by specific techniques. With the help of this methodology, the researcher is able to develop a systematic understanding of the structure of meaning beyond the subjectively intended meaning of the actors, while retaining an empirical and analytical focus on the *knowledge of the actors themselves* (Bohnsack & Nohl, 2003: 371) while revealing the relevant dimensions of the informant's habitus. Therefore, Documentary Analysis provides us with the sufficient thinking tools for reflecting on the individuals' orientations, be it participation in adult education for our case, which we may call as reconstruction of the conjunctive knowledge of the social actors.

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Inequality in adult education participation across national contexts: is growing employer support exacerbating or mitigating inequality in participation?

Richard Desjardins & Jungwon Kim

Abstract

Over the span of 20–30 years, evidence suggests that participation in adult education (inclusive of undertaking for job-related purposes) is on a significant upward trend since the 1990s in most OECD and many EU countries. The upward trend may be attributed partly to the increasing interest by employers (private, public, and non-governmental sectors) to invest in adult education due to its substantial benefits. As employer investment grows, who gets employer support to participate in adult education thus becomes an important research and policy question, particularly since inequality in participation may exacerbate social inequalities of various kinds. The purpose of this article is to explore whether the trend of increased participation in employer-supported adult education is exacerbating or mitigating the Matthew effect across different countries. It provides estimates of the change in probabilities of participation in employer-supported adult education by various individual, socio-demographic, and job-related characteristics associated with adults between the period of 1994–1998 and 2013. Results of the data analysis based on the 2013 OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Competencies (PIAAC) and the 1994–1998 International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) suggest that the growth of employer-supported adult education may be playing a role in mitigating inequality in participation. Reduced differences over time in the probabilities of participation between contrast categories associated with various individual, socio-demographic, and job-related characteristics (e. g. women compared to men, lowest educated compared to highest educated, etc.) are interpreted as reduced inequalities in the probability of participation associated with those contrast categories. Further research on additional and updated datasets is warranted to explore the trend of whether growing employer support for adult education is exacerbating or mitigating inequality in adult education participation in different countries.

Keywords: Adult education participation; inequality of adult education; Matthew principle; growth of adult education; employer-supported adult education; PIAAC; IALS

1 Introduction

Already in the 1990s, Heckman et al. (1998) estimated that firm-based and other adult training accounted for over half of lifelong acquisition of human capital. On one hand, a few analyses since then have suggested that there is a growth of adult education since the 1990s (e. g., Desjardins, 2017; 2020). On the other hand, other more country specific analyses focusing on specific periods have also suggested some declines (e. g., Mason, 2010). Naturally, shocks to the economy and society such as the COVID-19 pandemic can have substantial short- to medium-term effects. Similarly, so can changes in governments that feature significantly different political and budgetary priorities. Over the span of 20–30 years, however, the evidence suggests that adult education is on a significant upward trend since the 1990s in many OECD and EU countries for which there is available data.

It is worthwhile at the outset to define adult education for the purposes of this article in terms of its relationship to the world of work and job-related training. Approaches to the definition and delineation of adult education can vary considerably by country. In some circles adult education is approached as something distinct or different to job-related training but this can be problematic. Foremost, motivations and purposes for undertaking learning of any kind are not neatly distinguishable, and nor are the implications. That is, the impact of learning in one sector or for a given purpose on other sectors and other purposes (e. g., adult education for democracy and civil society vs. work related reasons) is interrelated in complex ways. For example, learning for basic skills or for activities in civil society involving social relations and context-based experiences can be directly related to skill development that is relevant to the world of work. Additionally, adults undertake diverse forms of learning for job-related reasons, and employers support diverse forms of learning including formal qualifications in the regular system of education and in some cases even those undertaken for non-job-related reasons (see Desjardins, 2020, Fig. 2.7). It is therefore crucial to note that organized learning undertaken by adults that is job-related and/or employer-supported cannot be reduced to the concept of training. Indeed, this can involve formal and non-formal adult education including basic skills programs, compensatory or second chance education, higher education for mature students as well as popular forms of adult education. Accordingly, the concept adult education in this article includes job-related training, whether it is on- or off- the job, as well as other forms of adult education.

The upward trend in the growth of participation in adult education (broadly defined) since the 1990s may be attributed partly to the increasing interest by employers (private, public, and non-governmental sectors) to invest in adult education due to its substantial benefits. Lerman (2015) for example, documented the positive impacts, such as industry productivity and innovation, wage increment and tax benefits of continued investment in learning. As employer investment grows, who gets employer support to participate in adult education thus becomes an important research and policy question. One expectation is that the growth of participation in employer-supported adult education will exacerbate inequalities in participation. This follows from an assumption about employers' general behavior of seeking benefits over costs (Becker, 1964), whereby participation in employer-supported training is likely to be selective. For example, adults with higher levels of education tend to be perceived as more capable by employers and thus tend to selectively train them for advanced skill development to boost productivity (Ci et al., 2015). Given that adult education has been found to be associated with various economic and non-economic benefits (see for example, Ruhose et al., 2019), the growth of inequality of participation in adult education may therefore exacerbate social inequalities of various kinds.

This article provides estimates of the growth of participation in employer-supported adult education by various individual, socio-demographic, and job-related characteristics associated with adults since the 1990s to ascertain the impact of changes on inequalities in adult education participation over time. The purpose is to explore the hypotheses of whether growing employer support for adult education is exacerbating or mitigating inequality in adult education participation. As mentioned, an expectation is that the growth of participation in employer-supported adult education will exacerbate inequality in participation. Inequalities in participation are ascertained based on differences in the probabilities of participation between contrast categories associated with various individual, socio-demographic, and job-related characteristics (e. g., women compared to men, lowest educated compared to highest educated, etc.). For example, reduced differences in the probabilities of participation between contrast categories are interpreted as reduced inequalities in the probability of participation associated with those contrast categories.

The article is organized as follows. First, a brief overview of recent research on patterns of inequality in adult education participation is provided. This includes the role of social disadvantage, and some macro, institutional, organizational, or other structural factors that may be affecting participation patterns. Second, the data and method used to generate estimates is elaborated. Estimates are based on analysis using the 2013 OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Competencies (PIAAC) and the 1994–1998 International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS). Twelve countries are included in the analysis, namely: Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden, United Kingdom, and United States. A small number of other countries participated in both studies but due to restricted data access and/or comparability concerns, these countries are excluded from the analysis (e. g., Australia, Canada, Germany). Third, results are discussed with emphasis on inequalities of participation in adult education by various individual, socio-demographic, and job-related factors as well as changes over the period covered. Finally, some conclusions are drawn in relation to limitations as well as implications for further research.

2 Patterns of inequality in adult education participation

2.1 The role of social disadvantage and employer-support

There are well known patterns of inequality in adult education participation across a wide range of countries (e. g., Desjardins et al., 2006). Boeren (2009, 2016, 2017) elaborates on these patterns invoking the notion of the Matthew principle to portray the typical observation that it is adults with already high levels of education and skills and who are in high-skilled jobs that tend to participate the most in adult education including their chances to receive employer-support. More recently, in their review of adult education and socioeconomic inequality, Kosyakova and Bills (2021) confirm that "…Matthew effects are ubiquitous in the world of adult education" (p. 10). Lee and Desjardins (2019) highlight the relationship to skill inequality, where a workers' skill level has been found to be associated with the probability of participation. For example, adults with lower levels of literacy skills show an approximate probability of participation of .3 compared to approximately .74 for adults with higher levels of literacy skills (OECD, 2014). Individuals in need of improving their job-related skills and knowledge are thus rather less likely to seize adult education opportunities, which leads to further imbalance at the expense of low-skilled workers in the labor market (Boeren, 2009).

As mentioned, one reason for the prevalence of the Matthew effect, particularly in relation to the role of employer supported adult education, follows from an assumption about employers' general behavior in seeking benefits over costs (Becker, 1964). On this basis, the allocation of employer support for adult education is likely to be selective and be less favorable for adults associated with a range of disadvantaged individual, socio-demographic, and job-related characteristics. Vignoles et al. (2004), for example, found evidence to suggest that employers channel support to workers who are most likely to gain from adult education.

2.2 Structural factors affecting inequality of participation

At a macro, institutional and organizational level, research suggests that structural factors in different countries and contexts matter for mitigating inequalities in adult education participation, or alternatively may exacerbate them. For a recent review of the role of educational systems, the welfare state, and employment systems, see Kosyakova and Bills (2021).

It is worthwhile to highlight that system characteristics reflecting government intervention in the areas of education, lifelong learning and active labor market policy have been suggested to play an important role in reducing inequalities in participation (e. g., Groenez et al., 2008; Desjardins and Ioannidou, 2020). For example, Roosma and Saar's (2016) analysis confirm the significance of including structural and institutional factors in addition to individual characteristics in explaining barriers to participation in adult education. Similarly, Cabus et al. (2020) proposed a model to explain cross-national variability of participation in adult education with emphasis on employed adults including vulnerable sub-groups of the employed such as low-skilled, young and low-skilled, and immigrants. They consider employer's characteristics as well as system characteristics and suggest that employees participate more often in adult education when it is employer supported. Institutional arrangements at the organizational and sectoral level have also been found to affect the likelihood and size of employer investments in continuing training for low-skilled workers in Germany (see Wotschack, 2020). Wotschack (2020) suggests that the role of employee representation, formalized HR practices, and bargaining coverage can benefit lower-skilled workers and thus affect the chances of participation in adult education.

Collectively, this research suggests that the extent and distribution of adult education (including inequality) in each country or context is likely driven by specific institutional features and specific policies that are related to the provision, take up and distribution of organized adult learning. Desjardins and Ioannidou (2020) discuss some institutional factors that promote adult learning, namely open, flexible, and permeable formal education structures combined with public support for education particularly second chances that are connected to formal qualification systems. They also discuss the role of active labor market policies and their potential effectiveness when connected to open and flexible educational structures as well as the importance of targeting such as the Basic Competence in Working Life program introduced in Norway in 2006 which involved state support for the provision of basic education to disadvantaged employees in the workplace (VOX, 2013).

3 Data and method

3.1 Data on trends

Research on whether inequality in participation is changing over time and what may explain those changes is limited. At the same time there are number of datasets that can enable such analyses in a cross-national setting such as the EU Adult Education Survey, the EU Labor Force Survey as well as the OECD Programme for the Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC). Each vary in terms of the time series or number of cross-sectional panels available. Moreover, there are data at national levels over time that enables research of this kind (see Zanazzi, 2018), although this does not easily lend itself to comparative analyses of structural factors that may have an impact on inequality in participation. Table 1 (discussed below) helps to reveal changes over time of participation rates in employer-supported adult education since the 1990s.

3.2 Data used for analysis

The data presented in Table 1 and used for the analysis in this article is the 2013 PIAAC dataset as well as the 1994–1998 IALS dataset. Similar analysis can be considered using the three cross-sectional panels of the EU Adult Education Survey (2007, 2011, 2016) and a fourth scheduled for 2022 but this is left for further study. While the EU Labour Survey provides time series since the 1990s for many countries, it does not allow for an overview on employer support. An advantage of using the PIAAC study is that non-EU countries can be included although only the United States fits this category for this analysis. However, the upcoming 2024 PIAAC dataset will enable an update with more countries, including several of them which will have three observations dating back to 1990s.

IALS was a large-scale co-operative effort undertaken by governments, national statistics agencies, research institutions and multi-lateral agencies in the period between 1994 and 1998 (for more details see OECD and Statistics Canada, 2000). PIAAC is a follow up study that targeted the same population with the same objectives and for the most part implemented near identical survey and measurement instruments that are comparable in nature (for more details see OECD, 2013a, 2013b). These are cross-sectional studies based on a unique combination of household survey methodologies (as in the case of Labour Force Surveys) and direct skill assessment methods. Both studies were primarily designed as international comparative assessments of literacy proficiency, which were administered to nationally representative samples of adults aged 16 to 65 (large sample sizes ranging between 2,000 to 5,000 cases per country). However, IALS was effectively the first large scale international comparative study of adult education ever undertaken which offers an important baseline measurement of the extent and distribution of adult education in the 1990s for a wide range of OECD countries. Similarly, PIAAC collected detailed information on a range of education and training activities undertaken by adults in the 12 months preceding the interview including formal education programs and other non-formal education activities such as workshops, seminars, on-the-job training as well as leisure and civic related courses. Therefore, with both datasets it is possible to empirically assess the extent of growth in adult education since the 1990s by a range of individual, socio-demographic, and job-related characteristics. Only adults aged 26–65 were included in the analysis to avoid distortions associated with full time students and variations over time in youth transition systems.

3.3 Method

A multivariate binary logistic model is used to estimate the inequality in participation associated with various individual, socio-demographic, and job-related characteristics based on the PIAAC data (results are presented in Table 2). See note for Table 2 for details on sample sizes and measures of fit.

The multivariate model is based on Boudard and Rubenson's (2003) research examining the determinants of adult education based on the IALS data which includes most of the same predictors used in this analysis. The individual and socio-demographic factors hypothesized to affect the odds of participation are: gender (men, women*)[1], age (21–40, 41–55, 56–65*), immigrant and language status (native-native, foreign-native, native-foreign, foreign-foreign*), highest level of educational attainment (less than upper secondary*, upper secondary, more than upper secondary)[2], literacy proficiency (Level 2 or below*, Level 3 or higher)[3] and parents' highest level of

1 * Denotes reference category.

2 International Standardized Classification of Education (ISCED 1997) is used to identify category respectively as follows: <ISCED3, ISCED 3, and >ISCED 3).

3 See OECD (2013a, 2013b) for a definition of literacy proficiency levels.

education (at least one parent with more than upper secondary, at least one parent with upper secondary, both parents with less than upper secondary*)[4]. The job-related factors hypothesized to affect the chances to participate are: labor force status (employed, unemployed*), type of occupation (skilled, semi-skilled white-collar, semi-skilled blue-collar, elementary*), firm size (micro 1–10*, small 11–50, medium 51–250, large 250+), the frequency and variety of reading at work (little to no reading*, frequent and varied reading), earnings (lowest quintile, 20^{th}–60^{th} percentile, next to highest quintile, highest quintile, no earnings*), and sector (private*, public, NGO). Missing values for each independent variable are included in the logistic regression estimation models as separate categories to avoid the assumption of missing at random, or in the case of when values are missing by design such as those who had no earnings or did not read at work because they were not employed. All factors are included in the same binary logistic regression model. The dependent variable is whether an adult participated in employer-supported adult education or not.

The odds ratios along with the unadjusted (or observed) probabilities are used to estimate adjusted probabilities which are deemed to be simpler to interpret and to compare across the variables and enables the estimation of effect sizes (EF). The latter can be estimated as the difference between adjusted probabilities between two contrast categories associated with a variable (e. g., difference in adjusted probabilities between men and women is an effect size). Typically, contrast categories include the most pertinent advantaged category that applies across the majority of countries vs. the most disadvantaged category (this is usually the reference category by design). Summarizing the results in terms of effects sizes makes it easier to distinguish the relative importance of different predictors and thus produces an easy to interpret comparison of the most important predictors across countries. While the summary and interpretation of results is based on the above-mentioned approach, effect sizes are not reported due to space limitations. Unadjusted probabilities are defined as those resulting from bivariate distributions without statistically controlling for other variables. The formula used to estimate probabilities associated with odds ratios is as follows: [(p/(1-p)*odds ratio]/[1+(p/(1-p)*odds ratio)], where p is the unadjusted probability (see Liberman, 2005).

To ascertain the impact of growth in employer support on inequality in participation over time, it is deemed to be sufficient to only consider the changes over time in the unadjusted probabilities associated with each factor. This enables a focus on observed probabilities. The variable *sector* is only made available in the PIAAC dataset; therefore, changes in probabilities cannot be examined for this variable. Table 3 summarizes changes for the period between 2013 and 1994–1998. All data presented is based on the authors' own calculations of data made available.

4 International Standardized Classification of Education (ISCED 1997) is used to identify category respectively as follows: <ISCED3 (both), ISCED 3 (at least one), and >ISCED 3 (at least one).

4 Results and discussion

4.1 Growth of overall and employer-supported adult education

As mentioned, participation rates in adult education as measured in the 2013 PIAAC and 1994–1998 IALS studies can be seen to reflect an upward trend since the 1990s in nearly all the countries that participated in both studies. Table 1 displays the growth rates of overall and employer-supported adult education for populations aged 26–65. With few exceptions, the growth in employer-supported adult education is estimated to have outpaced the growth in overall adult education in nearly all countries.

As mentioned at the outset, there are other more country specific analyses focusing on specific periods which have also suggested some declines (e. g., Mason, 2010; Green & Hanseke, 2019). Base effects, the reference period, definition of participation (i. e., incidence or volume) and shocks to the economy or significant policy shifts may thus lead to substantially different empirically based perspectives on the trend.

Given that the trend in Table 1 is based only on two data points and there are potential sources of bias such as slightly different wordings to the relevant questions, additional analyses were performed using the EU Labour Force Survey (LFS) to cross-check the trend for the specific countries in this analysis (where possible) and over the approximate same period (see Desjardins 2020, Table 2.1). The latter is based on multiple data points based on the same question which were collected annually. While there are differences between the two sets of estimates, such as the fact that participation rates in the EU LFS are based on a 4-week reference period whereas those in IALS and PIAAC are based on a 52-week period, and the reference years are not identical, the trend overtime from the two sources concur in nearly all cases, which adds credence to the interpretation of the trend from IALS and PIAAC.

Table 1: Growth of overall and employer-supported adult education since the 1990s

			Overall participation		Employer supported participation		Growth in overall participation			Growth in employer supported participation			Percentage point difference between annualized growth rate in employer supported participation and overall participation
	IALS Reference year	Years between PIAAC and IALS	IALS 1994–98	PIAAC 2013	IALS 1994–98	PIAAC 2013	Difference (%)	Growth (%)	Annualized growth (%)	Difference (%)	Growth (%)	Annualized growth (%)	
Belgium	1996	16	21.6	46.7	11.1	35.9	25.1	116.2	7.3	24.8	223.4	14.0	6.7
Czech Republic	1998	14	26.8	46.7	20.1	37.9	19.9	74.3	5.3	17.8	88.6	6.3	1.0
Denmark	1998	14	55.7	63.6	35.4	52.1	7.9	14.2	1.0	16.7	47.2	3.4	2.4
Finland	1998	14	57.6	63	37.5	50.1	5.4	9.4	0.7	12.6	33.6	2.4	1.7
Ireland	1996	16	22	47.9	8.9	33.9	25.9	117.7	7.4	25	280.9	17.6	10.2
Italy	1998	14	21.9	22.1	7.8	16.2	0.2	0.9	0.1	8.4	107.7	7.7	7.6
Netherlands	1996	16	36.2	61.6	19.5	49.2	25.4	70.2	4.4	29.7	152.3	9.5	5.1
Norway	1998	14	47.8	60.7	37.6	51.3	12.9	27.0	1.9	13.7	36.4	2.6	0.7
Poland	1994	18	14	31.9	8.4	22.8	17.9	127.9	7.1	14.4	171.4	9.5	2.4
Sweden	1994	18	53.4	62.9	43.4	48.6	9.5	17.8	1.0	5.2	12.0	0.7	–0.3
UK	1996	16	44.7	53.3	32.8	44.9	8.6	19.2	1.2	12.1	36.9	2.3	1.1
US	1994	18	41.7	56.1	28.5	44.3	14.4	34.5	1.9	15.8	55.4	3.1	1.2

Source: Own calculations from PIAAC 2013 and IALS 1994–1998.

4.2 Inequality in participation by individual, socio-demographic and job-related factors

As the overall growth of adult education appears to be driven by employer-support it is important to ascertain whether the growth is narrowly concentrated on certain types of jobs or on workers with specific characteristics. In other words, who gets employer support and who does not become important questions. This is because not all sectors of the economy may be investing in adult education equally and not all workers may have equal chances of receiving employer support, which drives the risk of exacerbating social inequality and to marginalize large segments of the population. Table 2 summarizes the adjusted probabilities of participating in employer-supported adult education by the range of individual, socio-demographic and job-related factors (along with each characteristic associated with each factor) included in the analysis.

Table 2: Adjusted probabilities of participation in employer-supported adult education by individual, socio-demographic and job-related characteristics, 2013 PIAAC (Source: Own calculations from 2013 PIAAC.)

