Coordination of Action in Adult Education Organizations

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E-Journal Einzelbeitrag
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"It has a lot to do with trust…" – Mechanisms of Social Control in the Coordination of Action between Teaching and Planning Staff in Adult Education Organizations

Die Handlungskoordination zwischen planend-disponierendem und lehrendem Personal stellt einen Schlüsselprozess für die Ermöglichung des Lernens Erwachsener in organisationalen Kontexten dar. Angelehnt an die Systemtheorie, die Strukturationstheorie und den Neo-Institutionalismus werden Vertrauen und Macht als Mechanismen sozialer Kontrolle in diesen Koordinationsprozessen identifiziert. Der vorliegende Beitrag erkundet, wie diese Mechanismen die Handlungskoordination zwischen planend-disponierendem und lehrendem Personal in Weiterbildungsorganisationen regulieren. Um dieser Frage nachzugehen, wurden 18 Expert:inneninterviews anhand qualitativ strukturierender Inhaltsanalyse ausgewertet. Die Ergebnisse weisen auf die regulative Bedeutsamkeit personalisierter sozialer Kontrollmechanismen vor dem Hintergrund eher schwach ausgeprägter institutioneller Strukturierungen hin.

The coordination of action between teaching and planning staff is a key process for the facilitation of adult learning in organizational settings. Informed by system theory, structuration theory and neo-institutionalism, trust and power are identified as mechanisms of social control in the context of such coordination processes. The present paper explores how these mechanisms regulate the coordination of action between teaching and planning staff in adult education organizations. 18 expert interviews were analyzed by means of structuring qualitative content analysis in order to address the research question. The findings point to the regulative significance of personalized mechanisms of social control against the background of rather weak institutional arrangements.

Schlagworte: coordination of action; adult education; trust; power; adult education organization; Handlungskoordination; Erwachsenenbildung; Weiterbildung; Vertrauen; Macht; Weiterbildungsorganisation

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1 Introduction

Coordination of action is a social phenomenon that is immanent to society, not only in everyday bilateral interactions but also as a structuring feature in more complex social systems. In organizations, coordination of action is of particular significance since various actors are subsumed here in a social system with a specific purpose and their individual efforts and interests need to be aligned accordingly. Therefore, organizational governance is concerned with researching

> "…how agents, pursuing their own interests, and differing in terms of preferences, knowledge/information and endowments, may deploy instruments of control and influence to regulate their transactions" (Foss & Klein 2007, 5).

In adult education, questions of organizational governance are particularly relevant due to the constitutive structure of the division of labor in the provision of adult learning which is especially delicate in the interaction between planning staff within the organization and teaching staff with usually no formalized or permanent organizational affiliation. Adult education research has thus far looked at leadership in adult education organizations (e. g. Herbrechter 2016), at interactions in the context of program planning (e. g. von Hippel & Röbel 2016, Alke & Graß 2019) or at the intersections between different actor groups (e. g. administrative staff and educational managers, Franz & Scheffel 2017; for an overview, see Goeze & Stodolka 2019). While there are a few studies on the interaction between teaching and planning staff, these focus on what constitutes the basis for such interaction (Schrader 2001), on recruitment practices and different patterns of division of labor (Schneider 2019) or modes of selecting and governing trainers based on economic logics (Howe 2005).

However, following the organizational governance perspective, it still remains unclear how the actions of teachers and trainers are oriented towards the organizational goal under the condition of them usually being only loosely tied to the organization. Here, trust and power come into play as social control mechanisms (Bachmann 2002), i. e. social coordinative mechanisms that account for regulating behavior in interactive settings. Trust has been identified as a crucial means of coordinating interpersonal cooperation in adult education organizations, especially in flexible organizational settings which lack stabilizing formal and depersonalized rules (Schrader 2001). Power permeates coordination of action in different forms and constellations, for example through hierarchical practices, orientations and rules in adult education organizations (Herbrechter 2016). The present study therefore explores the question of how trust and power as mechanisms of social control regulate the coordination of action between teaching staff and planning staff in adult education organizations. The objective is to shed light on coordinative practices in adult education organizations and their embeddedness in personal, organizational and institutional arrangements based on a sociological, multi-level perspective on coordination of action.