	BE	CZ	DK	FI	IE	IT	NL	NO	PL	SE	UK	US
Total population 26–65	0.35	0.38	0.52	0.49	0.33	0.16	0.48	0.50	0.22	0.47	0.44	0.43
Gender												
Men	0.38	0.44	0.51	0.49	0.36	0.20	0.53	0.51	0.24	0.48	0.47	0.47
Women	0.33	0.31	0.46	0.54	0.32	0.11	0.38	0.51	0.24	0.43	0.43	0.41
Age												
26–40	0.45	0.43	0.57	0.57	0.37	0.20	0.58	0.57	0.30	0.51	0.47	0.47
41–55	0.39	0.42	0.43	0.56	0.51	0.33	0.17	0.49	0.20	0.20	0.54	0.56
56–65	0.12	0.17	**0.21**	**0.26**	0.25	0.24	0.03	0.19	0.05	0.09	**0.28**	**0.29**
Immigrant-language status												
Native-native	0.36	0.38	0.54	0.50	0.34	0.17	0.50	0.52	0.22	0.51	0.45	0.46
Foreign-native	0.56	0.24	0.06	0.78	0.39	0.50	0.02	0.57	0.31	0.37	0.54	0.48
Native-foreign	0.35	0.23	0.29	0.16	0.51	0.38	0.11	0.31	0.05	0.03	0.34	0.39
Foreign-foreign	0.15	0.28	0.43	0.29	0.40	0.15	0.08	0.26	0.09	0.01	0.19	0.18
Education												
ISCED 4/5b/5A/6	0.52	0.50	0.66	0.64	0.43	0.36	0.64	0.61	0.41	0.60	0.56	0.56
ISCED 3	0.24	0.31	0.38	0.42	0.39	0.26	0.14	0.45	0.12	0.11	0.46	0.42
< ISCED 3	0.08	0.09	0.10	0.20	0.14	0.12	0.04	0.22	0.05	0.07	0.18	0.18
Literacy skill												
Level 2 or below	0.23	0.31	0.40	0.35	0.26	0.12	0.33	0.38	0.16	0.34	0.33	0.33
Level 3 or higher	0.52	0.52	0.45	0.67	0.61	0.42	0.32	0.62	0.34	0.31	0.59	0.59

(Continuing table 2)

	BE	CZ	DK	FI	IE	IT	NL	NO	PL	SE	UK	US
Parents' education												
<ISCED 3 (both)	0.26	0.27	0.45	0.42	0.28	0.13	0.42	0.39	0.11	0.41	0.33	0.27
ISCED 3 (at least one)	0.45	0.46	0.34	0.52	0.54	0.40	0.18	0.59	0.30	0.32	0.58	0.54
> ISCED 3 (at least one)	0.45	0.54	0.37	0.66	0.64	0.45	0.11	0.54	0.43	0.39	0.54	0.60
Labour force status												
Employed	0.46	0.50	0.66	0.64	0.48	0.25	0.61	0.61	0.35	0.58	0.56	0.55
Unemployed	0.11	0.20	0.21	0.09	0.04	0.04	0.11	0.21	0.03	0.05	0.07	0.22
Occupation												
Skilled	0.55	0.52	0.70	0.69	0.53	0.34	0.65	0.65	0.44	0.66	0.62	0.61
Semi-skilled white-collar	0.24	0.36	0.43	0.39	0.26	0.12	0.35	0.36	0.17	0.33	0.37	0.34
Semi-skilled blue-collar	0.16	0.31	0.33	0.29	0.18	0.13	0.35	0.33	0.12	0.22	0.29	0.26
Elementary	0.07	0.15	0.17	0.18	0.14	0.09	0.22	0.15	0.11	0.17	0.17	0.13
Firm size												
Micro (1–10)	0.36	0.42	0.49	0.50	0.33	0.17	0.46	0.48	0.18	0.45	0.37	0.43
Small (11–50)	0.57	0.67	0.74	0.74	0.60	0.38	0.67	0.71	0.45	0.72	0.69	0.76
Medium (51–250)	0.58	0.69	0.77	0.83	0.74	0.46	0.74	0.76	0.58	0.82	0.77	0.81
Large (251+)	0.68	0.83	0.89	0.88	0.81	0.63	0.83	0.83	0.67	0.88	0.82	0.89
Reading at work												
Little to no reading	0.31	0.39	0.44	0.46	0.31	0.14	0.43	0.44	0.22	0.36	0.38	0.34
Frequent and varied reading	0.75	0.73	0.80	0.82	0.68	0.54	0.85	0.76	0.56	0.74	0.79	0.78

(Continuing table 2)

	BE	CZ	DK	FI	IE	IT	NL	NO	PL	SE	UK	US
Earnings												
Lowest quintile	0.23	0.28	0.27	0.39	0.37	0.25	0.14	0.31	0.37	0.15	0.38	0.36
20th-60th percentile	0.53	0.55	0.54	0.67	0.76	0.50	0.24	0.75	0.64	0.29	0.63	0.53
Next to highest quintile	0.75	0.81	0.75	0.85	0.87	0.74	0.48	0.88	0.81	0.44	0.76	0.74
Highest quintile	0.81	0.83	0.83	0.86	0.88	0.90	0.48	0.87	0.82	0.68	0.86	0.83
No earnings	0.02	0.06	0.13	0.03	0.06	0.08	0.03	0.05	0.06	0.03	0.04	0.09
Sector												
Private	0.41	0.47	0.56	0.57	0.41	0.22	0.54	0.54	0.27	0.51	0.48	0.48
Public	0.54	0.67	0.90	0.82	0.69	0.35	0.81	0.77	0.48	0.80	0.87	0.77
NGO	0.77	0.76	0.87	0.72	0.86	0.34	0.85	0.75	0.35	0.78	0.84	0.78

Note: All variables in Table 2a and 2b were included in the same model.
Cox & Snell R square are as follows: BE (.301); CZ (.275); DK (.345); FI (.344); IE (.31); IT (.184); NL (.334); NO (.278); PL (.265); SE (.291); UK (.347); US (.306).
Sample sizes are as follows: BE (4388); CZ (4486); DK (6166); FI (4480); IE (5129); IT (4034); NL (4202); NO (4058); PL (4246); SE (3554); UK (7523); US (4074).

The most important factors affecting the probability of receiving employer-supported adult education vary somewhat by country but there are a few general observations that can be made as follows.

First, job-related factors are found to be more important than individual and socio-demographic factors in predicting the probability of receiving support. Of the 10 most important factors predicting employer support, only one or two tend to be associated with individual (or socio-demographic) factors across countries, and in some cases, it is none. Specifically, workers who are in jobs that earn more, are in larger firms, are more skilled, require more reading as part of the job, or are in the public or NGO sector are associated with the highest probabilities of receiving employer support. In contrast, workers who are least likely to receive support are those who are in jobs that earn less, are in blue-collar type or elementary type jobs, and require little to no reading as part of their job.

Second, the individual and socio-demographic factor that tends to matter most is level of educational attainment. Higher educated workers regardless of other factors tend to have a comparatively high probability of receiving employer support. But the exact rank order of the most important socio-demographic factors is mixed across countries.

Importantly, another substantial individual and socio-demographic predictor is parents' educational attainment (as a proxy of socioeconomic status) but this is not the case in all countries. In fact, having at least one parent with more than upper secondary is a more important predictor of receiving employer support than one's own level of education in Italy, Poland, the Czech Republic, Ireland, the US, and Finland. But in Denmark, Sweden, and the Netherlands, it is the reverse, where having both parents with the lowest levels of education is a better predictor, which is an indication that adult education may play an important role in mitigating the intergenerational transmission of social disadvantage in those countries.

A high level of literacy proficiency is also an important predictor in nearly all countries except Denmark, Sweden, and the Netherlands – the same countries where socio-economic status seems to play less of a role. In fact, in Sweden and the Netherlands, having a lower level of proficiency is a more important predictor of receiving employer support after adjusting for educational attainment, which suggests that low proficiency workers are effectively targeted to receive support whether they have high or low levels of education.

Age is somewhat important, but the pattern is mixed across countries. Early-career workers (aged 26–40) have higher probabilities of receiving employer support but mostly in the Nordic countries, the Netherlands and Belgium. This is also the case in the Czech Republic and Poland. But the pattern is reversed in the US, the UK and Italy where it is mid-career workers (aged 41–55) who have the highest probability of receiving employer support.

4.3 The impact of growth in employer-support on inequality in participation

The results discussed above were based on a multivariate analysis of the 2013 PIAAC data. The purpose was to discern the relative importance of different factors in terms of their relationship to receiving employer support for participating in adult education. The most important factors were signified by the extent of inequality associated with the contrast categories of each factor included in the analysis (e. g., most educated vs. least educated, men vs. women). This section focuses on the changes in probabilities of participating in employer-supported adult education since the 1990s by selected contrast characteristics for each individual, socio-demographic and job-related factor. The purpose of the analysis is to ascertain whether the growth of employer-supported adult education since the 1990s has exacerbated or mitigated the inequality of receiving employer support to participate in adult education among the contrast categories of each factor. Table 3 summarizes the results.

Table 3: Unadjusted probabilities of participation in employer-supported adult education by selected contrast characteristics for each individual, socio-demographic and job-related factor, and annualized growth between 2013 PIAAC and 1994–1998 IALS (Source: Own calculations from PIAAC 2013 and IALS 1994–1998.)

	BE			CZ			DK			FI			IE			IT		
	PIAAC	IALS	Annualized growth	PIAAC	IALS	Annualized growth %	PIAAC	IALS	Annualized growth %	PIAAC	IALS	Annualized growth %	PIAAC	IALS	Annualized growth %	PIAAC	IALS	Annualized growth %
	prob.	prob.	%	prob.	prob.	%	prob.	prob.	%	prob.	prob.	%	prob.	prob.	%	prob.	prob.	%
Gender																		
Men	0.38	0.16	**9.2**	0.44	0.25	**5.2**	0.51	0.37	**2.8**	0.49	0.36	2.5	0.36	0.10	**15.5**	0.20	0.12	**5.3**
Women	0.33	0.07	**22.0**	0.31	0.15	**7.4**	0.52	0.33	**3.9**	0.50	0.39	1.9	0.30	0.07	**20.9**	0.12	0.04	**13.6**
Age																		
26–40	0.45	0.14	**14.6**	0.43	0.20	**7.9**	0.57	0.40	**3.1**	0.57	0.44	**2.1**	0.37	0.12	**13.0**	0.20	0.10	**6.7**
56–65	0.16	0.04	**21.4**	0.21	0.07	**13.0**	0.34	0.15	**9.1**	0.31	0.15	**7.7**	0.22	0.03	**46.4**	0.06	0.02	**15.4**
Immigrant-language status																		
Native-native	0.36	0.11	**13.7**	0.38	0.20	**6.1**	0.54	0.35	**3.7**	0.50	0.38	**2.3**	0.34	0.09	18.0	0.17	0.08	8.2
Foreign-foreign	0.19	0.05	**15.5**	0.38	0.08	**26.9**	0.36	0.15	**10.4**	0.39	0.14	**12.8**	0.24	0.18	2.2	0.10	0.09	0.9
Education																		
ISCED 4/5b/5A/6	0.52	0.26	**6.3**	0.50	0.37	2.5	0.66	0.53	**1.8**	0.64	0.60	0.4	0.43	0.19	**7.7**	0.36	0.15	9.7
< ISCED 3	0.12	0.03	**20.3**	0.15	0.13	0.8	0.30	0.18	**4.5**	0.22	0.20	0.6	0.17	0.05	**16.3**	0.08	0.04	8.5
Literacy skill																		
Level 3 or higher	0.47	0.18	**10.2**	0.43	0.26	**4.7**	0.64	0.47	**2.5**	0.59	0.50	**1.3**	0.42	0.14	**13.2**	0.27	0.13	8.3
Level 2 or below	0.23	0.05	**23.8**	0.31	0.16	**7.1**	0.40	0.22	**5.8**	0.35	0.21	**4.8**	0.26	0.05	**28.5**	0.12	0.06	7.1
Parents' education																		
> ISCED 3 (at least one)	0.53	0.19	**11.3**	0.45	0.25	5.8	0.60	0.40	3.6	0.58	0.52	0.8	0.44	0.18	**9.2**	0.26	0.12	7.9
<ISCED 3 (both)	0.26	0.08	**13.3**	0.27	0.18	3.8	0.45	0.30	3.6	0.42	0.33	2.0	0.28	0.07	**17.9**	0.13	0.07	7.1

(Continuing table 3)

	BE			CZ			DK			FI			IE			IT		
	PIAAC	IALS	Annualized growth	PIAAC	IALS	Annualized growth %	PIAAC	IALS	Annualized growth %	PIAAC	IALS	Annualized growth %	PIAAC	IALS	Annualized growth %	PIAAC	IALS	Annualized growth %
	prob.	prob.	%	prob.	prob.	%	prob.	prob.	%	prob.	prob.	%	prob.	prob.	%	prob.	prob.	%
Occupation																		
Skilled	0.55	0.39	**2.6**	0.52	0.33	4.1	0.70	0.56	1.8	0.69	0.63	0.7	0.53	0.22	**8.8**	0.34	0.19	6.0
Elementary	0.25	0.04	**30.2**	0.37	0.21	5.2	0.41	0.27	3.9	0.39	0.27	3.3	0.28	0.07	**20.4**	0.14	0.09	3.6
Firm size																		
Large (200+)	0.56	0.24	**8.4**	0.65	0.33	**6.9**	0.81	0.56	3.2	0.74	0.68	0.7	0.71	0.24	**12.1**	0.38	0.22	**4.8**
Small (20–99)	0.48	0.13	**17.1**	0.56	0.21	**12.0**	0.66	0.44	3.5	0.64	0.52	1.6	0.53	0.11	**25.5**	0.26	0.13	**6.9**
Reading at work																		
Frequent and varied reading	0.58	0.23	**9.3**	0.58	–	–	0.71	0.51	**2.9**	0.69	0.58	**1.4**	0.56	0.20	**11.3**	0.39	0.18	**8.0**
Little to no reading	0.31	0.05	**36.4**	0.39	–	–	0.44	0.19	**9.2**	0.46	0.22	**8.0**	0.31	0.06	**26.9**	0.14	0.06	**10.5**
Earnings																		
Highest quintile	0.65	0.33	**6.2**	0.73	0.42	**4.7**	0.75	0.55	**1.4**	0.53	0.69	**0.8**	0.71	0.25	**13.0**	0.73	0.25	**14.1**
Lowest quintile	0.23	0.04	**26.6**	0.28	0.14	**6.8**	0.27	0.11	**10.6**	0.39	0.18	**8.3**	0.37	0.01	**160.3**	0.25	0.03	**54.4**

(Continuing table 3)

	NL			NO			PL			SE			UK			US		
	PIAAC	**IALS**	**Annualized growth**	**PIAAC**	**IALS**	**Annualized growth %**	**PIAAC**	**IALS**	**Annualized growth %**	**PIAAC**	**IALS**	**Annualized growth %**	**PIAAC**	**IALS**	**Annualized growth %**	**PIAAC**	**IALS**	**Annualized growth %**
	prob.	**prob.**	%	**prob.**	**prob.**	%	**prob.**	**prob.**	%	**prob.**	**prob.**	%	**prob.**	**prob.**	%	**prob.**	**prob.**	%
Gender																		
Men	0.53	0.26	**6.4**	0.51	0.38	2.3	0.24	0.10	**8.6**	0.48	0.44	0.5	0.47	0.36	2.0	0.47	0.31	2.8
Women	0.43	0.12	**16.6**	0.50	0.38	2.4	0.21	0.07	**10.3**	0.47	0.45	0.3	0.41	0.29	2.4	0.40	0.27	2.8
Age																		
26–40	0.58	0.25	**8.3**	0.57	0.42	**2.6**	0.30	0.11	**10.2**	0.51	0.46	0.7	0.47	0.40	**1.1**	0.47	0.32	**2.6**
56–65	0.27	0.05	**28.1**	0.31	0.20	**4.2**	0.10	0.02	**26.8**	0.34	0.28	1.2	0.28	0.12	**7.9**	0.36	0.17	**6.4**
Immigrant-language status																		
Native-native	0.50	0.20	9.8	0.52	0.39	2.4	0.22	0.09	8.9	0.51	0.47	**0.5**	0.45	0.33	**2.3**	0.46	0.31	**2.6**
Foreign-foreign	0.32	0.13	8.9	0.41	0.29	3.0	0.12	0.08	2.8	0.29	0.21	**2.3**	0.30	0.17	**5.0**	0.30	0.13	**7.6**
Education																		
ISCED 4/5b/5A/6	0.64	0.34	**5.6**	0.61	0.54	**0.9**	0.41	0.19	6.5	0.60	0.59	0.0	0.56	0.52	0.5	0.56	0.45	**1.4**
< ISCED 3	0.28	0.11	**10.3**	0.29	0.19	**3.7**	0.08	0.04	6.9	0.24	0.28	–0.7	0.25	0.23	0.4	0.16	0.08	**6.2**
Literacy skill																		
Level 3 or higher	0.59	0.25	**8.4**	0.60	0.46	**2.1**	0.31	0.15	**5.8**	0.58	0.50	0.8	0.54	0.47	**0.8**	0.55	0.39	**2.2**
Level 2 or below	0.33	0.11	**12.3**	0.38	0.23	**4.5**	0.16	0.07	**8.0**	0.34	0.29	1.0	0.33	0.19	**4.6**	0.33	0.15	**6.6**
Parents' education																		
> ISCED 3 (at least one)	0.60	0.27	**7.6**	0.59	0.49	1.5	0.39	0.21	5.0	0.57	0.51	0.7	0.55	0.48	0.9	0.53	0.42	**1.4**
<ISCED 3 (both)	0.42	0.17	**9.5**	0.39	0.31	1.9	0.11	0.07	3.4	0.41	0.41	–0.1	0.33	0.33	0.0	0.27	0.17	**3.5**

(Continuing table 3)

	NL			NO			PL			SE			UK			US		
	PIAAC	IALS	Annualized growth	PIAAC	IALS	Annualized growth %	PIAAC	IALS	Annualized growth %	PIAAC	IALS	Annualized growth %	PIAAC	IALS	Annualized growth %	PIAAC	IALS	Annualized growth %
	prob.	prob.	%	prob.	prob.	%	prob.	prob.	%	prob.	prob.	%	prob.	prob.	%	prob.	prob.	%
Occupation																		
Skilled	0.65	0.32	6.2	0.65	0.56	1.1	0.44	0.23	4.9	0.66	0.62	0.3	0.62	0.57	**0.5**	0.61	0.50	**1.3**
Elementary	0.42	0.26	3.7	0.40	0.30	2.3	0.16	0.07	6.7	0.35	0.36	–0.2	0.41	0.29	**2.6**	0.32	0.19	**3.9**
Firm size																		
Large (200+)	0.72	–	--	0.72	0.55	2.2	0.52	0.19	10.1	0.69	–	–	0.72	0.58	**1.5**	0.68	0.50	**2.1**
Small (20–99)	0.64	–	--	0.60	0.44	2.7	0.36	0.16	6.5	0.59	–	–	0.60	0.38	**3.7**	0.56	0.26	**6.5**
Reading at work																		
Frequent and varied reading	0.69	0.35	**5.9**	0.64	0.52	**1.7**	0.47	0.24	**5.3**	0.65	0.60	0.4	0.65	0.53	**1.4**	0.63	0.46	**2.1**
Little to no reading	0.43	0.12	**16.4**	0.44	0.19	**9.8**	0.22	0.06	**15.2**	0.36	0.30	1.3	0.38	0.21	**5.1**	0.34	0.11	**12.3**
Earnings																		
Highest quintile	0.37	0.37	0.0	0.74	0.54	**2.4**	0.76	0.19	**15.2**	0.77	0.63	–0.9	0.66	0.61	**1.4**	0.69	0.58	**1.5**
Lowest quintile	0.14	0.12	1.4	0.31	0.13	**9.5**	0.37	0.03	**76.0**	0.15	0.31	–2.8	0.38	0.24	**3.5**	0.36	0.17	**6.1**

Notes: Shaded boxes reflect a statistically significant ($p<.05$) reduction in inequality in participation between the two contrast groups.

With few exceptions, it can be seen from the results that employer-supported adult education has grown substantially for nearly every selected set of contrast characteristics for each individual, socio-demographic, and job-related factor considered in the analysis. In many cases, the probabilities to participate associated with specific characteristics more than doubled or even tripled particularly in countries that experienced the most overall growth including Belgium, Ireland, and Poland. In most cases, the growth of employer-supported adult education has led to a narrowing of differences in the probability to participate (i. e., reduced inequality of participation) among workers in advantaged vs. disadvantaged jobs in terms of earnings, skill orientation and other characteristics as well as with traditionally advantaged vs. disadvantaged socio-demographic characteristics such as gender, education level, and minority and socioeconomic status (as proxied by parents' level of education). In most of the remaining cases, very few show an increased inequality between the two contrast categories.

The dominance of job-related factors in predicting the probability of receiving support was examined earlier in the multivariate analysis which focused on adjusted probabilities. To be sure, the type of work that one is employed in remains very important in determining the chances to participate in adult education, particularly of the kind that is employer-supported. To reiterate, workers who are in jobs that earn more, are in larger firms, are more skilled, and require more reading as part of the job continue to be associated with the highest probabilities of receiving support. However, in nearly all cases, the growth of employer-supported adult education since the 1990s has contributed to narrowing the gap between jobs that are more advantaged vs. those that are more disadvantaged in terms of continued investment in adult education. That is, the growth in employer support has for the most part gone not only to workers in advantaged jobs but also in many cases to workers in disadvantaged jobs at least as much or even more to effectively narrow the gap.

This could reflect a few alternative explanations. It may be an indication of upskilling across the occupational spectrum in many countries, and accordingly increased employer-support for adult education. However, the extent to which this relates to a market-based phenomenon cannot be readily ascertained. This is because government policies and programs may have incentivized employers to invest more in disadvantaged workers. An example of this is the Basic Competence in Working Life program introduced in Norway in 2006 which involved the provision of basic education to disadvantaged employees in the workplace (VOX, 2013).

Worthwhile noting is that the private sector in the US and the UK is contributing to employer-supported adult education nearly as much as in the Nordic countries and the Netherlands (see Table 2). Notably, while Sweden featured the highest rate of employer-supported adult education for workers in disadvantaged jobs in the 1990s, it is now surpassed by its Nordic neighbors and often the US and the UK have either caught up to Sweden or surpassed it regarding several disadvantaged characteristics. As mentioned, while these developments may in part be due to government policies and programs in collaboration with the private sector in different countries, it is beyond the scope of the analysis presented here to ascertain whether this is the case.

Beyond the private sector, governments can arguably affect policies and programs in the public sector more easily and directly. This is important to keep in mind since results shown indicate that employers in the public sector tend to play a much more important role in supporting adult education than employers in the private sector (see Table 2).

It is important to note that due to data limitations, the analysis has not considered any qualitative differences between the type of adult education that is received by workers in advantaged vs. disadvantaged jobs, nor the extent or nature of employer support.

5 Conclusions

Results of the analysis suggest that employer support for adult education is playing an important role in mitigating inequality in adult education participation. These findings are contrary to what was expected. The expectation was that as the role of employers becomes more important in extending support for adult education, that this would exacerbate inequality of participation in adult education. This is because employers are expected to channel more support to more trainable and efficient trainees who tend to possess advantaged characteristics such as already higher levels of education and skills which follows from Becker's (1964) theory that the decision to invest in human capital is a function of the cost/benefit ratio. However, the analysis presented here, which was based on cross-nationally comparable data across several countries with very different institutional configurations and starting points, suggests that the trend in the growth of employer-supported adult education is the reverse of this expectation. Accordingly, the findings in this article do not support the general assumption about employer behavior as suggested from Becker's theory. This may be an indication that the cost/benefit ratio associated with employer investment in adult education is increasingly favorable even among the most disadvantaged adults and those in the lowest skilled jobs, which would be consistent with a broader trend of upskilling across the skill spectrum in a range of advanced economies. Alternatively, it may be an indication of the need to consider macro and other structural factors when considering employer behavior from a market-based perspective including the role of government intervention in the areas of education, lifelong learning and active labor market policy as suggested by the research literature discussed above.

Moreover, the notion that employer support for adult education could exacerbate inequality in participation to a higher degree in countries that are typically more associated with neoliberalism such as the US and the UK compared to countries that are typically more associated with progressive social policies such as the Nordic countries is also brought into question. In fact, the private sector was found to be almost equally involved in supporting adult education in the Nordic countries, the US, and the UK. Interestingly, the latter are also found to be much more successful at extending support to older workers than the Nordic countries and the Netherlands which is a feature that merits further comparative research. In recent years, much international comparative research in education has suggested that certain types of welfare states or production regimes may exacerbate or mitigate inequalities of various kinds including participation in adult education (see Desjardins & Ioannidou, 2020 for a review and discussion of this research). However, the findings in this article suggest that the extent and distribution of adult education in a given country or context is likely driven by specific institutional features and specific policies that are more directly related to the provision, take up and distribution of adult education, rather than varieties of welfare states or production regimes as such.

Further research on additional and updated datasets is warranted to explore the hypotheses of whether the upward trend in growing employer support for adult education is exacerbating or mitigating inequality in adult education participation in different countries. The upcoming 2024 PIAAC dataset will enable an update with more countries, including several of them which will have three observations dating back to 1990s. These hypotheses may also be tested using data from the four cross-sectional panels of the EU Adult Education Survey (2007, 2011, 2016, 2022), with focus on comparative analysis investigating whether variations in structural factors (policies, programs) can reveal any discernable patterns that yield insights and nuances.

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Frustration, Care Work, and the Pandemic: Reasons for Drop-Out in Literacy and Adult Basic Education

Lena Sindermann

Abstract

One of the central goals in literacy and adult basic education is to avoid drop-out. This is because participation in basic education programmes can demonstrably promote social participation for their target groups. Consequently, a number of (inter)national political organisations have launched programmes to strengthen literacy and adult basic education in various fields such as policies, practice and research. Regarding research on literacy and adult basic education, participation behaviour has been increasingly examined. Remarkably little attention has been paid to researching the factors that prevent low-literacy people from completing these programmes once they are in the course. The article takes this as an opportunity to examine the reasons of drop-out in the field. Based on interviews with trainers in literacy and adult basic education (n = 13), central reasons for drop-out are identified and characterised along individual, life-contextual and institutional factors.

Keywords: Drop-out; literacy and adult basic education; reasons for drop-out

Zusammenfassung

Eines der zentralen Ziele im Bereich der Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung ist die Vermeidung von Kursabbrüchen (Drop-out), da ihre Teilnahme nachweislich gesellschaftliche Partizipation für ihre Zielgruppen fördern kann. (Inter)nationale politische Organisationen haben aus diesem Grund Programme zur Förderung von Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung in Feldern wie Politik, Praxis und Forschung etabliert. Im Fokus der Forschung stehen in diesem Zusammenhang insbesondere Fragen von Zielgruppenakquise und Teilnahme, während teilnahmeverhindernde Faktoren von gering literalisierten Erwachsenen bedeutend wenig erforscht werden. Im Beitrag wird dieses Desiderat zum Anlass genommen, um Ursachen für Kursabbrüche im Feld der Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung herauszuarbeiten. Als Datengrundlage dafür dienen Expert:inneninterviews mit Dozierenden, die im Feld tätig sind (n = 13). Zentrale Ursachen für Drop-out werden so aus Perspektive von Kursleitenden identifiziert und entlang individueller, lebenskontextueller und institutioneller Faktoren charakterisiert.

Schlagworte: Drop-out; Kursabbrüche; Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung; Ursachen für Drop-out

1 Introduction

Participation in literacy and adult basic education potentially increases literacy skills for adults and promotes both social and political participation (OECD, 2016). Consequently, a number of (inter)national political organisations have launched programmes to promote basic education. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, for instance, started the international *Education for All Initiative* in 2000 to reduce barriers to educational access (Schemmann, 2012; 2019). In Germany, the *National Decade for Literacy and Adult Basic Education (2016–2026)* was founded to strengthen literacy and adult basic education in various fields such as policies, practice and research. The starting point for all such measures and initiatives has been the shared conviction that literacy and adult basic education is the prerequisite for a self-determined life, lifelong learning, and social and professional participation. Appropriate basic education, which includes teaching reading and writing skills, aims to increase learners' chances of independently completing everyday tasks, enabling their participation in society and achievement of professional qualifications. Thus, literacy and adult basic education includes not only reading and writing skills but also numeracy, basic IT knowledge, health education, basic financial literacy, and basic social skills (Euringer, 2016). Such education is oriented towards the practical use of written language in everyday work and social life, and teaching everyday competencies leads to the improvement of reading and writing (General Agreement on the National Decade for Literacy and Basic Skills).

However, participation rates in literacy and adult basic education are relatively low. In Germany, the *Leo. Studies* (2011 and 2018) have identified a strong need for literacy and adult basic education as well as great difficulties in addressing their target groups. Only 0.7 % of the 6.2 million low-literacy people in Germany participate in a literacy and adult basic education programme (Grotlüschen et al., 2019). In observing the low participation rates compared to the self-proclaimed goals of literacy and adult basic education, it becomes clear that one of the central purposes of basic education practice is recruiting the target group and keeping participants in their courses. Therefore, an important aspect of literacy and adult basic education is the avoidance of drop-out (Dorschky, 2016). Although research has increasingly been conducted on participation behaviour in adult education, it is also necessary to examine the reasons and causes for absences in adult education (Dutz & Bilger, 2020; Hoffmann et al., 2020). Specifically, in the context of literacy and adult basic education, little research has been done on how to retain participants once they are in the course. Accordingly, there seems to be a high discrepancy between the political importance of the topic and the successful maintenance of attendance. Remarkably little attention has been paid to researching the factors that prevent low-literacy people from completing these programmes. Considering the tremendous research gap regarding drop-out, this article aims to examine the causes of drop-out in adult education. This can be summarised in the following research question: *What reasons for drop-out can be identified in literacy and adult basic education?*

In this study, this question is answered through an interview study of trainers[1] in literacy and adult basic education in the ongoing research project "DRAG – Drop-out in literacy and adult basic education"[2]. Trainers in literacy and adult basic education can give an overview of the reasons for drop-out due to their proximity to participants in the course and their professional role in the institutions. Especially with focus on drop-out, trainers represent a key component interfacing between the institutions and participants.

To address the research question, this article first articulates the current state of research on drop-out for adult education (2.1), as well as on the specific field of literacy and adult basic education (2.2). The presented models and studies serve as a heuristic and theoretical framework for subsequent analyses. Methodologically, this article is based on a qualitative interview study with 13 trainers in literacy and adult basic education (3). The findings evince different reasons for drop-out in literacy and adult basic education, as observed from trainers' perspectives, and therefore give an overview of factors that might influence (permanent) participation (4). In addition, the findings are discussed against the background of the current state of research; finally, conclusions are drawn with regard to current debates in the field (5).

2 Reasons for Drop-Out in (Literacy and) Adult (Basic) Education: State of Research and Theoretical Framework

Research on drop-out in the field of adult education started in the 1970s and has used different definitions of the term, making a clear delimitation of the phenomenon difficult (Hoffmann et al., 2019). In addition to the classic definition of drop-out, which can be summarised as the discontinuation of an adult education activity that has begun (Schmidt, 2011, p. 203), many empirical studies have a broad understanding of the phenomenon. Definitions range from the failure to take final examinations to the short-term suspension of an offer or the general withdrawal from the education system (also called non-participation) (Hoffmann et al., 2020). The obscurity of the phenomenon is understood as the cause of large research gaps in the field and the occasionally widely divergent results of studies (Schmidt, 2011; Thomas, 1990). Chapter 2.1 presents how the phenomenon is commonly researched in adult education. Expanding on this, Chapter 2.2 focuses on the specific field of literacy and adult basic education and explains how drop-out is researched in this context. Both sections reveal how causes for drop-out are researched in the field and serve as a heuristic framework for the subsequent analysis.

1 There are a variety of terms used to describe teaching staff in the field of literacy and adult basic education. In the following, the term *trainer* is used. This refers to all persons who teach in the field in various course formats.

2 The research project is funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) as part of the National Decade for literacy and adult basic education 2016–2026 with the funding codes W1474BFO and W147AFO.

2.1 Research on Drop-Out in Adult Education

Concerning research on the causes of drop-out in adult education, different dimensions for drop-out have been identified: individual factors, institutional factors, (socio-)structural factors, and situational reasons have been named in existing studies on the phenomenon (Hoffmann et al., 2020). The beginnings of drop-out research mainly featured studies with psychological explanatory models. A relevant theory in this context is Boshier's (1973) *congruence model*, which identifies drop-out decisions where the individual needs of the participants (self-concept) do not match the institutional arrangements of the course (learning environment). Garrison (1985, 1987) adopted this model and extended it to consider psycho-social factors by considering participants' individual expectations of their courses in relation to social influences. Darkenwald and Gavin (1987) additionally focused on social factors as causes of drop-out in their empirical studies and developed the *social environment theory*, which focuses on the fit between learners and course structure. They considered trainers as relevant actors in the drop-out process and emphasised that social interactions between participants and trainers can promote or reduce retention in adult education. According to the current state of knowledge, individualised approaches to participation decisions have progressively been replaced. Cross's (1981) *chain of response model* demonstrated possible interrelationships between variables that affect participation behaviour in educational activities. By differentiating between factors that influence decisions on participation, different barriers can be identified through this model – situational barriers (e. g. lack of money, lack of time, professional and family obligations, lack of transport), institutional barriers (e. g. inconvenient class times, inappropriate entrance requirements, lack of study guidance), and dispositional barriers (e. g. self-esteem and the attitude of the adult learner). More advanced models, such as Boeren's (2017) *comprehensive lifelong learning model*, have examined participation along different levels of action in adult education. Boeren (2017) analysed the perspectives of individual learners (micro-level), educational institutions (meso-level) and regulating governments (macro-level) to examine participation behaviour by considering multiple relevant actors in this context.

The models mentioned above focus exclusively on participation in adult education. As a research perspective that explicitly examines drop-out in adult education, the *typology of non-fit in cases of drop-out from adult education* (Thalhammer et al., 2022) should be mentioned as an explanatory approach to examining drop-out. It assumes that decisions against participation in adult education cannot be traced back to individual aspects and are rather influenced by a series of situational factors. The researchers examined drop-out as a matter of suitability and developed different types of non-fit that can be related to individual – as well as institutional and structural – causes for drop-out. The basis for this model came from interview data from drop-outs in adult education. According to the findings, the reasons for drop-out can be attributed to the following seven types of non-fit: intra-individual non-fit, life context-related non-fit, inter-personal non-fit, individual-institutional non-fit, institutional-individual non-fit, intra-institutional non-fit, and inter-institutional non-fit. These types of non-fit give an overview about various reasons for drop-out. In the following analysis, they are contextualised within the specific field of basic education and used as a heuristic framework to establish a classification system for the interviews with trainers in the subsequent analysis (3).

2.2 Research on Drop-Out in Literacy and Adult Basic Education

With regard to drop-out research in the field of literacy and adult basic education, Thomas (1990) summarised that despite numerous studies, little holistic research has been conducted on the phenomenon. According to Pickard (2013), this changed in the 1990s, when there was a shift from a predominantly unidimensional view of drop-out to a multi-dimensional view. Subsequently, it has become apparent that causes, risk factors, and preventive measures of drop-out have been researched using different approaches. Empirical studies have identified individual, institutional and structural barriers to participation (Kumar, 1994; Pickard, 2013; Thomas, 1990). Socio-demographic experiences, psychological constitution, external influences from the environment, and institutional barriers, such as supply structures or the learning atmosphere in the course, were identified as relevant causes for drop-out, reflecting the multi-layered effects and complexity of the phenomenon (Kumar, 1994). This is of particular importance for the target groups of literacy and adult basic education. In this context, Prins and Schafft (2009) criticised the traditional research on drop-out as follows: "When situational factors such as inflexible work schedules or health problems are discussed, they are often treated as randomly occurring personal problems rather than social problems that disproportionately affect poor families" (Prins & Schafft, 2009, p. 4). It becomes clear that factors influencing decisions on participation are often located in the life circumstances of participants. Thus, it can be determined that low literacy has been researched less as an individual matter than as a social-structural phenomenon (Müller, 2012). Therefore, low participation in literacy and adult basic education should be seen as a complex interplay of different influences in which the structural interweaving of social circumstances and participation decisions play a particularly important role (Pickard, 2013). In her review, Pickard (2013) summarised that most participants attributed their drop-out to circumstances beyond their influence, such as their workplace, health problems or economic constraints.

However, this multi-perspective view of participation barriers in literacy and adult basic education has not always been evident. In 1994, Sparks criticised the dominance of psychological explanatory models for non-participation in basic education. These models, she argued, hide the structural inequalities, political struggles and cultural differences experienced by people of colour, women, and other marginalised groups. In her comprehensive study of non-participation in the field of literacy and adult basic education in Colorado, USA, Sparks drew attention to the significance of the experiences of oppression for non-attendance in basic education opportunities. Additionally, she criticised the prevailing discourse on non-attendance, which is limited to learning motivations and implicitly blames individuals for their low literacy. Especially for marginalised groups, reasons for drop-out should be seen along categories of difference such as race, class and/or gender (Sparks, 1994).

Further evidence in support of this is Bremer's (2004) study on the *myth of the self-learning subject* also emphasising that participation in literacy and adult basic education is often less a matter of motivation than a matter of privilege. It is important not to deny the participants of literacy and adult basic education their power to act, but the current research shows that the interweaving of different experiences of inequality can make participation difficult. Cutz and Chandler's (2000) study, which examines the non-participation of the indigenous population – especially women – in Central America, also exemplifies this phenomenon. They concluded that patriarchal structures in families can have a considerable influence on the non-participation of women in basic education programmes. They demonstrated that many women avoid literacy programmes to avoid personal threats and conflicts in relationships (Cutz & Chandler, 2000). The study showed that violence and oppression can be major barriers to women's participation. Horsman (2000) also conducted research on women's participation behaviour as it relates to experiences of violence. Her examination built on extensive research that revealed the wide range of impacts violence has on adult literacy learning. Overall, empirical studies on drop-out in literacy and adult basic education have shown that the reasons for it are multi-layered and cannot be seen as isolated decisions.

Now focusing specifically on adult education research in Germany, it has to be noted that there is very little evidence-based research examining drop-out in literacy and adult basic education although the phenomenon may be particularly topical (Hoffmann et al., 2019). With regard to the Covid-19 pandemic, empirical findings have suggested that pandemic-related living conditions have acted as a push factor for drop-out in literacy and adult basic education and reinforced risk factors for participants in the field. A study by Bickert et al. (2022) revealed that the pandemic has further amplified existing educational inequalities and that this predominantly affects the target groups of literacy and adult basic education. In view of the current state of research, this article now identifies the causes and reasons for drop-out according to the perspectives of trainers working in the field of literacy and adult basic education.

3 Methodological Approach

This article aims to identify reasons for drop-out as observed by trainers in literacy and adult basic education. As indicated above, the findings of this research are based on a qualitative interview study in the field of literacy and adult basic education. Guided interviews (Gläser & Laudel, 2010) were conducted with persons who have "expert knowledge" (Gläser & Laudel, 2010, p. 11) about the research field due to their involvement in it. Thus, 13 interviews with trainers who were teaching literacy and adult basic education courses in German *Volkshochschulen* and other educational institutions were conducted. The interviewed persons teach in formal, non-formal, and low-threshold programmes which cover the range of basic education offers in Germany. The interview guide included questions on the trainers' activities, the target groups of basic education programmes, the importance of drop-out in the field, the causes of drop-out, and preventive measures against drop-out.

The interview material was then evaluated using qualitative content analysis based on Kuckartz (2016). The category system for the interviews was established through a multi-step procedure that developed deductive and inductive categories. The intercoder reliability calculated over the entire data corpus had a satisfactory Cohens-Kappa value of 0.69 (Cohen, 1960; Krippendorff, 2004).

Aiming to identify the main causes for drop-out, the article focused on deductive categories on reasons for drop-out based on *Thalhammer et al.'s model*, as indicated above (2.1), and on inductive categories that emerged from the material (Fig. 1).

Category	Definition *(based on Thalhammer et al. 2022)*	Subcategories *(inductive emerged from the material)*	
intra-individual non-fit	The type of intra-individual non-fit indicates a non-fit within a subject in relation to enduring and temporary/situationally required forms of dealing with the world and oneself. A drop-out is given when enduring characteristics also occur in the adult education situation and lead to participation no longer being possible (e. g. psychological reasons).	• Lack of motivation • No concentration • Life circumstances • Avoidance attitude • Traumas • Expectations • Effort • Fatigue	• Health problems • Overload • No progress • Lack of learning strategies • Fear of infections • Shame/fear
life context-related non-fit	The type of life context-related non-fit refers to (varying) life circumstances that make further education irrelevant or difficult to achieve (e. g. new job, move, childcare, etc.).	• Care work • Pregnancy • (new) job • Relocation • No capacities	• No lack of motivation • Unstable living conditions • Change in living conditions
inter-personal non-fit	The type of inter-personal non-fit takes a look at interactions of persons. In adult education situations, at least two persons meet (in the course context or in other contexts) which can lead to non-fits due to different expectations (e. g. conflicts between the individual and other participants or between the individual and their partner).	• When friends leave • Demographic characteristics • Group dynamics do not fit	• Private environment • Conflicts with other participants
individual-institutional non-fit	The type of individual-institutional non-fit refers to a discrepancy between the individual and institutions, such as the educational institution itself, or other institutions. The individual's expectations, formulated demands on institutions, assessments of fit and interests do not fit from the beginning or no longer fit during the educational activity.	• Corona measures • Course content • Trainer decides • Too expensive • Expectations • Teacher leaves	• Counselling as a barrier • Change to online teaching • Framework conditions of the courses
inter-institutional non-fit	The type of inter-institutional non-fit refers to the fact that a non-fit can also occur between institutional bodies, for example between an employer who finances adult education programmes and the educational institution that offer the programmes.	• Course is dissolved • Participants are not allowed in courses • Disruptions/Failure	• Corona pandemic • Reduction of courses • Digital conversion
target achieved	The course is ended or discontinued by the participants when they feel that they have achieved the goal they set for themselves.	• Individual goal achieved • No new registration	• Continue learning independently

Figure 1: Reasons for drop-out of the perspectives of trainers in literacy and adult basic education according the *Typology of non-fit in cases of dropout from adult education* of Thalhammer et al. (2022)

During the coding process, the categories *individual-institutional non-fit* and *institutional-individual non-fit*, as well as *intra-institutional non-fit* and *inter-institutional non-fit*, were merged. Additionally, the inductive category *target achieved* was added to the codes. Furthermore, inductive subcategories were formed for each of the presented codes further differentiating the reasons for drop-out. Consequently, the analysis is based on the main- and subcategories presented in Figure 1. As the interviews and the coding were carried out in German, the quotations in the following chapters were translated into English by the author.