First, the theoretical framework will be unfolded focusing on trust and power as coordinative control mechanisms (chapter 2.1). As a part of the theoretical foundation,

the phenomenon of coordination of action will be framed in the specific context of adult education (chapter 2.2). Following explanations on the methodical design (chapter 3), the findings on the mechanisms of social control will be presented and discussed (chapter 4). Finally, the article concludes with a summary and implications for further research (chapter 5).

2 Theoretical Framework

In order to examine mechanisms of social control in the context of coordination of action between teaching and planning staff in adult education organizations, the theoretical framework first needs to modify trust and power as coordinative control mechanisms based on insights from structuration theory, system theory and institutional theory (chapter 2.1). Following, coordination of action will then be contextualized in the specific field of adult education and condensed to the interaction between teaching and planning staff (chapter 2.2).

2.1 Trust and Power as Social Control Mechanisms

From an actor-oriented sociological theory viewpoint, coordination of action is a social phenomenon which occurs whenever "a subject gets into the perception and relevance field of another[1]" (Schimank 2016, 44) providing a need for coordinating expectations and actions. Following system theory, coordination of action is a continuous process of reducing complexity and uncertainty (Luhmann 2014). While coordination of action appears as a regular social phenomenon in modern societies, it is of crucial significance in organizations since different responsibilities, tasks and actions of various actors need to be aligned towards the organizational goals (Foss & Klein 2007). According to Bachmann (2002), "the question of how to integrate different actors' expectations and interaction lies at the heart of any organization's identity" (p.2). Coordinating different actions and interests is an essential precondition for the existence and persistence of an organization (ibid.). Given that stable organizations exist and usually continue to exist even when their environment changes, actors come and go and interests diverge, it can be assumed that coordination of action is regulated not by individual persons but by "certain social mechanisms" (Bachmann 2002, 2). Trust and power have been identified as such social control mechanisms in (organizational) actor relations (Bachmann 2001/2002/2003, Martin 2003). In the following, these mechanisms and the respective theoretical framings from structuration theory, system theory and institutional theory will be explained allowing for an analysis of the coordination of action between teaching and planning staff in adult education organizations while also acknowledging its embeddedness in multi-level structures and institutional contexts.

According to Luhmann (2014), trust serves as a means of reducing complexity in any social interaction. It is granted in advance thus allowing for specific assumptions of

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1   All translations from German publications and from the interviews were made by the author.

another actor's behavior (Bachmann 2001, Luhmann 2014). Likewise, the trustee is able to make assumptions about the preferred behavior which might direct his or her choices of (re)action (Bachmann 2001). However, trust still remains a "risky engagement" (Bachmann 2001, 342; Luhmann 2014). The trustor manages the risk by identifying "objective clues" (Luhmann 2014, 40) which make the risk acceptable. Objective clues might be based on information about the trustee, e.g. their overall trustworthiness or their motives, or they might be based on possibilities for sanctions that can be applied in cases of deviant behavior, e.g. based on legal regulations (Luhmann 2014). Similarly, structuration theory points to the perspective that actors not only refer to and interact with *each other*. Instead, structural arrangements influence the coordination of action in that they serve as orientation frameworks to which the actors refer in their actions, thus reproducing these structures. Following this, Giddens (1991) incorporates a personal and structural component in his concept of trust and defines it as "confidence in the reliability of a person or system, regarding a given set of outcomes or events" (p.48).