4 Results

The central findings of the analysis are presented as follows: First, reasons for drop-out concerning individual barriers (such as health or psychological problems) are mentioned (4.1). In addition, changed or persistent life circumstances of participants (4.2) and discrepancies between individuals and institutions (4.3) are presented as causes for drop-out.

4.1 Dealing with the World and Themselves

Reasons for drop-out can be influenced by different factors that reveal a non-fit between the individual needs of participants and course conditions. This section focuses on the causes for drop-out found within the individuals themselves. Trainers of literacy and adult basic education reported that participants in their courses are rarely used to organised learning due to their educational biographies. Therefore, participants are often frustrated when they do not achieve self-imposed learning goals which trainers frequently consider to be unrealistic. Frustration about the lack of progress in their own literacy skills and the lack of successful learning strategies are described as reasons for drop-out (I02_Pos. 70). At the same time, permanent participation is described as being "easier for people who either already have a certain level of schooling or a learning biography" (I07_Pos. 63).

From the trainers' point of view, another reason for drop-out is the lack of fixed daily structures for some participants. One interviewee explained that low-literacy adults, in particular, have "big hurdles to cope with everyday life" (I07_Pos. 62). According to this trainer, some participants must make extensive preparations to keep fixed appointments during the week. Therefore, regular attendance presents challenges for parts of the target group of literacy and adult basic education (I07_Pos. 62). Simultaneously, firmly established everyday structures of participants clashing with course time can cause drop-out. One of the trainers reported that a woman stopped participating because she prioritised other obligations such as "going out with her dog during course time" (I07_Pos. 101). The interviews thus illustrate how heterogeneous the target groups of literacy and adult basic education – and therefore their causes for drop-out – are. The interviewed trainers also explained that some participants could not continue attending the courses for psychological reasons (I01_Pos. 32). These include addiction problems

(I02_Pos. 66) or depression, as well as fears that make course participation impossible (I03_Pos. 47).

Overall, it can be said that these causes of drop-out are often closely related to the individual condition of the participants. One of the interviewed trainers summarised that "[some participants] can't integrate [the course] into their everyday life, because they just can't manage it" (I10_Pos. 103). At the same time, the interviews show that many trainers adjust to the individual needs of the participants and give them the opportunity to participate unregularly: "Whoever comes is always warmly welcomed, and there is no culture of 'You have to come regularly though.' I don't do things like that" (I10_Pos. 103).

4.2 (Changing) Life Circumstances that Make Education Difficult to Complete

In addition to the previous reasons for drop-out which are found in the individuals themselves, the article now focuses on the life circumstances of participants that make permanent participation difficult to achieve and therefore cause a drop-out. Trainers reported that participants faced changing life circumstances such as getting a new workplace or finding a job which constitute a central reason for stopping a programme (I12_Pos. 110). If the working hours of the new job clash with the course times or it is simply too exhausting to come to the course after work, participants usually prioritise their work (I09_Pos. 73). Regarding the target groups of literacy and adult basic education, this can be explained by economic constraints that force participants to earn money instead of improving their literacy skills (I13_Pos. 143, I03_Pos. 34). Often, the opportunity to find a (new) workplace is one of the main reasons why potential participants enrol in a course. They may either be obliged to do so by the job centre or expect better chances in the job application process by improving their reading and writing skills (I03_Pos. 39). In addition to a new job, trainers also mentioned that moving to another region is a common cause of drop-out (I12_Pos. 161).

The findings also show that the most common causes for course drop-out are the lack of childcare, as well as "women's circumstances" (I08_Pos. 20). In this context, trainers emphasised that participation is almost never a question of motivation but is prevented by the participants' life circumstances. Women, in particular, have to give up courses due to pregnancy or care work. One interviewee described the women in her course as follows: "They are managers. It's not an issue that they drop out because they don't like it anymore" (I08_Pos. 51). Another trainer stated the following:

> "What makes it even more difficult for many women – even middle-aged women – is their children. There are a lot of things piling up around them that have to be done or that make it difficult for them to have their own head free or to have the time to do it regularly. The will… I think the will is not so much questioned by the participants" (I07_Pos. 72,73).

It becomes clear that reasons for women's drop-out are located in their life circumstances that are characterised by care work and mental load. Sometimes, women reenter their courses after their pregnancy (I08_Pos. 27), but often, care work (including taking care of children and being responsible for housekeeping) does not decrease across these years, so it remains a central reason for drop-out (I04_Pos. 87, 88). According to trainers, care work as a cause for drop-out affects not only mothers but also grandmothers who take care of their grandchildren (I04_Pos. 73).

In this context, the private environment of participants must also be kept in mind when it comes to drop-out. Trainers reported, for instance, that spouses may forbid their partners from participating to prevent learning progress and the associated independence. One interviewee described a scene in which "women were asked by their husband to stop" (I05_Pos. 41). When the trainer confronted the man, he replied that "his wife didn't need [the course] as he could take care of everything for her" (I05_Pos. 43). According to the interview data, this particularly affects women, but in exceptional cases, parents sometimes forbade their adult children from taking part in the course. Generally, trainers reported that "in the vast majority of cases, there are many reasons for [drop-out], which mainly lie in the personal circumstances of life, [...] outside the course" (I07_Pos. 45).

4.3 Discrepancy Between Individuals and Institutions

As already indicated above, a frequent reason for drop-out is that participants' ideas about the courses may not match the course content offered (I09_Pos. 67). This can be related to unrealistic expectations regarding participants' own learning success, as well as other facets of the course, such as "structure or format" (I07_Pos. 81). The following section focuses on the reasons for drop-out that are located in the institutions or the framework conditions of the courses. One interviewee reported that "the difficulty is really to organise the lessons in such a way that everyone is equally supported" (I05_Pos. 71). Another trainer summarised that "everyone is different and some people need more time, others are quicker, and that is actually the atmosphere in our courses. That everyone is welcome" (I09_Pos. 99). This shows that trainers often try to adapt the course content to the individual needs of the participants. However, this balance can be difficult, especially with regard to difficulties of their lessons because the participants of the courses are very heterogeneous (I13_Pos. 206).

Other reasons for drop-out include conflicts within the course group or between participants and trainers (I09_Pos. 88). In terms of long-term participation, a good relationship between trainers and participants is seen as particularly important in the field of literacy and adult basic education. Relationships therefore function as course-binding elements, as well as factors for drop-out. For example, a trainer reported that participants dropped out when their trainer stopped giving lessons (I11_Pos. 156). It was also reported that no successor could be found after the trainer quit, so the institution could not continue to offer the course.

The Covid-19 pandemic also caused drop-out in the field of literacy and adult basic education. According to trainers, courses have been cancelled due to institutional restrictions or had to be switched to an online format. This has been difficult to implement for the target groups of basic education programmes. Since many participants had neither the digital equipment nor the skills for online instruction, some trainers tried to give one-on-one lessons over the phone or sent worksheets home to the participants (I07_Pos. 15, I06_Pos. 32). In addition to pandemic-related measures, institutions also had to contend with other requirements, such as a minimum number of participants for a course to take place (I07_Pos. 48). In addition to drop-out reasons located in the individual or in their life circumstances, institutionally caused drop-out becomes relevant in the field of literacy and adult basic education.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the perspectives of trainers, the article provides key reasons for drop-out in literacy and adult basic education, revealing that causes for drop-out are due to the participants themselves, their life circumstances, or the educational institutions. With regard to individual factors causing drop-out, trainers mainly described frustration and unrealistic expectations of participants' own learning progress. Addiction problems, depression, and other illnesses were also named as causes for drop-out. Trainers observed that the target groups of literacy and adult basic education often have difficulties with organised learning due to their own school and learning biographies. Consequently, the target groups of literacy and adult basic education are often described as educationally distant, which has been critically debated in current research (Mania, 2018). In the context of participation, it has been argued that it is not the participants who are educationally distant but the programmes that are far from the living environment or the needs of the participants (Bolder, 2006). For this reason, low-threshold programmes are seen as particularly valuable in basic education practice. These programmes enable participants to access learning in a way that is close to their everyday lives (Bremer & Pape, 2019).

Furthermore, the analysis of the interviews has shown that factors for drop-out can also be found in the participants' life situations. This primarily consists of a (new) workplace that clashes with course times and causes participants to drop-out. Even though the target groups of literacy and adult basic education are very heterogeneous, many of them are considered marginalised (Tröster, 2010). Trainers stated that many participants must prioritise their work due to economic constraints. Furthermore, trainers particularly observed women's life circumstances leading to drop-out. Care work and patriarchal family structures can accordingly be seen as gender-specific reasons for drop-out in literacy and adult basic education. Gender-specific causes for drop-out are often intertwined with other factors, such as economic constraints, making participation for women in basic education even more difficult.

Furthermore, the findings show that drop-out is not necessarily caused by participants or their life situation but can also be caused by institutions. For example, pandemic-related measures that terminated or interrupted courses should be mentioned here. Trainers also reported that in the field of literacy and adult basic education, it is difficult to recruit trainers, so courses may have to be terminated if no trainer can be found. Thus, not only are the target groups of literacy and adult basic education affected by marginalisation but the field of basic education is also partially precarious for their staff (Lernende Region – Netzwerk Köln e. V., 2021).

All in all, drop-out in the field of literacy and adult basic education is influenced by various factors. Through the findings of this interview study, it became clear that this phenomenon must be researched multi-dimensionally: the causes for drop-out are as heterogeneous as the target groups of the field (Grotlüschen & Riekmann, 2021).

The findings contribute to participation research in literacy and adult basic education. The interviews of trainers not only confirmed findings from the current state of research, especially with regard to basic education in Germany but also provided new insights into the research field such as institutionally induced reasons for drop-out that have so far only been marginally researched. The characterisation of causes for drop-out in the field provide information about factors which prevent permanent participation. These can be used to derive measures to prevent drop-out. A central question that remains might be how to counteract drop-out in practice when the needs of participants vary so greatly within a course.

The findings of this study can be linked to debates on structural educational inequalities in adult education (Erler, 2013). With regard to the gender-specific factors for drop-out indicated above, it is very important to determine how permanent participation can be enabled for women in literacy and adult basic education programmes. To this end, the perspectives of other actors in the field should also be taken into account (e. g. those of participants themselves) who may identify further risk factors and reasons for drop-out.

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Participation in Non-formal Adult Education in the Czech Republic from 1997 to 2020

Jan Kalenda

Abstract

Non-formal adult education (NFE) encompasses a broad spectrum of organised learning activities for adults outside the formal educational system, including on-the-job training, workshops as well as individual lessons. Both governments and international organisations have regularly highlighted the importance of high participation rates in NFE as a precondition for the successful establishment of a lifelong learning society. Despite this claim, countries around the world vary a great deal in terms of overall participation of their population, social groups involved, and factors that influence access to NFE. This paper focuses on the long-term participation in NFE in the Czech Republic by investigating the development of adult participation in NFE between 1997 to 2020. We aim to present (1) the main long-term trends in participation in NFE, (2) changes in the critical socio-demographical factors that have influenced the involvement of adults in NFE. For this purpose, we analyse data from international surveys (IALS, PIAAC and AES) as well as from the CZ-ALE, a national survey focused on adult education and learning. Our analysis has found that although participation in NFE significantly increased between 1997 and 2016, it sharply decreased in 2020. In addition, while participation inequality between lower and higher educated adults declined from 2011 to 2020, inequality based on economic activity increased during the same period. Finally, occupational class position has played an important role in the likelihood of participation in NFE, but the influence of this factor has not been as significant as that of employment status.

Keywords: non-formal education; participation; the Czech Republic; social change; educational inequality

1 Introduction

The measurement and analysis of participation in non-formal adult education (NFE) is crucial to understand contemporary trends and thus to make informed decisions relating to lifelong learning policy and strategies with the goal of securing the involvement of more adults in NFE.

As understood in current literature (Boeren, 2016; Cabus et al., 2020; Desjardins et al., 2006; Van Nieuwenhove & De Wever, 2021), manuals, and reports of international organisations (EC CLA, 2016; UNESCO, 2019, 2020), NFE can be defined as a wide range of organised learning activities for adults conducted outside the formal educational system. These activities include on-the-job training, workshops, individual lessons as well as other forms of planned and intentional training. Although NFE is not always officially certified, many programs are in fact sanctioned by governmental and other agencies (Singh, 2015). NFE can be divided into two main domains: (1) non-formal vocational education related to the 'formation of human capital' (Hanusek, 2016) for a particular job market; this comprises learning activities targeting the upskilling and reskilling of the workforce, and (2) a form usually termed 'popular education' (Crowther et al., 2005) or 'adult liberal education' (Desjardins, 2020, pp. 15–16). In contrast to type 1 above, type 2 usually includes leisure-oriented learning activities which take place outside of the work environment, i. e. interlinked more with participation in civil society than specifically in the labour market.

We know from scholarly literature that participation in NFE represents the vast majority of participation in adult education and learning (Desjardins, 2017, 2020) and it also brings many benefits to individuals, companies, economies, even civil society (Albert et al., 2010; Schuller & Desjardins, 2010). There is much evidence that adults who have undergone some form of non-formal education and training have improved their employability (Campbell, 2012; Laal & Salamati, 2012; OECD, 2019), including the possibility of transitioning from one segment of the labour market to another as well as increasing their earnings and the likelihood of being promoted within an organization (Jenkins, 2006, 2021). Moreover, several studies have highlighted the finding that adults can benefit from participation in NFE in areas of life unconnected to the workplace. For example, participants regularly show higher levels of civic engagement (Manninen, & Meriläinen, 2014; Iñiguez-Berrozpe et al., 2020) and report better overall quality of life (Field, 2012; Sabates & Hammond, 2008).

Based on that, the main objective of this paper is to explore long term trends in participation in NFE in the Czech Republic.

2 Theoretical Background

In this study, we draw on a 20-year tradition of research focused on participation in adult learning and education, particularly in NFE (e. g. Boeren, 2016; Desjardins, 2017; Desjardins & Ioannidou, 2020; Desjardins et al., 2006; Jenkins, 2021; Rubenson, 2018). According to Desjardins (2011, p. 205), this research niche is oriented toward three fundamental questions: (1) What is the extent of participation? (2) Who is participating? (3) Why are certain people or groups participating either more or less, or not at all?

In attempting to answer these questions, several theories and related typologies of national adult education systems have been developed. These conceptions are part of the overreaching framework of the so-called political economy of adult education systems (Desjardins, 2017, 2020; Desjardins & Ioannidou, 2020) which deals with the issues of political and institutional coordination and support of adult education.

Current theories conceptualize participation levels and patterns through a bounded agency model (Rubenson & Desjardins, 2009). According to this conception, involvement in organized adult learning is considered both a result of the decision-making of various social actors, their perception of the utility and value of further education and the institutional features of countries where those actors live. In this regard, particular theories differ in their focus on various clusters of institutions that enhance or block adults from participating in NFE. All of them work with the idea that the adult education systems are deeply rooted in the intersection of various economic, welfare and education institutions (Desjardins, 2022), whereas they usually highlight the central role of one of these institutional clusters.

Welfare regime oriented conceptions (Rubenson & Desjardins, 2009) of participation in adult learning have highlighted the role of supportive welfare state measures and effective active labour policy for increasing the number of adults involved in NFE, as well as lowering inequality in participation. For example, social democratic welfare states, like those in Scandinavia, have implemented more policy measures for adult education support. In contrast, liberal democratic welfare state regimes (e. g. UK, USA) have been less active in this regard. Therefore, adults living in them have faced more obstacles to participation and have had less publicly supported opportunities for organized learning and training.

Another influential conception is the *Varieties of Capitalism* approach (Hall & Soskice, 2001), which stresses the characteristics of the production system labour relationships in a particular country. In this context, the two main types of capitalism are distinguished. First, it is Liberal market economies that are typical of lower investment in workforce development and training, weak employee protection and a dominant focus on the initial level of education. Second, Coordinated market economies that, contrary to the previous type, employ more investment into the development of the workforce, introduce more measures for the protection of employees in the labour market and put less attention to initial formal education. For this reason, the Coordinated market economies create better preconditions for participation in NFE and adult skill formation in the later phases of life (Busemeyer & Trampusch, 2012; Busemeyer, 2015; Estevez-Abe et al., 2001).

The last frequently mentioned institutional features are characteristics of the *formal educational system*. This is because adult education systems are usually deeply interrelated with systems of initial formal education. In this context, many authors (Green et al., 2015; Gross et al., 2016; Lee, 2017; Saar & Ure, 2013) have followed the seminal work of Allmendinger (1989), who distinguished two primary dimensions of formal education system with important implications for participation in NFE. On the one hand, it is the level of standardization of the education system, while on the other hand, it is its stratification. If the standardization in the form of unification of learning outcomes is high, the participation level in NFE is also usually low (Saar & Ure, 2013). The main focus is put on formal education instead of non-standardized NFE (Kilpi-Jakonen et al., 2015). The second factor, the level of stratification, indicates how various parts of secondary education are separated, usually general education and vocational-oriented learning (Green et al., 2015; Gross et al., 2016). In countries with a low level of stratification, vocational-oriented education and training are to be carried out later after an initial phase of general education, and therefore they form a structural precondition for a higher volume of further NFE in the workplace (Saar & Ure, 2013; Kilpi-Jakonen et al., 2015). Conversely, a higher level of stratification in initial education predisposes to a lower interest of adults in employment-oriented NFE.

Empirical research based on these theoretical traditions has identified two main trends typical for NFE around the world that could also have particular relevance for the empirical characteristics and the development of NFE in the Czech Republic:

1. *Participation levels* (i. e. extent of participation): Following an overall increase in NFE participation among adults since the 1990s, especially in job-related education and training (Desjardins, 2020; Desjardins & Ioannidou, 2020; Rubenson, 2018) a sharp decline has been reported during the COVID-19 pandemic (Paciorek et al., 2021).
2. *Pattern of participation* (i. e. groups of participants and factors influencing participation): Inequality in participation in NFE among various social groups based on their economic activity, highest attained education, and occupational class position has persisted (Cabus et al., 2020; Hovdhaugen, & Opheim, 2018; Van Nieuwenhove & De Wever, 2021) or has even been exacerbated (Kalenda & Kočvarová, 2020), especially during the COVID-19 pandemic (Waller et al., 2020; James & Thériault, 2020). Generally, lower educated adults, people outside of the job-market, and individuals in the lower social classes have less economic resources available for learning. These adults also usually work in positions with lower educational requirements and/or opportunity for additional education and training than is the case for employed adults with higher education and a higher occupational class position.

3 Research Questions

To understand long-term trends in NFE participation in the Czech Republic, these trends must first be investigated within the national context, with these results then compared with other regional and global contexts. To begin to achieve the first part of this rather broad goal, the main objective of this paper is to systematise empirical findings regarding long-term participation in NFE in the Czech Republic since 1997. For this purpose, we have formulated two interconnected secondary aims:

1. key long-term trends in the overall participation rates in NFE between 1997 to 2020 will be analysed, with this work building on available secondary and primary data sources;
2. the influence of three mentioned socio-demographic variables on the participation in NFE among Czech adults (25 to 64 years) will be analysed through the same time period. In this context, we will explore the effect of (a) attained education, (b) economic activity, and (c) occupational class position (EGP7 scheme) on the involvement in NFE.

Such an analysis will help us to show not only the long-term development of NFE participation among the Czech adult population, but also investigate factors that are responsible for inequality in access to organised lifelong learning as well as to show who have been the main participants and non-participants of NFE in the Czech Republic over time.

In this context, we want to explore not only the role of traditional sociodemographic variables used for the analysis of participation in NFE (education and economic activity) but also introduce a new one – occupational class position using the EGP7 scheme (Erikson & Goldthorpe, 1993; Goldthorpe, 2000). Although the role of social class on involvement in lifelong learning has been discussed (Desjardins, 2011; Desjardins et al., 2006; Rubenson, 2018), it has not been explored by any exact categorization used frequently in sociology. One of these is the EGP7 scheme distinguishing seven different occupational classes that can serve as a tool for understanding class differences in participation in NFE and enable their comparison with other class-based pattern of behaviour.

In terms of long-term development of NFE, we view this type of analysis as essential, as the main body of literature investigating participation in adult learning and education has worked only with the data from one single international survey (e. g. Cabus et al., 2020; Desjardins & Ioannidou, 2020; Desjardins, 2021; Desjardins et al., 2006; Hovdhaugen, & Opheim, 2018; Van Nieuwenhove & De Wever, 2021), has compared two surveys (Desjardins, 2020; Rubenson, 2018; Kalenda & Kočvarová, 2020), or, much less often, has employed panel research data collection (Blossfeld et al., 2011; White, 2012). The original contribution of this paper lies in the utilization of all available data sources regarding NFE from 1997 to 2020, a total of six surveys.

4 The Case of the Czech Republic's Adult Education System

In light of the previously discussed aspects of adult education systems influencing participation in NFE, we have to briefly describe this system's key institutional features in the Czech Republic. From this point of view, the Czech case represents a "hybrid mix" of previously discussed characteristics. We can position it somewhere between liberal and social-democratic welfare regimes (Cerami & Vanhuysee, 2009; Vanhuysee, 2006) with weak support of active labour policy measures (Kalenda, 2015). Due to this, public support for NFE has been historically meagre here (Kopecký & Šerák, 2015). Although its market regime has undergone significant liberalization since the 1990s, employee protective measures have remained high compared to many western European states. Generally, the local skill-formation regime has not a high requirement for adults skills (Nolke & Vligenthart, 2009; Saar & Rais, 2017). The main focus of the skill formation has been on the general education of youth (Hamplová & Simonová, 2014) who have often considered themselves overqualified for their job (Koucký et al., 2014). Furthermore, at least two other essential features have specified the local economy. At first, it has one of the highest proportions of workers employed in the industrial sector among European nations (OECD, 2021) working as qualified and unqualified manufacturing workers. Second, it has been a typical high demand for the workforce, accompanied by a shallow level of unemployment (Kalenda et al., 2022). Last but not least, a high level of standardisation and low level of stratification between general and vocational education has characterised its formal education system. Moreover, this system's primary orientation has been toward developing a good level of basic skills during secondary education (Scott, 2007). The combination of these characteristics has made the Czech republic an ambiguous type of adult education system with many structural properties that should counteract the high participation rate in NFE and favour a high level of inequality in participation based on the highest attained education and social class position.

5 Methodology

This study draws on secondary and primary quantitative data analyses from several international and one national survey regarding lifelong learning conducted in the Czech Republic since the 1990s. One of the advantages of this approach is that it enables us to cover a relatively long time period (1997 to 2020), and to apply analyses that focus both on the rate of involvement of different groups of adults in NFE as well as the sociodemographic factors influencing participation.

Participation measurement and variables

In line with the operationalisation used in the international tools *Adult Education Survey* (AES) and *Survey of Adult Skills* under *The Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies* (PIAAC), participation in NFE is understood as the involvement of adults (aged 25 to 64 years) in any non-formal education activity in the 12 months prior to the survey administration.

However, there are other ways to analyse the participation issue. The involvement of adults in NFE can be measured by a shorter time duration frame or by the number of hours spent in organised training activities. The first mentioned approach is used by EU *Labour Force Survey* (LFS), which maps participation rates in both formal and non-formal education and training in the preceding four weeks before the survey among adults aged 25 to 64 years.

Although according to Boeren (2016), statistics from the LFS can provide a good source of general trends related to participation in NFE through Europe, these data cannot be directly used for the analysis of some crucial sociodemographic variables that we planned to utilise in our study, mainly EGP7 scheme. Data from the LFS also cover a shorter time frame in comparison to other international surveys measuring participation in NFE and has started to be used only since 2004 for the Czech Republic. Therefore, their utilisation would significantly shorten an analysed period and exclude data from the late 1990s.

Another approach to measuring participation is based on the total time dedicated to organized learning activities. The mean number of training hours per participant or adult during one year is measured (OECD, 2000). This time dimension is crucial because adult education systems could significantly differ not only in the number of persons involved in NFE but also in the time dedicated to learning activities (Desjardins et al., 2006). For this reason, we also explore the average number of hours spent by adults aged 25 to 64 years in any NFE activity in the 12 months prior to the survey administration. For the analysis of socio-demographic factors, three sets of independent variables were selected:

1. *Attained education*, which includes three subcategories according to the international classification ISCED (2011): (a) adults with primary and lower secondary education (ISCED 0–2), (b) adults with upper secondary and pre-tertiary education (ISCED 3–4); (c) adults with tertiary education (ISCED 5–6). All data were coded based on the ISCED (2011) classification.
2. *Economic activity*, defined by the labour status of a person in four categories: (a) employed, (b) unemployed, (c) retired, or (d) on maternity leave. The last three categories represent groups of economically non-active adults aged 25 to 64 years with the highest occurrence in the Czech Republic, who have also been considered as typical non-participants of NFE (Boeren, 2016; Desjardins, 2020). Other economic categories, like students in formal education, were excluded from our analysis.
3. *Occupational class position* according to the EGP7 occupational class scheme (Erikson & Goldthorpe, 1993; Goldthorpe, 2000) that groups adults into social classes according to their occupational position and, by extension, as perceived in society. The conception contains seven categories: (a) higher service class, (b) lower service class, (c) routine non-manual workers, (d) self-employed; (e) technicians and supervisors, (f) skilled manual workers, (g) unskilled manual workers.

Data and analysis

Our analysis is based on the data from the following international surveys: (1) the *International Adult Literacy Survey* (IALS, 1997) conducted in the Czech Republic in 1997 ($n = 5.643$); (2) data from three waves of AES for 2007 ($n = 6.840$), 2011 ($n = 10.190$), and 2016 ($n = 12.272$) realised by Eurostat (AES, 2007, 2011, 2016); and (3) OECD's *Survey of Adult Skills* (PIAAC, 2012) conducted in the Czech Republic in 2012 (n = 6.102). In most cases, the data were collected by Czech Office for National Statistics, which has facilitated their use for research purposes. Although these data samples contain data from younger (18 to 64 years) as well as older (65 to 69 years) adults, we worked only with the data for our target population of adults of 24 to 64 years of age. These data were also used for measuring the overall level of participation in NFE as well as in our analysis of the influence of attained education and economic activity on the involvement of adults in non-formal learning activities. In our measurement of the influence of class membership, reduced data samples that contained only working adults were used.

In addition, we also utilised data from a national representative survey focused on lifelong learning conducted by The Research Centre of the Faculty of Humanities, Tomas Baťa University in Zlín in 2020 (CZ-ALE, 2020). This survey was carried out between the first and second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Czech Republic and was collected through Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) by a professional data collection company ($n = 1.564$, aged 25 to 64 years). These data have helped us to extend the time horizon of our analysis by investigating losses in the volume of NFE during the first phase of the pandemic.

Utilised data do not represent longitudinal panel dataset with the same methodology and exact same wording of questions. In line with current methodological critique (Boeren, 2016; Widany et al., 2019) in the field, this represents the central limit of the following analysis. Although participation in NFE has been measured in all these surveys, they slightly differ in their definition of NFE and formulation of items in the questionnaire. For example, the IALS survey excluded those who obtained less than 6 hours of training among all participants. Moreover, AES 2007 and AES 2011/2016 differ in an important note regarding the item measuring participation in NFE. While in 2011/2016 this item also states that short mandatory occupational safety and health training in the workplace should not be considered participation, the item from 2007 questionnaire missed this information. This could lead to a minor overestimation of participants in 2007. The slightest differences we could find between the AES 2011/2016 and CZ-ALE 2020 survey, which used the exact wording and operationalization of all measured items.

In summary, our analysis is based on the same defined category of adult education (NFE) and participation horizon (12 months before the survey), which are comparably stable. Based on that, utilised data collectively represent a good source of information for understanding long-term trends concerning patterns of participation in NFE.

All analytical procedures were realised using IBM SPSS 27.0. Two levels of analysis were employed: (1) descriptive statistics with a focus on long-term trends in NFE participation which also explores the involvement of various social groups based on their socio-demographic characteristics, and (2) an analysis of socio-demographic variables influencing involvement in NFE. Data regarding influence was captured by a regression analysis and determination of odds ratios through binary logistic regression using the Enter Method with control of crucial sociodemographic variables. Enter Method was carried out for each individual data sample and then compared, with the odds ratios representing the relative likelihood of participation occurring for a particular social group compared to a reference group (e. g. higher educated as compared to lower educated adults, see Table 4). An odds ratio of 1.0 represents equal chances of involvement in NFE for a particular group as compared to the reference group. Coefficients with a value below 1 indicate a lower probability of participation in NFE for a particular group compared to the reference group, with coefficients greater than 1 representing increased likelihood (Menard, 2002). The level of statistical significance was based on a p-value of 0.05.

6 Results

Trends in overall participation in NFE

Since the initial measurement of adult involvement in NFE in the 1990s, the Czech Republic has ranked among the countries with a below-average participation rate (Desjardins et al., 2006; IALS, 1997). This situation is similar in other Central and South European countries that introduced adult learning systems during the late 1980s and early 1990s. It was determined that only after 2007 the Czech Republic had finally 'caught up' (Green, 2006) with Western European and Scandinavian countries, which had been early adopters of national-scale lifelong learning (Saar et al., 2013). The table below (Tab. 1) confirms this catching up since the 1990s and contextualises the participation trends in the Czech Republic among other European countries already involved in the IALS survey in 1994–1998.

Table 1: Trends in participation in NFE in selected European countries: 1994/1997 to 2016

Country	1994–1998*	2007	2016
Czech Republic	27	35	45
EU (28 countries)	N.A.	32	43
Portugal	24	40	44
Finland	57	51	48
Sweden	53	69	57
UK	44	24	48
Slovenia	31	36	43

Note: Data in percent. *Data were collected in those countries in period of 1994 to 1998. Participation measured as involvement of adults (25 to 64 years) in any non-formal adult education in the 12 months prior to survey. Data for IALS excluded adults who obtained less than 6 hours of training. Data in percent. *Source:* IALS (1997), AES (2007, 2016), OECD (2000).

Fig. 1 then shows the long-term development of the overall participation rate in NFE between 1997 to 2020 in the Czech Republic. Two clear trends can be seen, the first of which is an overall increase in participation rates from 27 % of adults for 1997 to 45 % for 2016, i. e. an annual growth of almost 1 percent (see also Tab. 2). Nevertheless, this growth was followed by a sharp decline for 2020 when the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic decreased the level of participation back to numbers comparable with the late 1990s.

Similar to the first trend, a second tendency in the growth of job-related NFE can be noted, one which includes a majority of organised education and training for adults in the Czech Republic: the data show a slightly lower degree of growth in non-job-related learning. This segment of NFE grew only by five per cent point over the two decades after 1997.

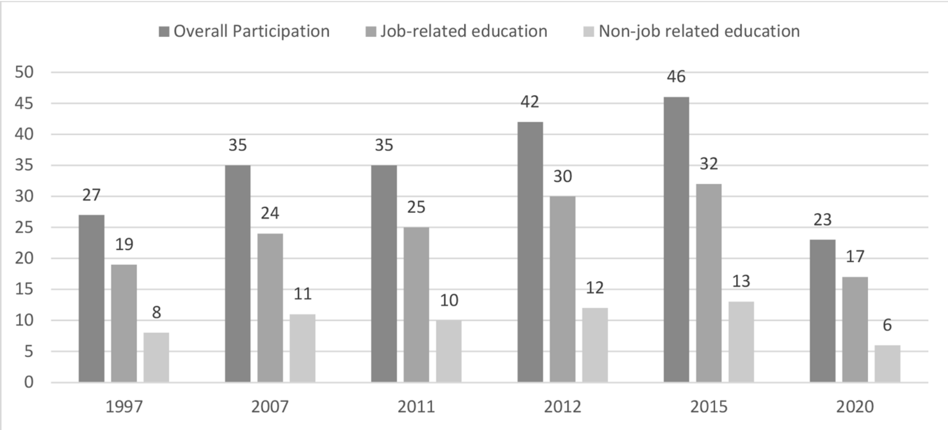

Figure 1: Trends in overall participation in NFE in the Czech Republic between 1997 to 2020

Note: Participation measured as involvement of adults (25 to 64 years) in any non-formal adult education in the 12 months prior to survey. Data in percent. *Source:* IALS (1997), AES (2007, 2011, 2016), PIAAC (2012), CZ-ALE (2020).

Nevertheless, we have to note that although this increase does not represent high absolute growth, it actually shows almost the same relative increase as participation in job-related NFE (a 65 % increase in non-job-related education versus a 67 % increase in job-related education between 1997 to 2016). In summary, these data document the overall expansion of number of adults involved in NFE until the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, with a similar proportion of participation in job-related and non-job-related training activities.

However, data for the second indicator of participation in NFE tell a different story. The mean number of NFE training hours per participant has declined since 1997 (see Table 2.). It went down from 117 to 35 hours in 2016, while then it slightly increased in 2020 to 41 hours. These levels are generally much lower than the EU average. Actually, the participation of Czech adults based on the number of hours was one of the lowest in Europe in 2016. Concerning this trend, we can conclude that although the number of adults during the monitored period significantly increased till the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of training hours per participant significantly decreased.

Table 2: Trends in hours of participation in NFE in the Czech Republic between 1997 to 2020

Area	1997	2007	2011	2016	2020
EU (28 countries)	N.A	73	81	78	N.A.
Czech Republic	117	55	52	35	41

Note: Data in average number of training hours per participant of NFE. Participation measured as involvement of adults (25 to 64 years) in any non-formal adult education in the 12 months prior to survey. Data for IALS excluded adults who obtained less than 6 hours of training. *Source:* IALS (1997), AES (2007, 2011, 2016), CZ.ALE (2020).

Trends in participation of main social groups in NFE

Typical significant differences have been shown regarding access of adults to NFE in the Czech Republic among the involvement of various social groups based on their socio-economic characteristics: (1) highest attained education, (2) economic activity, and (3) class position. These three variables have been shown to affect the vast majority of inequality in access to NFE.

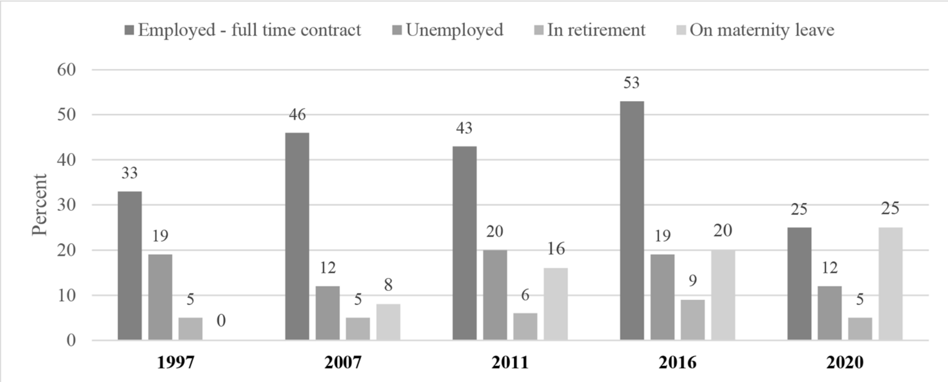

Figure 2: Trends in participation in NFE based on economic activity: 1997 to 2020

Note: Participation measured as involvement of adults (25 to 64 years) in any non-formal adult education in the 12 months prior to survey. Data in percent. *Source:* IALS (1997), AES (2007, 2011, 2016), CZ-ALE (2020).

Fig. 2 provides an overview of trends in the participation in NFE based on the economic activity of adults since 1997. As expected, employed report the highest participation rate. In addition, their involvement in NFE increased significantly from 33 % for 1997 to 53 % for 2016. Other groups of adults – the unemployed, the retired, and individuals on maternity leave – participated much less. Especially retired adults showed a meagre participation rate, as only 5 to 9 % of this population took part in any organised learning activity during the period mapped.

Table 3: Trends in participation in NFE according to education and class membership: 1997 to 2020

		1997	2007	2011	2016	2020	Growth 1997–2016[1]	Annual. change 1997–2016[2]	Decline 2016–2020[3]
All adults	Overall participation	27	35	35	45	23	18	0,9	–22
Highest attained education	ISCED 0–2	11	14	12	17	11	6	0,3	–6
	ISCED 3–4	36	34	34	40	30	4	0,2	–10
	ISCED 5–6	47	48	49	53	44	6	0,3	–9

(Continuing table 3)

		1997	2007	2011	2016	2020	Growth 1997–2016[1]	Annual. change 1997–2016[2]	Decline 2016–2020[3]
EGP7 Class Scheme	Higher service class (I.)	45	60	60	63	41	18	0,9	–22
	Lower service class (II.)	47	62	64	70	48	23	1,2	–22
	Routine non-manual work (III.)	23	53	53	60	15	37	1,9	–45
	Petty bourgeoisie (IV.)	27	27	28	39	15	12	0,6	–24
	Technicians and supervisors (V.)	42	59	57	65	38	23	1,2	–27
	Skilled manual workers (VI.)	29	48	39	52	32	23	1,2	–20
	Unskilled manual workers (VII.)	18	19	14	23	15	5	0,3	–8

Note: Participation measured as involvement of adults (25 to 64 years) in any non-formal adult education in the 12 months prior to the survey. Data in percent if not stated otherwise. ISCED = International Standard Classification of Education. EGP7 = European Group Profession 7 class scheme.[1] Growth in percentage points during the period 1997 to 2016.[2] Annualised percent change in participation during the period 1997 to 2016.[3] Decline in participation in percentage points during the period 2016 to 2020. *Source:* IALS (1997), AES (2007, 2011, 2016), CZ-ALE (2020).

In contrast to the long-term trends in overall participation captured in Fig. 1, the results regarding trends in the involvement of various social groups in NFE according to their economic activity were not unequivocal. The involvement of the unemployed in NFE varied between 12 to 20 %, without any dramatic rise since the 1990s. Similarly steady figures were also typical for retired adults. In contrast, what is striking is the involvement of adults on parental leave. While in 1997, less than 1 % of adults from this group participated in NFE, in 2020, despite the restrictions and measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic, every fourth person from this social group was shown to participate.

Tab. 3 covers the main changes in participation based on two key characteristics of adults: the highest attained education of the respondents based on ISCED classification; and class position based on the EGP7 occupational class scheme (Erikson & Goldthorpe, 1993; Goldthorpe, 2000).

Regarding attained education level, the table shows sharp differences in participation in NFE. Adults with short-cycle tertiary education or a university degree (ISCED 5–6) participated in NFE much more frequently than adults with only primary or lower secondary education (ISCED 0–2). Higher educated adults with ISCED 5–6 were involved three or four times more than the adults with the lowest formal qualification.

Further, adults with upper secondary or pre-tertiary education (ISCED 3–4) usually participated in NFE 10 to 15 percent less frequently than did individuals with higher education diplomas. Moreover, these differences were constant throughout the analysed period. While participation slightly increased in all other categories from 1997 to 2016, differences among education groups remained approximately the same. This finding also corresponds to data for 2020; i. e. although a sharp decline occurred in the volume of participation, the proportion among groups remained similar. These trends confirm data for the annual change in participation between 1997 and 2016 (see Tab. 1) that report annual growth of between 0.2 and 0.3 percent for all three educational categories.

Similar differences can also be found in adult involvement in NFE based on occupational class position. From this perspective, it is worth mentioning that members of the lowest service class had the highest level of participation in NFE, taking part even more than individuals from the higher service classes according to the EGP7 scheme. Furthermore, numerous technicians and supervisors were frequently involved in organised learning activities themselves during the monitored period, with almost two thirds participating in at least one NFE activity per year after 2016. At the opposite pole of the participation continuum are situated the unskilled manual workers and adults from the self-employed workers who had the lowest participation level in NFE. The highest growth rate in the period 1997 to 2016 was reported for routine non-manual workers (1.9 % annual change), followed by the lower service class, technicians and supervisors, and, surprisingly, skilled manual workers (1.2 % annual growth).

In contrast to the category of attained education, trends in participation in NFE according to occupational class were uneven. Though also in this case the main trends reflected the overall growing trend in participation levels from 1997 to 2016 with a sharp fall in 2020, some social classes recorded a long period of stagnation till 2016, while others showed a higher level of growth in the early part of the analysed period. For instance, adults from the higher service class increased their participation only from 1997 to 2007, after which they remained at almost the same level until 2016. On the contrary, unskilled manual workers and self-employed did not increase their involvement in non-formal organised learning prior to 2016. Last but not least, the skilled manual workers showed the most uneven evolution of participation in NFE, as their participation sharply increased twice (in 2007 and 2016) as well as decreased twice (in 2011 and 2020).

In comparison to the classes with uneven growth, we have identified a long-term steady increase in NFE participation among adults from the lower service class, technicians and supervisors, and routine non-manual workers, a group which almost tripled their initial level of participation in 2016.