Thus, there is a personalized and a depersonalized component of trust depending on whether objective clues are found in the trustees themselves or whether they are rooted in structural arrangements. These structural arrangements do not necessarily refer to legal regulations or other formalized structures but have a more latent aspect to them which can be clarified when complemented by insights from institutional theory. Scott (1999) defines institutions as "cultured-cognitive, normative, and regulative elements that, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability" (p.48). Stable institutions in the form of shared norms, values and common standards of behavior thus contribute to minimizing the risk of being betrayed and regulate behavior in accordance with expectations (Bachmann 2001; see also Zucker 1986, Powell 1996, Fukuyama 1995). Likewise, "social rules" (Bachmann 2002, 5) existing within the organization regulate the actions of its members. This "structural inventory of the organization" can be found for instance in "patterns of division of work and the distribution of responsibilities" or in "various other agreements and practices" that are established within an organization thus creating a "world-in-common" (ibid., 6). Accordingly, it is assumed that stable institutional arrangements within or outside of the organization create a reliable basis for trust (Bachmann 2001, 2002).

Consequently, based on the previous theoretical explanations, the concept of trust will be further distinguished here into "*personal trust*" (Bachmann 2002, 8), i.e. trust in a specific person and their reliability and competences based on experiences in direct interactions or other objective clues (e.g. formal qualifications), and "*institutional trust*" (ibid.), i.e. trust in stable institutional arrangements within or beyond the organization that make deviant behavior of the trustee less probable. The category of *system trust* referring to manifest structures such as "formal social positions as well as […] the reliability of technical systems, standards and procedures" (Bachmann 2002, 9) also needs to be mentioned here. However, this form of trust is not included in the analysis as it incorporates system *power* as an antecedent and is thus not reliably empirically distinguishable from this power mechanism (see below).

While trust is a very resource-preserving mechanism of social control, it is also risky and fragile and, in some cases, a social actor might not (yet) be able to identify sufficient objective clues for establishing trust (Bachmann 2001, 2002). Here, power comes in as another mechanism to coordinate actions and regulate the social dynamics. According to Luhmann (1979), power works by influencing "the *selection* of actions (or inaction) in the face of other possibilities" (p.112; emphasis in original). In contrast to trust, which builds on the trustor having positive assumptions about the trustee's behavior, power is wielded in order to control hypothetically assumed deviant behavior (Bachmann 2001, 350). According to Giddens (1984), the ability to exert power is based on the possession of "authoritative" and "allocative" resources (p.32) referring to the capability to coordinate the activities of human actors (authoritative resources) and to the control over the distribution and use of material objects (allocative resources). An actor might choose to use his or her resources in order to control another actor's behavior whenever trust is considered too risky which especially occurs in social systems with weak "institutional regulation" (Bachmann 2001, 352). Simultaneously, in cases of strong institutional frameworks, individual power as well as personal trust become less relevant and institutional trust is likely to be more dominant. However, this does not necessarily mean that no power mechanism is at work at all. It might be present "as *system power* in the form of law, powerful trade associations, inflexible business practices, technical standardization, and rigid structures of hierarchy" (Bachmann 2001, 352; emphasis in original). System power thus serves as a prerequisite for system trust and might complement institutional trust. Subsequently, power as a means of influencing the selection opportunities of another actor (Luhmann 2012) also appears in a personalized and depersonalized form. *Personal power* refers to the capability of an individual actor using their authoritative or allocative resources in order to influence the selection possibilities of another actor while *system power* depicts structural conditions beyond individual actors that influence their scope of action.

To sum up, coordination of action between actors within and beyond organizations can be regulated by the social control mechanisms of trust and power. Both mechanisms can appear in a personalized and actor-specific form (personal trust, personal power) or in a depersonalized form referring to institutional or structural arrangements (institutional trust, system power). This distinction brings about the need to take into consideration the different organizational and institutional settings in adult education (see chapter 2.2). While it has already been elaborated on that coordination of action is mostly realized with both trust and power dynamics at work (Bachmann 2001, 2002), it is of great significance in the upcoming analysis which mechanisms are dominant, which mechanisms co-occur and under which conditions they appear in the specific context of adult education organizations.