Table 4: Trends in chances of participation in NFE in the Czech Republic based on education, economic activity and class membership: 1997 to 2020

		OR (CI 95 %)				
		1997	2007	2011	2016	2020
Highest attained education	ISCED 0–2 (ref.)	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
	ISCED 3–4	1.6*	3.4	2.3*	2.1*	2.2*
	ISCED 5–6	1.7*	6.3*	3.7*	2.9*	2.6*
Economic activity	Unemployed (ref.)	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
	Employed – full time contract	1.0	2.8*	3.0*	6.1*	5.9*
	In retirement	0.3*	0.4	0.3	0.2*	0.3
	On maternity leave	0.0	0.8	0.6	0.8*	0.5
EGP7 Class Scheme	Unskilled manual workers (ref.)	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
	Higher service class	2.3	2.2*	2.1	2.0*	2.5*
	Lower service class	2.1*	2.3*	2.1	2.2	1.5*
	Routine non-manual work	1.3*	1.8	1.9	2.1	1.3*
	Self-employed	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.1
	Technicians and supervisors	2.0	2.5*	2.0	2.1*	2.0
	Skilled manual workers	1.4*	1.7*	1.5	1.9*	1.5

Note: Ref. Reference category. *P*-value significant on the level < 0.05 **P*-value < 0.001. OR – odds ratio, CI – confidence interval. *Source:* IALS (1997), AES (2007, 2011, 2016), CZ-ALE (2020).

Crucial factors influencing participation in NFE

Tab. 4, which covers the period from 1997 to 2020, shows the main patterns of unequal chances of participation in NFE. The data represent the results of binary logistic regression analysis with control of other socioeconomic variables using the Enter method, which was carried out for each data sample and then compared with the odds ratios representing the relative likelihood of participation (for details, see methodology above). Dependent variables, in this case, represent the highest attained education (ref. cat. ISCED 0–2), economic activity (ref. cat. unemployed), and class category (ref. cat. unskilled manual workers).

In the table we can see that education played a crucial role in participation in NFE in the Czech Republic, as individuals with the highest level of education (ISCED 5–6) had far higher probabilities of participating in NFE than did adults with primary or lower secondary education (ISCED 0–2). Interestingly, the likelihood of participation for the ISCED 5–6 population dynamically increased from 1997 to 2007 – from a 1.7 odds ratio to 6.3. Nevertheless, after this period educational inequality in participation started to fall, significantly decreasing during the period between 2010 and 2016. This is especially typical for differences in chances between higher educated individuals and adults with upper secondary education (ISCED 3–4), which began to equalise.

Tab. 4 also shows differences in chances of participation according to the economic activity of the adults, with chances beginning to expand after 2007. Soon after, the chances of employed adults for participation in NFE also increased. In this context, the rate jumped from a three-fold advantage over other socio-economic groups between 2007 and 2011 (2.8 to 3.0 odds ratio) to a six-fold advantage in 2016 and 2020 (6.1 to 5.9 odds ratio). While the inequality in participation in NFE based on attained education tended to decline, the inequality related to socio-economic activity increased.

Regarding the occupational class position of adults, the highest long-term odds of participating in organized adult learning were shown by members of the lower and the higher service class, accompanied by adults working as technicians and supervisors. These social groups had a two-fold greater chance to enter NFE than unskilled manual workers. In contrast to the influence of education and economic activity, data for the influence of occupational class position do not indicate any strong global trend in odds ratios, with one exception, i. e. a slow improvement of likelihood among routine non-manual workers between 1997 and 2016, as this class slowly decreased its participation gap as compared to other classes.

7 Discussion

As elsewhere, in the Czech Republic there is a notable absence of long-term oriented reports focused on participation in NFE at the national level. More research and analysis would foster a deeper understanding of the trends in organized non-formal learning for adults which could inform adult education policy and practice. To this end, the first aim of this study was to capture long-term trends in the overall participation rates in NFE in the Czech Republic from 1997 to 2020. Our findings reveal that despite the overall sharp upward trend in participation of number of adults from 1997 to 2016, in 2020 their involvement declined to levels comparable with those of the beginning of the analysed period.

With regard to this trend, participation in the Czech Republic paralleled global development during the 1990s and 2000s (Desjardins, 2020; Desjardins & Ioannidou, 2020; Rubenson, 2018) as well as the global decline after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic (Paciorek et al., 2021). Moreover, most of the previous growth had been caused by an increase in job-related training activities, which encompassed the vast majority of NFE during the last two decades.

We are currently entering a period during which we will have to wait and see whether a recovery in adult education and training will occur to get the Czech Republic back on track with its previous sharp growth. According to several authors (Hawley, et al. 2020; Webb at al., 2022) and international reports (OECD, 2021; UNESCO, 2022), this scenario is highly probable, since both economic challenges and problems related to social and environmental sustainability will require a wide scope of organised learning for adults. On the other hand, global geopolitical and economic developmental issues connected with the recent war in Ukraine, inflation, as well as energy issues related to a lack of gas and rising electricity prices could lead to the reduction of educational expenditures by individuals, employers, nations and the European Union. As a result of any or all these factors, the resurgence of NFE participation could come slowly or it could even stagnate at the 2020 level.

Our position is that national adult education policy must focus on promoting NFE in the upcoming years if the downward trend is to be reversed or at least stabilised. To this end, governmental policy should support not only formal adult education and NFE programs based in universities (MEYS, 2021), but also introduce measures that will restore and maintain job-related education among employers. Popular adult education, which has been relatively weak in the Czech Republic in comparison to Scandinavian and Western European countries, must also be buttressed.

What is interesting in the case of the Czech adult learning system is the long-term decline in the number of training hours per participant of NFE, accompanied by the rise of persons participation between 1997 to 2016. Data reveals that although the number of participants is comparable with other European states after 2007, time spent by organised learning is among the lowest. The possible explanation for this result is based on the high level of basic skills among Czech adults (Straková & Veselý, 2013) and low demands for intensive job-oriented training in the labour market (Nolke & Vligenthart, 2009; Saar & Rais, 2017). These structural preconditions of the Czech adult education system have led to the situation where many adults and employers providing them with job-related training have been able to cope with the obsolescence of skills through short-duration training. If we add low unemployment rates and very high demand for the workforce to this equation, it helps us understand why neither employees nor employers have strategically invested in more intensive, long-duration training. In this case, the enhancement of skills by organised learning activities does not represent a tool for improving the employability of adults. At the same time, for employers, who have faced high demands for utilising a disposable workforce and need every worker, NFE cannot fulfil their needs. For this reason, they have been unwilling to support long-duration training.

Our secondary aim in the present research study was focused on differences in participation among various social groups along with the role of key socio-demographic factors influencing the involvement of adults in NFE. In this context, it is worth mentioning that the results based on participation factors highest attained education, economic activity and occupational class position did not converge between 1997 to 2020, nor during the period of the first and most extensive expansion of participation in NFE from 1997 to 2016. In other words, the overall growth was not accompanied by an overall democratization in access to NFE. Instead, the results indicate that differences among the analysed groups have increased along with the general inequality of access. This trend is probably an outcome of long term weak support of NFE oriented on those who are outside of the labour market, or have low-level of attained education. A current adult education policy that focuses on formal higher education and support of job-oriented training realised by employers could not meet this demand.

In particular, the influence of economic activity on participation has significantly risen compared to the role of attained education. While education was more important for access to non-formal-educational opportunities in the period 1997 to 2011, i. e. prior to the main expansion of the Czech higher education system, since 2016 economic activity has overtaken the primary role. We assume that the dramatic growth of the number of graduates with university diplomas (ISCED 5–6) in the period of 2004 to 2012 (Koucký et al., 2014) shows a lowering of exclusivity of higher education among the Czech adult population. This in turn led to a weakening of attained education as the crucial precondition to access occupational positions that need continuous lifelong learning as well as the lessening of the influence of the lifestyle of higher educated adults, for whom frequent participation in NFE had been typical. For this reason, education has not been as accurate a predictor of participation as it once had been.

Further, we also identified significant differences in likelihood of participation in NFE based on the membership in particular occupational classes: the higher service class, the lower service class, and technicians and supervisors, all of whom had regularly shown a two-fold chance to participate in comparison to unskilled workers and the self-employed petty bourgeoisie, the categories with the lowest participation rates.

Generally, our results indicate that the inequality in participation in NFE between various social groups based on their economic activity, highest attained education and occupational class position have persisted in the Czech Republic during the last 20 years. What makes the situation in the Czech Republic different is the more significant role of economic activity for participation compared to education, which has been influencing the involvement into NFE more greatly in other countries such as Belgium, Australia, Cyprus and the United States (Desjardins, 2020).

Furthermore, inequality in participation in NFE in the Czech Republic based on the measured socio-demographic factors has not increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, as other studies have also claimed (Waller et al., 2020; James & Thériault, 2020). Leaving aside inequality based on economic activity, inequality overall slightly dropped in the Czech Republic. One possible explanation for this result could be that the involvement of the Czech adults in NFE has primarily depended on employment status and the availability of job-related training. If some external factor, like the COVID-19 pandemic, negatively impacts the labour market, this translates to an overall decline in chances to participate among all social classes at more or less the same rate.

Based on these findings, we suppose that *national adult education policy should target* NFE that is focused more on adults outside the labour market, a population that has always faced the highest level of inequality. Furthermore, when individuals in this group also have a lower level of education, they have essentially been excluded completely from lifelong learning activities. In addition to initiatives focused on those completely outside of the labour market, future attention will need to be devoted the training and development of unskilled manual workers with very low participation rates in NFE. These efforts are even more important considering the fact that unskilled workers represent the social class that will be threatened most by the disappearance of the traditional industrial sector (ILO, 2022). This population comprises almost twenty percent of current occupational positions in the Czech Republic.

As we have already mentioned in the methodological section above, the main limitation of this study represents data utilised for our long-term analysis. Although they illustrate the overall trends in NFE, they cannot be considered equal because especially older surveys (IALS 1997 and AES 2007) differ in the wording of items measuring participation and explanatory instructions for respondents. This could lead to minor differences in the overall participation rates, as well as in results of the subsequent analysis of key factors related to participation.

To face these methodological limits and support data-driven adult education policy in the Czech Republic, we propose that future research in the field should address more regular monitoring of participation in NFE. Such a research endeavour should utilise standardized items for various dimensions of participation – i. e., different time frames (e. g., 12 months and four weeks prior to the survey) and measures (number of participants and hours). Beyond that, it should also explore a new model of measuring participation that has been proposed by some authors both inside (Boyadjieva & Ilieva-Trichkova, 2022) and outside of this field of adult education (Kelty et al., 2015).

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II Vermischtes/Miscellaneous

Between Anything Goes and Methodical Rigor – An Empirical Analysis of Systematic Literature Reviews in Adult Education Research

Tim Vetter, Gwennaëlle Mulliez & Eva Bonn

Abstract

Within the past two decades, the use of systematic reviews (SRs) in the context of adult education research has increased against the backdrop of the debate on evidence orientation. Following on from this, this paper examines the implementation of the method within the discipline. Based on an integrative review (IR), 57 adult education SRs were identified and subsequently analyzed using a differentiated coding system. The findings point to varying degrees of methodical grounding in the application of the SR method. The article forms the starting point for further methodological reflection on SRs in adult education research.

Keywords: Systematic Review; Adult Education; Integrative Review; Research Method Reflection

Zusammenfassung

In den letzten zwei Dekaden hat die Verwendung von Systematic Reviews (SRs) im Kontext der Erwachsenenbildungsforschung vor dem Hintergrund der Debatte um Evidenzorientierung zugenommen. Hieran anknüpfend untersucht der vorliegende Beitrag die Implementierung der Methode innerhalb der Disziplin. Ausgehend von einem integrativen Review (IR) konnten 57 erwachsenenpädagogische SRs ermittelt werden, die anschließend mittels eines ausdifferenzierten Kodiersystems analysiert wurden. Die Befunde verweisen auf unterschiedliche Ausprägungen methodischer Fundierung in der Anwendung der Methode des SRs. Der Beitrag soll den Grundstein zur weiterführenden methodischen Reflexion zu SRs in der Weiterbildungsforschung legen.

Schlagworte: Systematic Review; Erwachsenenbildung; Integrativer Review; Forschungsmethodische Reflexion

1 Introduction

The thorough preparation of the state of research on a subject of interest, both in theoretical and empirical terms, can be understood as a cross-disciplinary common sense in the process of gaining scientific knowledge. However, approaches to the collection, processing and presentation of current academic knowledge on a specific topic are diverse and usually diverge in terms of their degree of systematization. Methodical approaches to achieve the highest possible degree of systematization are systematic reviews (SRs), which have their origin in evidence-based medical research (EBM). This methodical procedure is linked to the claim to process the state of knowledge on clearly defined problems on the basis of collected empirical evidence that meets predefined selection criteria and freeing it from possible biases in order to generate empirically more robust decision-making knowledge (cf. Higgins et al. 2019, p. xxiii). Within the last one to two decades, there has also been a lively interest in SRs and their potential outside of EBM. In the meantime, various efforts to claim the method in different ways for diverse topics of adult education can be identified. For instance, experiences from employees with team learning in a vocational learning or work setting (Hannes et al. 2013), the transfer of vocational education and training (Toepper et al. 2022), the identification of factors of successful language acquisition in the context of functional illiteracy (Sahlender & Schrader 2017), explorations of the concept of innovation (Koller 2021) or the investigation of interaction interfaces between personnel groups in adult education (Goeze & Stodolka 2019) are examined.

However, while there is a consensus regarding the respective research objects and the epistemological interests in medicine and in natural sciences in general, this is not the case for research in the field of adult and continuing education – at least in its entirety (cf. Rubenson & Elfert 2015). The lack of fundamental reflections on the conditions under which the 'import' of SRs as a method seems appropriate can be considered a desideratum and marks a starting point for the present study, which aims at analyzing the methodological application of SRs. Thus, this paper addresses the following question: How is the method of systematic review adapted in the research field of adult and continuing education?

The paper takes its point of departure by discussing the methodical roots of SRs explaining issues of its adaptation in educational science in general and in adult education research in particular taking into consideration the specifics of these research fields (chapter 2). In order to address the research question, an integrative review (IR) is conducted which is further described in chapter three. Based on the methodical explanations, the paper then continues by presenting and discussing the essential results (chapter 4) and finishes off with a conclusion and an outlook on further research (chapter 5).

2 Systematic Reviews and Adult Education Research – Positioning the Method in the Research Field

A SR can be defined as a method to systematically search, evaluate, and synthesize all relevant research on a specific research question by means of explicit and reproducible methods to minimize bias. It is a way of comprehensively and transparently summarizing the current state of evidence on a particular topic, with a focus on randomized controlled trials (RCTs) as the highest level of evidence (cf. Chandler et al. 2022).

Looking at systematic reviews in the context of EBM, it becomes obvious that there are several special features of and developments in this research field contributing to a strong entrenchment of SRs as a research method. SRs have been institutionally established in medical research by the Cochrane Collaboration founded in 1993 (cf. Altman & Burton 1999) aimed at making information and evidence on therapeutical issues broadly available, facilitating medical decisions and informing patients through preparation, continual updating and dissemination of systematic overviews (cf. Blümle et al. 2009, p. 88; cf. Antes & Oxman 2009, p. 448). The relevance of SRs in medical research is also displayed by corresponding funding programs (e. g. BMBF 2013). Furthermore, SRs are applied quite naturally in medical research due to the overall paradigm of evidence-based research.

This is certainly quite different in educational and therefore also in adult educational research as a subdiscipline. Educational research has been confronted with calls for a stronger evidence-orientation coming from educational policy and the rather young field of empirical educational research has indeed readily apprehended this development (cf. Schrader 2014, p. 194). Still, the debate on evidence-based educational research is quite controversial within the educational research community. Proponents for instance point to improvements of subject-related and methodical expertise induced by competitive situations in the scientific community that have evolved around evidence-oriented objectives (cf. ibid., p. 210). Simultaneously, critical voices warn against a functionalist appropriation of educational research on part of educational policy-makers (cf. e. g. Bellmann 2017). Common sense among researchers only seems to exist with regard to the conviction that an unreflected adaptation of scientific practices and paradigms from EBM cannot meet the specific requirements of educational research.

Even though the critical reflection of the beginnings of evidence-based research in educational sciences, starting off with PISA and incentives from educational policy (cf. Baumert et al. 2002), can rather be seen as a self-reflection of the respective actors, SRs being essentially connected to the paradigm of evidence-based research can still provide an additional value to educational research. However, the specifics of educational research need to be taken into consideration here. According to Smith and Keiner (2015), it can currently be observed that there are attempts of imitating methods from natural sciences based on the evidence levels in educational research (cf. p. 666). Problems of these imitation attempts become most obvious regarding the focus on RCTs. There are voices defending RCTs not only as a standard for educational policy programs and strategies but even as a gold standard of the current educational scientific profession (cf. ibid.). Nevertheless, two points of criticism in particular illustrate the need for a critical approach to such studies in educational science. First, in contrast to medicine, educational research rarely offers the possibility to conduct laboratory studies. These can rather be found in cognitive psychology next to experimental designs (cf. Schrader & Berzbach 2005, p. 30). The aspect of control in the context of RCTs in educational research is therefore often characterized by mutually dependent, confounded variables (cf. Smith & Keiner 2015, p. 670). Second, the operationalization of success criteria is not as clear in educational research as it might be in medical research. While medical RCTs provide clear indicators for success, desirable outcomes of an educational RCT must first be operationalized. For example, educational success or competence development need to be operationalized and measured by means of different sub-categories while medical RCTs can often observe clear effects (e. g., lower blood pressure).

This also has far-reaching consequences regarding the relation between science and educational and social policy. While health policy can convert objective insights from an RCT into practical laws, regulations or recommendations, this cannot be done in the field of education without critically evaluating the definition of benchmarks and success factors. Evidence-based policy, that is, the deliberate use of the best evidence in processes of decision making among policy options (cf. Burns & Schuller 2007, p. 16), therefore faces increased complexity in education. Despite these difficulties, the field of educational research attempts to bridge the gap between the method of SRs and the specific field of educational research (see e. g., Newman & Gough 2020).

The criticisms described above are currently being discussed within the discipline of educational science in the context of a methodological debate on the fit, usefulness and implementation of SRs, as exemplified by the anthology by Zawacki-Richter et al. (2020). In the context of the volume, critical methodological reflections on the method within the discipline are formulated, emphasizing, for example, the necessary attention to other review forms besides SRs in order to counter the problems of an unreflected methodological adoption as described (cf. Hammersley 2020).

3 Methodical Design

The present study aims at exploring how SRs are employed as a research method in the field of adult education research. It intends to gain a comprehensive and preferably unbiased picture of the *status quo* of the application of SRs in adult education research. Therefore, independent from the methodical quality, all kinds of empirical studies in the field of adult education research that report conducting a SR are included in the present review indicating the adequacy of an integrative review (IR) approach in this context.

Contrary to SRs, IRs allow for the inclusion of both experimental and non-experimental studies. The IR "[…] combines data from theoretical and empirical literature, and has a wide range of purposes, such as definition of concepts, review of theories and evidence, and analysis of methodological problems of a particular topic" (Tavares de Souza et al. 2010, p. 103). However, the rather large methodical scope for interpretation and application compared to SRs needs to be viewed critically with regard to potential biases and a lack of stringency (cf. Whittemore & Knafl 2005, p. 548, Toronto & Remington 2020). Whittemore and Knafl (2005) therefore developed a five-step process model aiming at ensuring a systematic and standardized application of the method. The first phase comprises the definition of the guiding question(s) for the review while the second phase continues with the literature search. In the third phase, the data produced through the literature search is evaluated with the use of predefined quality indicators. Phase four includes the data analysis which can vary in terms of the analytical categories depending on the research question and objectives. Finally, the results are presented in a structured manner in phase five (cf. ibid., pp. 548–552). As the guiding question for the present study (phase 1) has already been presented in chapter one, the following explanations will focus on describing the phases 2 to 4 as conducted in this review.

Two search strategies were used in the search procedure of this study including a database search and a manual examination of relevant international journals in the field of adult education research. Complementing the database search by a manual search can be considered an essential methodical step as it helps identify studies that would otherwise not become visible through database searches only (cf. Booth et al. 2022, p. 140).

The database search was conducted from August 29th to 30th, 2022 by the first author who has profound experiences in working with selected databases based on previous review projects. A total of five databases of interdisciplinary and pedagogical contexts and disciplines related to pedagogy, which are considered standard sources in their research contexts, were considered (ibid., pp. 129 ff.). All databases were searched via the advanced search tool using the search term (fig. 1) in order to look for papers whose title, abstract or keywords indicated that a SR was conducted in the context of adult education research. The search string was constructed by initially collecting synonyms for 'adult education' and 'systematic review' and then combining these terms (both in English and German).

TITLE, ABSTRACT, KEYWORDS ("adult education" OR "adult learning" OR "further education" OR "continuing education" OR "lifelong learning" OR "life-long learning" OR "lifelong education" OR "life-long education" OR "vocational learning" OR "vocational education" OR "vocational training" OR "andragogy" OR "Erwachsenenbildung" OR "Weiterbildung" OR "Fortbildung" OR "berufliche Bildung" OR "betriebliche Bildung" OR "lebenslanges Lernen" OR "lebensbegleitendes Lernen" OR "erwachsenenpäd*" OR "Andragogik") AND TITLE, ABSTRACT, KEYWORDS ("systematic review" OR "systematic literature review" OR "systematisches review" OR "systematische Literaturrecherche")

Figure 1: Search string

As explained in chapter two, upcoming debates on evidence orientation in adult education research suggest that SRs have only recently been adapted in this research field. Therefore, the selection of studies was not limited with regard to publication dates. During the browsing search conducted on September 20th, 2022, nine journals were identified that are either listed in the Journal Citation Report or in the SCImago Journal & Country Rank and that can be explicitly assigned to adult education research (cf. Vetter 2022, p. 111). Since the German adult education research context is considered, two renowned German journals were included in the manual search in addition to the International Yearbook of Adult Education. The flow diagram (fig. 2) presents all databases and journals included in the search along with the respective number of identified studies.