2.2   Coordination of Action in Adult Education Organizations

In adult education organizations, such need for coordination of action is distinctly coined by a multi-level framework (Schemmann & Bonn 2023). Various actors on the micro-level of teaching and learning processes (e. g. teaching staff, learners), the meso-

level of the organization (e. g. planning staff, leaders, administrative staff) and the macro-level of the institutional environment (e. g. providers, international organizations) (Schrader 2011) coordinate their actions in order to provide educational offers for adult learners. The micro-meso interaction of facilitators and trainers with their responsibility for facilitating learning processes and planning staff (e. g. educational managers, department heads, human resource managers) with their responsibility for recruiting and guiding the teaching staff is at the core of coordinated action in adult education since it is immediately directed at the overall objective, namely the provision of adult learning. While it is a crucial moment of coordination, it is also a very complex one considering that the facilitators and trainers are mostly loosely tied to the organization without any formal or permanent affiliation (Hahnrath & Herbrechter 2022) while the planning staff is responsible to coordinate their actions towards the organizational goal and align their individual offers with a comprehensive educational program. In addition, most of the work of adult education facilitators for an organization is conducted autonomously without any direct supervision making social control mechanisms particularly relevant.

Furthermore, this coordination of action is not only realized in a context of blurring organizational affiliations but also in different institutional settings in the field of adult education in Germany which are known as reproduction contexts (Schrader 2011). Schrader (2011) identifies four reproduction contexts based on how organizations gain legitimacy (private vs. public interests) and how they secure resources (mandate vs. contract) (ibid.). In the context "communities" (Schrader 2011, 116), resources are secured by means of contract, i. e. "a voluntary, joint declaration of intent by two contracting parties" with equal rights (ibid., 115), and legitimacy is gained by appealing to public interests. The context "state" (Schrader 2011, 116) is distinguished by mandates as a means of resource securement and public interests as the source of legitimacy. A mandate is conceptualized as an order that "presupposes authority to issue instructions on the basis of which the commissioned body or person can be obliged to provide a specific service" (ibid., 115). In the contexts "market" and "companies" (Schrader 2011, 116), private interests are referred to in order to gain legitimacy. In the market context, contracts are the basis for securing resources whereas in the context of companies, mandates are used to obtain resources. Since these institutional contexts significantly shape the functioning of adult education organizations, it is essential to take them into consideration when researching mechanisms of social control.

3   Methodical Design

The methodical design for researching mechanisms of social control in the context of coordination of action between teaching and planning staff in adult education will be presented here focusing on the data collection and sampling procedure (chapter 3.1) followed by a brief overview on the analytical procedure (chapter 3.2).

3.1 Data Collection and Sampling Procedure

The present study aims to not only observe certain actions and mechanisms of social control but to *understand* and *explain* why and under which conditions these occur (Strübing 2018). Therefore, a qualitative approach is employed which allows to "explore, describe, or explain social phenomena" and to "make micro-macro links" (Leavy 2020, 2), i. e. illuminating the embeddedness of individuals and their interactions in broader contexts.

18 digital and in-person guideline-based expert interviews were collected between November 2021 and August 2022 with an average length of 60 minutes. Experts are conceptualized as actors with specific interpretive and experiential knowledge who "structure the concrete area of action for others in a meaningful and guiding way through their own interpretations" (Bogner et al. 2014, 13). Against the background of the research question, facilitators and trainers in adult education were interviewed as experts (N=8) as well as actors responsible for planning and coordinating educational programs in adult education organizations (N=10). This entanglement of perspectives allows for grasping views on an actor's own actions and intentions and also on how actions or intentions are perceived by other actors in a specific cooperative setting thus providing a comprehensive view on social control mechanisms. The guideline focused on the overall cooperation between teaching and planning staff and included questions on practices, experiences and perceptions of the actors regarding different facets and phases of this cooperation. As concerns regulative mechanisms of coordination of action, the guideline included specific questions on how and why influence is exerted and autonomy is granted or perceived in the course of the cooperation between teaching and planning staff.