Duplicates were then removed and the resulting pool of literature was screened using the following inclusion and exclusion criteria. All empirical studies were included that were published as monographs, journal articles, or edited volume contributions in German or English and that, according to their own statements, conduct a SR in the context of adult education as a central or accompanying method. On the other hand, articles were excluded that were published in other languages, did not conduct a SR or that conducted other forms of review, such as a scoping review or thematic review, or belonged to research disciplines other than adult education research.

The final number of identified studies relevant to the guiding question were then analyzed by means of qualitative coding (phase 3 and 4). In order to evaluate the application of SR in international adult education research, the quality indicators for SRs presented by Talbott et al. (2018) were modified and adapted as a coding framework. For their field of interest, namely special education, the authors note that despite an overall international orientation towards evidence-based practice, there are still no quality criteria for SRs (cf. ibid., p.1). Against this background, they develop 43 quality indicators for SRs classified in five process phases. The resulting quality framework was adapted for the field of adult education research and inductively condensed in order to serve as a reliable coding framework for the present study (tab. 1). As with Talbott (2018), independent subcategories were binary coded ("present"/"absent"). Only the subcategory "Research Question" was coded tripartitely ("Implicit Research Question", "Explicit Research Question", "No Research Question"). The criteria catalogue by Talbott et al. (2018, pp. 20 ff) on the one hand fits the field of adult education and on the other hand provides a differentiated systematization of the SR method based on methodical standard works.

Regarding the coding process, the coding framework was initially tested with three articles in the context of a coding workshop. Following, overall 30 studies were double-coded by the authors and Cohen's Kappa was calculated in order to determine the interrater-reliability. The determined value was $\kappa = 0.90$ and thus can be considered "almost perfect" (Landis & Koch 1977, p. 165). Any coding differences were discussed and consensually resolved among the authors. Due to the high interrater-reliability and based on the further development and specification of the coding framework, the remaining studies were then single-coded by the authors.

The final analysis of this IR is divided into a part with overarching findings and five sub-segments oriented towards the superordinate categories of the coding framework. Since the analysis aims at an exploration of the application of SRs in the *field* of adult education research and not on an analysis of the methodical quality of single studies, the results are presented focusing on comprehensive observations and the studies are referred to by anonymized codes. An overview of all anonymized SRs and their assigned codes as well as the reference list of the coded articles are provided as a separate document in a repository.[1]

1 *Link to the document*: https://doi.org/10.57743/891

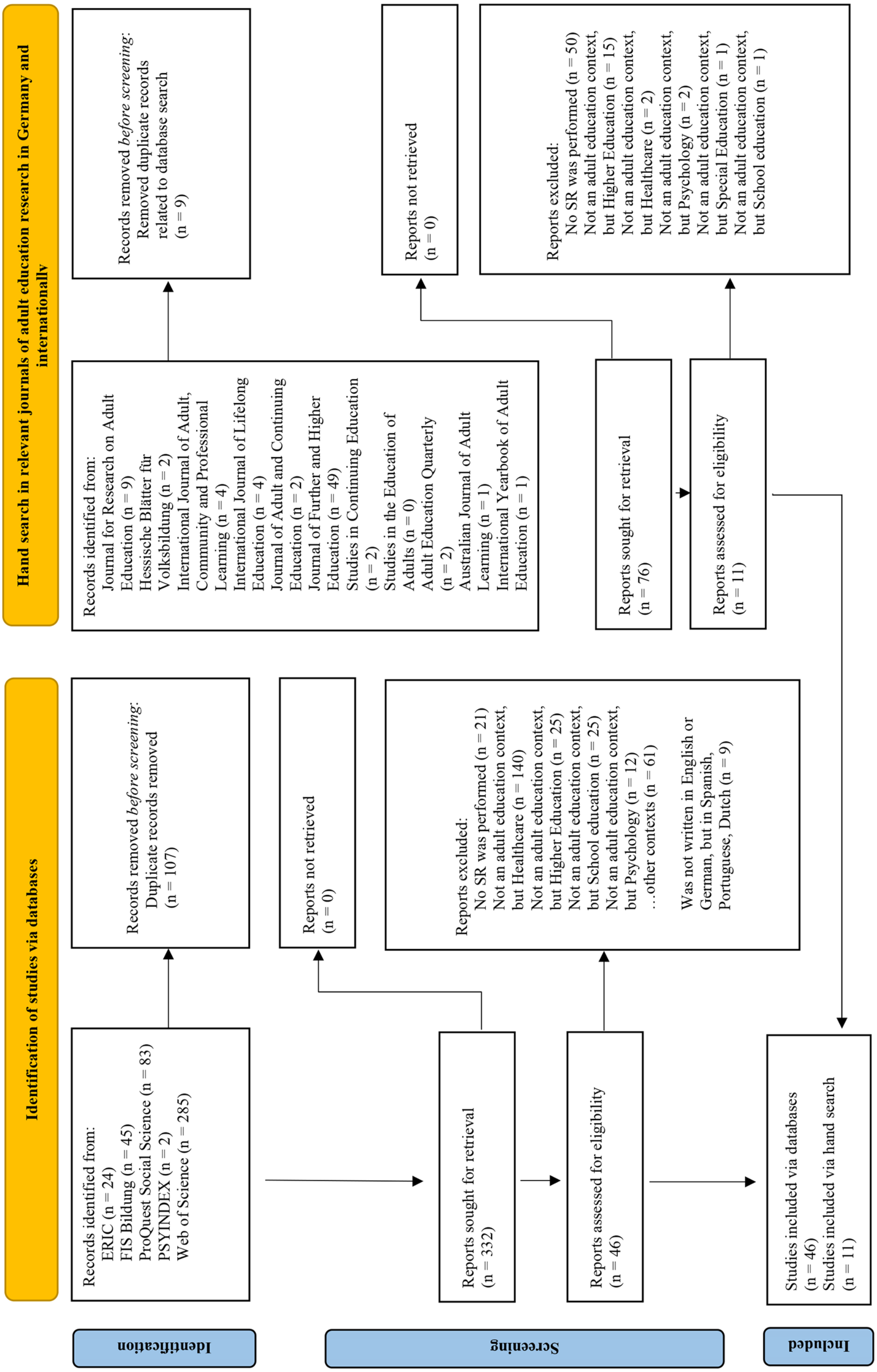

Figure 2: PRISMA flow diagram for the search procedure

Table 1: Coding Scheme and Code Definitions (adapted version based on Talbott et al. 2018)

Criteria designation	Coding condition
Evaluation of the guiding research question	
Implicit Research Question	If only an intention or topic formulation is formulated without a precisely answerable question.
Explicit Research Question	If a sentence can be found that hast he grammatical strucutre of a precise question.
No Research Question	If the article is based neither on an intention or topic formulation nor an explicit question.
Inclusion and Exclusion Prodcedures	
Population Defined	Only if research design is reported.
Research Designs Reported	Only if review refers to empirical studies and if specified which forms of empirical work were included.
Time Constraints Reported	If a timeframe is reported, no justification for setting the frame needed.
Search Procedures	
Databases Identified	If complete, explicit naming of all searched databases.
Unpublished Studies Included	If explicitly reported that unpublished studies were included.
Search Keywords Reported	If complete, explicit naming of al search terms used is listed.
Date of Implementation Reported	If execution date is reported for the search.
Hand Search Reported	If additional searches based on bibliographies or using the snowball principle is explicitly reported.
Inclusion of Thematic SLR	If explicitly formulated that thematic SRs were taken into account.
Subject Matter Experts Consulted	If additional researchers or institutions were contacted to identify invisible/hidden or internal studies.
More Than One Languages Included	If more than one language was considered in the search.
Abstracts Reviewed	If abstracts were screened.
Qualifications of Searchers Reported	If explicitly reported what kind of qualification the searchers have.
Study Retrieval Procedures	
Number of Studies Identified Reported	If the number of overall studies identified through the searches is reported.
Number of Studies Excluded Reported	If explicitly stated how many studies were excluded.
Number of Studies Retrieved	If the number of studies used in the further evaluation process of the SR is reported.

(Continuing table 1)

Criteria designation	Coding condition
Exclusion Criteria Reported	If arguments/aspects/criteria are named that lead to the inclusion of a study in the further SR procedures.
Inclusion Criteria Reported	If arguments/aspects/criteria are named that lead to the exclusion of a study in the further SR procedures.
Reliability of Screening Procedures	If a specific reliability value is reported.
Process for Resolving Disagreements	If a procedure for handling nonconformity during the screening process is described.
Coding Scheme Procedures	
Coding Scheme Reported	If an explicit coding scheme is reported and defined.
Coder Expertise Reported	If a procedure that provides information on the qualification of the coder is described.
Reliability of Coding Scheme Reported	If a specific reliability value is reported.
Process for Resolving Disagreements	If a procedure for handling nonconformity during the screening process is described.
Data Analysis Plan	
Data Analysis Plan Reported	If the use of a methodologically sound procedure to analyze date from SR is described.

4 Results and Discussion

As shown in the PRISMA flow diagram (fig. 2), a total of 57 papers were identified that conducted SR in the context of adult education research. Three papers (Cenka et al. 2022, Handzic et al. 2017 and Ioannidou & Parma 2022) did not use SR as the central method of the study, but as an accompanying tool. Since it is likely that accompanying methods are not described as detailed and the underlying measurement tool relies on a comprehensive description of the methodical approach of the studies under review, the three aforementioned papers were excluded from the analysis. A rough thematic clustering of the publication venues of all identified articles shows that the majority of the identified journals fall into one of three groups. The largest of these groups consists of journals with a clear focus on adult education and (vocational) training (n = 26), followed by a group of journals that focus on information and communications technology (ICT) in relation to educational topics (n = 10), and finally journals that focus on topics of broad educational research (n = 8).

In the following, the findings of the present analysis are presented and discussed along the five phases of an SR. Preceding the phases is a subchapter that addresses the transverse category of the research question. The chapter will close with cross-categorical findings.

4.1 Research Question

As with all other empirical methods, the formulation of a precise guiding research question plays a decisive role, as specific, measurable, achievable, and time-bounded goals are co-formulated here (cf. Alves 2018, p. 184). Especially for SRs, the development of a research question is crucial (cf. Thomas et al. 2019, p. 13). Thus, it is even more surprising that not all identified SRs in adult education research operate with a decidedly formulated and clearly identifiable research question. The 12 (22.22 %) papers that use an implicit research question achieve an average of only $\mu = 9.1$[2] codes. In contrast, the SRs with one or more stated questions reach a value of $\mu = 13.2$ codes. Although the coding was purely descriptive, the findings indicate that an implicit question also results in inaccuracies affecting the following steps of an SR.

4.2 Inclusion and Exclusion Procedures

A clearly defined and designated scope is important to keep the SR manageable and timely (cf. Garritty et al. 2021, p. 15). This paper focuses on the relevant population/target group, the relevant study designs, and the relevant time frame that the SR should cover. Looking at the first two codes, it is noticeable that very few studies make use of these narrowing options (n = 8, n = 12). Of the 8 papers that report a specific population/target group, all received above-average numbers of codes and, except for Doc_8, also reported a study design that goes beyond the rough designation of 'empirical studies'.

In turn, a temporal containment framework is indicated by 43 studies. A closer look at these contributions reveals that the majority (n = 25), such as Doc_7 or Doc_33, do not justify the set frame. 17 contributions, on the other hand, choose a substantive or thematic justification while 4 contributions mention a research pragmatic justification. An explicit justification of a temporal containment frame is important for reasons of transparency. This includes reasons why the decision was made not to use the temporal constraint. To make no statements at all about this limitation criterion, as is the case with 6 studies in the present sample, is detrimental to the replicability of the study and in this way to its scientific quality.

4.3 Search Procedures

This category in the coding guide is of particular relevance for the replicability of SRs. In addition, very basic components of a SR are collected here, which are also common to other review forms and are considered in all reporting guidelines for reviews (cf. Booth et al. 2022, p. 326).

While codes in this category are frequently assigned, considering their low-threshold nature and their basic methodical function, the numbers still seem rather low. 13

2 To avoid too much bias due to extreme values, the average is replaced by the 10 % trimmed mean. To calculate the 10 % trimmed mean, the top and bottom ten percent of cases are removed.

(24.07 %) of all SRs identified in adult education research do not explicitly mention all databases consulted. 15 (n = 27.78 %) do not publish the complete list of search terms used, let alone the search string. In this way, neither an assessment regarding the operationalization of the guiding question of the SR, nor the replicability is guaranteed.

With regard to the integration of multilingual articles within the SRs, it is noticeable that only 7 (12.96 %) include more than just English or German articles. This finding suggests that especially those articles are at risk of a language bias (cf. Song et al. 2010), which do not investigate localized questions. Language bias in the context of systematic reviews describes the phenomenon that many results remain invisible due to the focus on one language in the context of the inclusion and exclusion criteria depending on the guiding research question. In a SR, this can lead to biased results. For SRs in the field of social science, the identified language bias is due to a lack of resources, forcing review teams to rely on their limited language skills rather than the assistance of professional translators (cf. Rasmussen & Montgomery 2018). This finding also seems applicable to the field of adult education research.

Within the Search Procedures category, those categories that are not implemented in all sub-forms of the Reviews family of methods, and in this way maximize the degree of systematization of the data base, are particularly noticeable. In addition to the thematic inclusion of contributions in different languages, these are the consideration of unpublished studies (n = 3), the consideration of SRs that also have a thematic relevance for one's own review (n = 4), the contacting of potential authors (experts) to identify possible publications (n = 3), qualifications of the searchers are reported (n = 0), and a complementing manual search (n = 22). Since the latter criterion was assigned comparatively frequently, a more detailed analysis is necessary here. While six papers did not report how many relevant findings could be generated via manual search, the remaining SRs reported between 3 and 115 relevant hits generated e. g. via manual search in relevant journals and conference papers or manual review of reference lists. In 7 SRs, even different strategies of manual search were combined. Depending on the research question, manual search strategies can increase the number of hits, e. g. when investigating new trend topics in adult education.

4.4 Study Retrieval Procedures

To identify appropriate studies, researchers must first conduct a search of databases and other sources, reviewing each title and abstract to create an initial pool of studies for further review, then followed by a full-text evaluation (cf. Papaioannou et al., 2010, p. 119; Talbott et al. 2018, p. 10). The hit counts thus reduced are usually presented via the PRISMA flowchart (cf. Page et al. 2021, p. 5). Here, it is particularly important not only to show the excluded studies numerically, but also to name the reasons for exclusion based on the exclusion criteria.

In the present sample of SRs in the context of adult education, it is noticeable that not all contributions show the number of data in the unadjusted corpus, the number of excluded studies, and the number of studies identified as relevant. In light of the transparency claims of empirical methodology, this is noteworthy.

Regarding the identification of inclusion and exclusion criteria, five contributions stand out that do not identify any criteria at all. 4 of these 5 contributions only show an implicit question. This finding raises the question of the extent to which implicit questions can be investigated using SR. One paper reports implicit inclusion criteria, but the description at this point is not sufficient to replicate the study.

The reporting of a reliability value of the screening process (n = 5, 9.26 %) and the report of handling disagreements in the screening process (n = 11, 20.37 %) suggests that a large proportion of SRs studied rely on the estimation of a single person for the screening process. However, for SRs, it seems advisable to test the inclusion and exclusion criteria, as it is common for coding processes.

4.5 Coding Scheme Procedures

The coding procedure is an essential step in preparing the data retrieved from the searching phase. Based on Talbott et al. (2018), the relevant quality indicators for this phase include reporting a coding scheme, reporting the qualification of coders as well as the reliability of the coding scheme and reporting how disagreements were handled in the coding process. Coding schemes for systematic reviews can refer to study quality, describing the participants and setting of the identified studies and/or to describing the variables under study (cf. Talbott et al. 2018, p.10).

In our corpus, 35 out of 54 studies report a coding scheme. Considering that the coding procedure is an integral step of SRs, it is quite astonishing that only about 65 % of the studies applying this method follow this guideline. A closer analysis of the coding schemes in our study corpus shows that the coding procedure itself is conducted quite differently across the studies. In eight studies, the coding scheme serves to evaluate the study quality. However, the quality-related coding does not necessarily relate to the research questions of the respective studies. Only two studies included the coding of study quality since it has a direct use in addressing their research questions (Doc_50, Doc_51).

Apart from assessing study quality, coding schemes are frequently used in systematic reviews to capture the variables under study and thus address the research question(s). Nearly half of the studies that report a coding scheme (14 out of 35) use it to assess their variables under study. Here, the reference to the research question(s) is rather direct. Finally, nine studies were identified that use the coding scheme to extract other content-related aspects from their data and in three studies, the coding scheme was part of a lexicometric analysis.

Regarding the coding procedure, it is striking that the studies in our corpus show little transparency in their methodical reports. Only four studies report a reliability value for the coding scheme. Considering that, e. g. in qualitative content analysis, reliability scores have become a major quality indicator, it seems odd that this quality standard is not adapted in systematic reviews. After all, 11 studies report on how disagreements in the coding process were resolved providing at least some clarity and transparency on the coding process. The qualification of the coders described as “the expertise and training provided to individuals charged with coding studies” by Talbott et al (2018, p. 4) is only mentioned in two studies. This might be due to the fact that the authors usually conduct the coding themselves meaning that their expertise has built up throughout the searching and coding framework development process already and no special training was conducted.

Overall, it becomes obvious that reporting a coding scheme that directly serves to address the research question(s) is rather a rarity than a standard in our study corpus. While most of the studies use a coding scheme to assess the methodical quality and/or to extract information about their variables under study, a significant share of studies mentions or reports coding schemes not directly addressed to the research question(s). Furthermore, the quality and reliability of the coding procedures can hardly be assessed since essential methodical descriptions are missing or are only vaguely described.

4.6 Data Analysis Plan

While after all 35 out 54 studies reported a coding scheme, only nine studies provide a data analysis plan, i. e. any kind of statistical or other methodical procedure to further analyze the (coded) data. Out of these nine studies, only two conduct a comprehensive, methodically well-founded and transparently documented meta-analytical evaluation of the data from their study corpus thus interpreting their research findings "within the context of the methodical rigor of the systematic review" (Talbott et al. 2018, p. 5).

Though not as complex and rigorous, another study calculates effect sizes across its identified studies and controls for publication bias by means of a funnel plot and one study at least provides a descriptive comparison of effect sizes but without taking the methodical quality into consideration. Two further studies use weighting procedures for their data analysis while factoring in methodical aspects of the identified studies.

In contrast to this, three studies analyze their data by means of qualitative-synthesizing methods. In two cases, the qualitative synthesis is realized based on the Joanna Briggs approach of meta-aggregation which is a standardized framework for analyzing qualitative data in systematic reviews (cf. Lockwood et al. 2015). In one case, the data analysis plan is only referred to as a narrative review method which is not defined any further.

All in all, it needs to be noted that even though the nine studies described here attempt to generate preferably evident findings based on their review data, there are still 45 studies in our corpus that report no data analysis plan at all putting it into question which kinds of results they (aim to) produce by means of SR.

4.7 Consolidating Discussion

While the previous chapters have described and discussed findings alongside the coding scheme for this study, i. e. based on the overall process steps of SRs, the following chapter now focuses on identifying and discussing overarching findings on the case of SRs in adult education research. By looking at our study corpus as a whole against the guiding question of how SRs are adapted in adult education research, five groups of studies can be identified based on their coding results regarding the quality indicators.

Group A is made up of studies that provide rarely any or even no description of the method at all (n = 6). SR is simply mentioned in the abstract, title or full text but the full text provides hardly any information on how the review was conducted.

Group B consists of studies that do not meet baseline quality criteria since basic methodical standards of data searching and screening are not comprehensively reported (n = 14). However, while only some of the basic indicators are reported, the studies in this group sporadically refer to more advanced aspects of SRs, e. g. elaborated search procedures by manual searching or by contacting potential authors.

Group C comprises studies that meet baseline methodical requirements of literature reviews in general, especially with regard to a systematic and transparent search procedure (n = 15). However, the methodical outline of the reviews in this group hardly goes beyond these baseline requirements.

Group D is made up of studies that fulfill the baseline requirements and simultaneously report some more sophisticated methodical aspects of SRs (n = 16). These more advanced aspects are in most cases displayed through the description of a coding scheme and reports on the coding procedure making the analysis both more systematic and transparent. Furthermore, the studies in this group usually provide more comprehensive search procedures and a detailed documentation of the screening process.

Finally, Group E presents studies that come closest to the ideal method description of SRs as operationalized in this paper. They are highly reliable as the findings can be replicated based on detailed methodical descriptions regarding both the searching, the screening and the analysis procedures. Furthermore, the studies in this group approach the standards of SRs in that they soundly work towards generating evident findings. Yet, we only identified 3 studies in our sample that could be assigned to this group.

Against the background of this classification, it can be observed that there are obvious efforts of adapting the method of SRs in adult education research in a coherent and methodically reflected matter and the majority of studies does so successfully by meeting at least baseline requirements. However, the studies identified often end with the data extraction, i. e. the searching and screening of literature, and no further systematic analysis is provided generating *new* insights or even new evidence from the respective pool of existing studies. At this point, it remains unclear to what extent the methodical rigor of the studies analyzed here might also be linked to the project and funding structures in which they are embedded and how the publication format might affect methodical descriptions (e. g. monographic publications allow for more detailed reports than comprised journal articles).

Taking into consideration the specifics of adult education research as a discipline with its just beginning orientation and efforts towards evidence-based research (cf. chapter 2), it is not surprising that SRs in adult education research often refer to a qualitative data basis and hardly to randomized controlled trials. Still, there already are a number of approaches offering methodically systematic and well-founded ways for synthesizing and analyzing qualitative data (see e. g., Booth et al. 2022, pp. 235 ff). Furthermore, depending on the research question addressed in the study, an SR approach might not be perfectly suitable, but there are numerous other methods in the literature review family offering differentiated opportunities for synthesizing and analyzing existing literature corpora (e. g. narrative/integrative/scoping review; for the adult education research field, see e. g. Herbrechter et al. 2018, Mulliez 2021).

5 Conclusion and Outlook

The present study examined the question of how SRs are adapted in adult education research by means of an IR. Overall, 57 studies were identified as relevant and a coding scheme was used to assess how the method of SR was applied. The findings suggest that a majority of the studies fulfill baseline requirements for literature reviews but the specific approach of an SR is rarely applied since the demands for reliability, transparency and methodically controlled data synthesis are hardly met.

These findings open up several implications for further research and methodical debate within the discipline of adult education. Most importantly, future research might take a closer look at single findings from this study. For instance, there is a need for further exploring the application of SRs in adult education regarding the fit between the method of SR and the research question as our findings suggest a frequently occurring mismatch between methodical steps of the SR and the stated research question. Furthermore, the development of the methodical application of SRs over time might be analyzed by taking a longitudinal look at the broader literature corpus of SRs in (adult) education. Finally, the catalogue of quality indicators presented in this study might be further developed and adapted contributing to a debate on and establishment of methodical standards for SRs in the discipline of (adult) education research.

For adult education researchers planning a literature-based review to address a clearly stated research question, this paper demonstrates the relevance of a fit test between research question, data material, and review method. In many cases, an SR is not the best choice in the context of adult education research. Instead, other methods from the literature review family might be more appropriate.

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III Rezensionen/Reviews

Rezension: Bildungspolitiken. Spielräume für Gesellschaftsformation in der globalisierten Ökonomie?

Thomas Theurer

Helmut Bremer, Rolf Dobischat und Gabriele Molzberger (Hrsg.): ***Bildungspolitiken. Spielräume für Gesellschaftsformation in der globalisierten Ökonomie?*** **[Reihe Arbeit und Bildung, Band 7]. Wiesbaden: Springer VS. 280 S.**

Kritische Hinweise auf eine Vereinnahmung des Bildungswesens durch ökonomische Logiken sind in gegenwärtigen erziehungswissenschaftlichen Fachdebatten keine Ausnahmeerscheinung. Die Anschlussfrage, ob und inwieweit trotz aller Ökonomisierungs- und Neoliberalisierungstendenzen „alternative Entwicklungspfade" (S. 10) zwischen Bildung, Politik und Wirtschaft gangbar erscheinen, bildet den Ausgangspunkt des Sammelbands *Bildungspolitiken*. Dieser umfasst neben der Einführung der Herausgeber:innen *H. Bremer, R. Dobischat* und *G. Molzberger* zwölf Beiträge in drei thematischen Blöcken, die sich mit vielfältigen Theorieperspektiven und Aufmerksamkeitsrichtungen auf unterschiedliche Ebenen des Bildungssystems beziehen. Wie in der Reihe ‚Arbeit und Bildung' üblich, enthält der Band mit dem Wiederabdruck von Ausschnitten aus *D. Axmachers* Dissertation ‚Erwachsenenbildung im Kapitalismus' (1974) einen „Klassikertext" und schärft so den Blick für (Dis-)Kontinuitäten in der wissenschaftlichen Auseinandersetzung mit der wechselseitigen Durchdringung gesellschaftlicher Systeme.

Der erste Themenblock mit aktuellen Beiträgen „zwischen Bildungsökonomie und Politischer Ökonomie der Bildung" wird eröffnet von *S. Kunert* und *M. Rühle*. Die Autoren zeichnen zunächst nach, wie sich ab den 1970er Jahren eine „postfordistische Bildungsindustrie" (S. 21) entwickelte. Herausgestellt wird dabei zum einen, dass Bildung zunehmend auf die Bereitstellung von „menschlichen Ressourcen […] im Dienste der ökonomischen Standortsicherung" (S. 30) reduziert, zum anderen wie staatliche Bildungsinstitutionen als neue Kapitalverwertungssphären erschlossen wurden und werden. Veranschaulichend wird dies am Beispiel digitaler Lehr-Lern-Formate und der korrespondierenden Weiterbildungsbedarfe des pädagogischen Personals diskutiert.

T. Höhne und *M. Karcher* verdeutlichen in ihrem Beitrag, dass die Digitalisierung eine „Explosion von Daten" mit sich bringt, die ihrerseits eine „entdifferenzierende Wirkung" (S. 51) hinsichtlich der Handlungslogiken gesellschaftlicher Subsysteme zeitigt. Die Vernachlässigung des Umstands, dass Daten erst durch Kontextualisierung zu Information (‚*data in formation*') bzw. Wissen transformiert werden, bedinge eine Konjunktur neuer Technikutopien und solutionistischer Haltungen. Pädagogische wie politische Entscheidungen werden mit der objektivistischen Erwartung verknüpft, bestmögliche Lösungen im Sinne einer mathematisch präzisen Modellierung der Realität und ihrer Optimierbarkeit darzustellen. Demgegenüber plädieren die Autoren für eine Repolitisierung des Digitalisierungsdiskurses, bspw. durch (Auf-)Klärungen dazu, welche partikularen Interessen bei der Generierung und Verarbeitung von Daten eine Rolle spielen.

A. Lenger richtet den Blick auf das Zusammenspiel wirtschaftswissenschaftlicher Erkenntnisproduktion mit der Entwicklung tatsächlicher Gesellschafts- und Marktverhältnisse sowie der Habitualisierung ökonomischer Denkmuster auf Subjektebene. Dabei argumentiert er, dass für die Formierung eines „unternehmerischen Selbst" (Bröckling) nicht allein die Ausbildung arbeitsmarktrelevanter Kompetenzen in der formellen ökonomischen Bildung bedeutsam sei, sondern zudem die Internalisierung von „Wettbewerbsnormen und Konkurrenzpraktiken" im „Primärhabitus" (S. 72).

Der zweite Teil des Bandes beschäftigt sich mit dem Aktionsradius von Bildungspolitiken:

K. Büchter (mit Blick auf die BRD) sowie *L. Bonoli* und *J. Vorpe* (mit Fokus auf die Schweiz) fokussieren aus historischer Perspektive, wie in unterschiedlichen politischen Systemen mit ökonomischen Vereinnahmungsversuchen der Berufsbildung umgegangen wurde und wird. Jenseits der nationalen Besonderheiten unterstreichen beide Darstellungen, dass Berufsbildungspolitik zwar kaum sinnvoll „ohne Bezug zu Wirtschaft und Beschäftigungssystem" (Büchter, S. 120) vonstatten gehen könne, daraus aber keine Abkehr von sozialen Zielen folge, sondern unterschiedliche Modi der „Kompromissbildung" (Bonoli & Vorpe, S. 142 f.) in den Spannungsfeldern Zentralismus vs. Föderalismus/Regulierung vs. Autonomie zutage treten.

S. Bohlinger leuchtet mittels Verzahnung verschiedener politologischer Analyseperspektiven zur EU-Politik die Möglichkeiten der Koordination nationaler Berufsbildungspolitiken aus. Während die Forcierung einheitlicher Maßnahmen durch Harmonisierungsverbot und Subsidiaritätsprinzip verunmöglicht wird, korrespondieren „Verhandlung, Argumentation und Überzeugung [als] entscheidende Steuerungsmodi" (S. 161) mit der Setzung von (monetären) Anreizen und der Verbreitung (inter)nationaler *monitorings*. Transparenz und Austausch garantieren zwar auf Landesebene die „Zugänglichkeit [...] von Handlungsalternativen" (S. 162), gleichwohl blieben deren Effekte in anderen nationalen Kontexten bis zu einem gewissen Grad unvorhersehbar, weshalb Politiktransfer nicht zuletzt von der Intuition und dem Erfahrungswissen einzelner Akteure beeinflusst werde.

W. Böttcher argumentiert in seinem Beitrag, dass eine etwaige Ökonomisierung des Bildungswesens nicht unmittelbar durch die Verfügbarmachung von Daten durch die OECD bedingt sei. Zwar stehe das Anliegen, auf Basis verallgemeinerter Indikatoren Aussagen über die Funktionalität eines Bildungssystems zu treffen, durchaus in Einklang mit betriebswirtschaftlichen Denkmodellen, dennoch sei es Verdienst von PISA und ähnlichen Untersuchungen, das Thema herkunftsbedingte Bildungsungleichheit wieder auf die politische Agenda zu bringen. Begründete Kritiken an den

OECD-Studien seien für methodologische Erweiterungen aufgegriffen worden, etwa auf Ebene der operationalisierten Variablen und der Wende zur „formative[n] adaptive[n] Leistungsbewertung“ (S. 188). Insofern nationale Bildungsstandards, die in Folge von PISA kurzschlussartig instituiert wurden, eine ökonomische Verkürzung des Bildungsbegriffs darstellen, sei dies weniger der OECD als vielmehr den beschlussgebenden bildungspolitischen Instanzen anzulasten.

B. Zurstrassen zeichnet in ihrem Beitrag nach, wie wirtschaftliche Akteure in den letzten Dekaden ihren Spielraum in der schulischen Bildung ausbauen konnten. Die Autorin stellt die Versuche eines Netzwerks aus Unternehmer:innenverbänden, wirtschaftsnahen Stiftungen und Parteien dar, etablierte Unterrichtsmaterialien in sozialwissenschaftlichen Fächern als vereinseitigend-wirtschaftsfeindlich zu skandalisieren und vermeintlich ausgleichende Lehrmittel einzufordern, die eine „Heroisierung unternehmerischer Eigenschaften“ (S. 208) betrieben. Ergänzend wird empirisch rekonstruiert, dass Lehrkonzepte wie die „Schülerfirma“ (S. 208–203), die eine Subjektivierung nach dem Idealbild des Arbeitskraftunternehmers (Voß & Pongratz, 1998) propagieren, in der pädagogischen Praxis kaum auf Kritik stoßen.

Die Beiträge des dritten Themenblocks diskutieren Möglichkeiten, durch Bildung Gegengewichte zur Ökonomisierung verschiedener Lebensbereiche in Stellung zu bringen: *L. Metzger* diskutiert auf Basis phänomenologischer und disziplingeschichtlicher Überlegungen den erwachsenenpädagogischen Stellenwert von Solidarität als einer „existenzielle[n] Erfahrungserkenntnis“ (S. 236). Komplementär dazu argumentiert *J. Trumann* unter Bezug auf empirische Analysen, dass auch „schwache Solidaritäten“ (S. 248), wie sie in urbanen Gemeinschaftsprojekten erlebt und in „Utopiewerkstätten“ artikuliert werden, Ausgangspunkte für Lernen, „Selbstermächtigung und Partizipation“ (S. 258) sein können. Abschließend illustriert *A. Schäfer* die „Janusköpfigkeit von Bildungsprozessen“ (S. 275): Pädagogik könne zur Reproduktion des Konsenses hinsichtlich der „neoliberalen Hegemonie“ (S. 268) ebenso beitragen wie zur „Schaffung und Kollektivierung von gegenhegemonialen Ideen“ (S. 276).

Resümierend lässt sich festhalten, dass diesem Doppelcharakter von Bildung (-spolitiken) gerade auch durch die Gesamtkomposition des Bandes Rechnung getragen wird. Dadurch, dass einige der Beiträge Erklärungen offerieren, wie gegenwärtig hegemoniale Auffassungen von Bildung zuvorderst (re-)produziert werden, andere hingegen Vorschläge konkretisieren, wie Bildung zur subversiven Ausgestaltung verbleibender „Spielräume für Gesellschaftsformation“ anders konzipiert werden müsste, liefert das Sammelwerk wichtige Impulse gegen grassierende Rhetoriken der Alternativlosigkeit – und damit auch für eine kritische Bewusstseinsbildung.

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Rezension: Self-Empowerment und Professionalisierung in Migrantinnenselbst-organisationen. Eine biografieanalytische und differenzreflektierende Untersuchung.

Gwennaëlle Mulliez

Iva Hradská (2022). Self-Empowerment und Professionalisierung in Migrantinnenselbstorganisationen. Eine biografieanalytische und differenzreflektierende Untersuchung. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien. 521 S.

Professionalität und Professionalisierung können mittlerweile als etablierte Forschungsfelder der Weiterbildungsforschung gelten. Vor dem Hintergrund vielfältiger Migrationsbewegungen der letzten Jahrzehnte und damit einhergehender gesellschaftlicher Veränderungsprozesse rücken zunehmend auch diversitäts- und migrationsbedingte Anforderungen an pädagogisch Professionelle bzw. Kompetenzprofile von Institutionen in den Fokus erziehungswissenschaftlicher Fachdebatten. Diesem Gegenstandsbereich widmet sich die Reihe „Pädagogische Professionalität und Migrationsdiskurse" aus einer differenz-, macht- und rassismuskritischen Perspektive. Als neueste Publikation der Serie untersucht die vorliegende Dissertation Professionalisierungswege von Akteurinnen in sog. Migrantinnenselbstorganisationen (kurz: MSO). Ein dezidiertes Augenmerk der Autorin liegt in der Erforschung von Spannungsverhältnissen zwischen individuellen Optionen von Akteurinnen, ermöglichenden und limitierenden Faktoren in den Organisationsstrukturen sowie in den spezifischen organisationalen Feldern von MSO. Das konkrete Erkenntnisinteresse und das Untersuchungsdesign, mit dem sich die Arbeit diesem annimmt, wird im einführenden *Kapitel 1* nachvollziehbar gemacht.

Im ersten Teil der Arbeit (*Kapitel 2–4)* werden der theoretische Rahmen der Studie sowie damit einhergehende gegenstandstheoretische Annahmen expliziert. Im Zentrum von *Kapitel 2* steht die umfassende Auseinandersetzung mit (de-)konstruktivistischen Forschungsperspektiven sowie die Zusammenführung von Migrations- und Genderforschung unter Berücksichtigung intersektionalitätstheoretischer Überlegungen zu MSO (S. 21). Die Autorin plädiert hier für ein machtkritisches sozialkonstruktivistisches Verständnis gesellschaftlicher Differenzkategorien. Insbesondere als Migrationsandere gelesene Frauen verfügen über geschlechts- und migrationsspezifische Erfahrungen, deren Ursprung in gesellschaftlichen Differenzordnungen liegt (S. 101), daher rückt die Autorin „Frauen-MSO" in den Fokus ihrer Studie. Diese versteht sie als „Self-Empowermentstrategien innerhalb dominanter Systeme – Mehrheitsgesellschaft und Migranten-Community" (S. 96), die Räume der Selbstbestimmung, Partizipation und des Widerstandes eröffnen (S. 101).

Kapitel 3 widmet sich einer professionalisierungstheoretischen Auseinandersetzung mit dem Forschungsgegenstand MSO. MSO werden aufgrund ihrer Tätigkeitsfelder und Ziele als „intermediäre[r] pädagogische[r] Institutionaltyp" (S. 183) bestimmt und pädagogische Professionalität und Professionalisierung auf ihre Relation zu Topoi der Sozialen Arbeit, der Migrationsarbeit sowie der Erwachsenenbildung befragt. Hieran anknüpfend sind Akteurinnen innerhalb „von MSO als Vermittlungsinstanzen zwischen Migrantinnen und Gesellschaft [zu] fassen, die damit beschäftigt sind, Lernprozesse zu initiieren, die eine Teilnahme an der Gesellschaft verbessern und Autonomie befördern" (S. 133). Schließlich werden Konsequenzen für die Professionalisierung von MSO und den ihnen zugehörigen Akteurinnen auf vier Handlungsebenen (Gesellschaft, Institutionen, Organisationen und Individuum) plausibilisiert.

In *Kapitel 4* wird Biografie als verbindendes Konzept von Professionalisierung, Bildung und Differenz eingeführt. Im Fokus steht hierbei die These, dass sich Professionalisierungsprozesse in lebensgeschichtlichen Erfahrungen verdeutlichen und in Zusammenhang stehende Rollen- und Selbstverständnisse von Akteurinnen in Biografien artikulierbar werden (S. 205).

Kapitel 5 widmet sich den methodologischen und methodischen Grundlagen der Studie. Methodologisch wird auf das Konzept der Biografie sowie die Grounded Theory (S. 210) zurückgegriffen. Unter Berücksichtigung sowohl subjektseitiger als auch struktureller Aspekte von Professionalisierungsprozessen innerhalb von MSO wurden autobiografisch-narrative (Expertinnen-)Interviews und Dokumente – die MSO zur Außendarstellung nutzen – analysiert (S. 233). Der Auswertungsprozess lässt sich als Kombination aus Narrationsanalyse und Kodierung entlang der Grounded Theory beschreiben, der durch die Verzahnung der Akteurs- und Organisationsebene in eine Typenbildung mündet (S. 253). Ziel dieser methodischen Ausrichtung ist die Erfassung der Wechselwirkung institutioneller Etablierung und Professionalisierung einerseits und biografischer Erfahrungsaufschichtung und individueller Bildung der Akteurinnen andererseits.

In den *Kapiteln 6 bis 9* werden die gewonnenen Befunde ausführlich dargestellt und diskutiert. Im *6. Kapitel* veranschaulichen drei Fallanalysen exemplarisch professionelle Selbstverständnisse der befragten Akteurinnen. Es zeigt sich die Relevanz der biografischen Passung zwischen individueller Professionalisierung, organisationalen Positionierungen und Self-Empowermentstrategien. Mittels kontrastiver Fallvergleiche werden anschließend in *Kapitel 7* drei mustertypische Passungsverhältnisse herausgearbeitet: (1) Engagierte Parteilichkeit und die Repräsentation des Kollektivs, (2) Professionelle Widerständigkeit und Selbstbestimmung durch das Kollektiv und (3) Professionelle Solidarität und organisationale Artikulation (S. 410). Zentral sind je unterschiedliche Ressourcen, die Akteurinnen aufgrund ihrer Tätigkeit in MSO vor dem Hintergrund ihrer biografischen Erfahrungen aktivieren konnten, um Self-Empowermentprozesse anzustoßen.

Kapitel 8 verdichtet die empirischen Befunde und stellt Rückbezüge zu den im ersten Teil der Dissertation umrissenen, theoretischen Konturen einer biografisch- und differenzreflektierten Professionalisierungsforschung her. Die theoretisch begründete Forderung, den defizitorientierten Blick auf Migrationsbiografien durch ressourcenorientierte Perspektiven zu ersetzen, erhält hier eine empirische Erdung und Konkretisierung (S. 486).

Das abschließende *Kapitel 9* befasst sich mit Implikationen der empirischen Befunde für wissenschaftliche und gesellschaftliche Diskurse. Die Autorin plädiert explizit für „Anerkennung von geschlechts- und migrationsspezifischen Positionierungen und Betroffenheit als Teil von professionellem Erfahrungswissen" (S. 508).

Insgesamt liegt ein Band vor, dem es besonders gelingt, sich vom verkürzten Integrationsdiskurs um MSO abzuheben. Darüber hinaus leistet die Autorin eine präzise Verortung des Forschungsgegenstands am Schnittfeld von Sozialer Arbeit, Migrationsarbeit und Erwachsenenbildung, welche weiterführende erziehungswissenschaftliche Forschung legitimiert. Die Studie liefert fundiertes Reflexionswissen zu Professionalisierungsprozessen und -anforderungen innerhalb des spezifischen Feldes MSO. Besonders hervorzuheben ist die differenzierte Darstellung der Befunde, die aufgrund der Breite der berücksichtigten Handlungsebenen vielfältige theoretische wie empirische Anschlussmöglichkeiten bieten. Denkbar wären organisationstheoretische Analysen zu Organisationskultur oder Untersuchungen zu Handlungskoordination zwischen MSO und anderen Akteuren aus Perspektive der Educational Governance.

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