The sampling procedure was oriented towards common principles of sampling in qualitative studies thus looking for the inclusion of contrast dimensions and aiming towards a representation of the diversity of empirical constellations in the researched field (Przyborski & Wohlrab-Sahr 2014). Therefore, the sampling strategy aimed at the selection of diverse sociocultural backgrounds of the actors (e. g. educational background, experience, area of expertise) and characteristics of the educational programs and at the consideration of different organizational and institutional characteristics. Following the latter, the organizations from which the planning actors were recruited were to be as prototypical as possible for the respective reproduction context (Schrader 2011, see chapter 2.2) in order to exemplify the different areas of the German adult education system and to contrast different institutional conditions. While teaching staff cannot be exclusively assigned to one reproduction context as they move freely within the adult education system, it was still assessed in which fields they are most active in order to systematically complement the sample.

3.2 Data Analysis

In preparation for the analysis, the interviews were audiotaped and transcribed (Lamnek & Krell 2016). The transcribed interviews were further separated into analytical content units (segments) following Schreier (2012). The interviews were then analyzed

by means of structuring content analysis (Mayring 2014). For the overall category system, an intra-coder reliability value (Brennan & Prediger 1981) of 0.88 was assessed which can be considered very good (Rädiker & Kuckartz 2019).

The present study builds on an in-depth analysis of the category '*autonomy*'. The category was assigned to all segments in which the actors uttered perspectives and interpretations on their own or the other actor's scopes of actions or how these are managed, i.e. to what extent and under which conditions or for which reasons scopes of actions are restricted or granted.

Thus, the category provides distinct insights into coordinative practices and mechanisms of social control. A total of 94 segments were coded with this category across the 18 interviews and included in the in-depth analysis. Based on the theoretical framework on social control mechanisms in coordinative processes, two categories with each two subcategories (TRUST: institutional trust & personal trust; POWER: system power & personal power) were deductively derived from the theoretical conceptualizations in chapter 2.1. The category TRUST comprises all segments that include assumptions on the reliability of a person or system. 'Personal trust' was coded when the reliability assumption was directly linked to a specific person, for instance based on previous cooperation experiences with that person. In contrast to this, the code 'institutional trust' was assigned for utterances showing trust in institutional arrangements such as the adult teaching profession in general or established mechanisms of learner feedback. In parallel, the category POWER comprises all segments in which the actors' scope of action is influenced by another actor ('personal power'), e.g. when the planning staff hierarchically controls the planning process, or by means of structural conditions ('system power'), e.g. when formalized funding conditions guide the actors' behavior.

4   Findings

Having established the analytical framework, the following chapter will now focus on the results by separately zooming in on the mechanisms of trust (4.1) and power (4.2) and then ending in a consolidating discussion on mechanisms of social control in adult education organizations (4.3).

4.1   Trust

Overall, trust, i.e. general confidence in someone's or something's reliability (Giddens 1991) without further specification, is very present in the coordination of action between teaching and planning staff in adult education. While facilitators and trainers across different reproduction contexts report a high degree of autonomy when conducting educational offers (e.g. UL-10, pos. 26; SL-09, pos. 13; SL-05, pos. 11), the planning actors equivalently explain that they usually trust the teaching staff and hardly interfere in their work (e.g. GP-03, pos. 83; GP-04, pos. 99; UP-14, pos. 62).

Institutional Trust

Institutional trust as trust that is rooted in stable institutional arrangements can be found in the coordination of action between teaching and planning staff in adult education in different manifestations. First and foremost, the interviewees across all contexts mention trust in an institutional arrangement that can be described as a system of feedback and "vote by feet" (Schrader 2001, 145). Both actor groups share the perception that trust is granted in the coordinative constellation as long as there is no negative feedback from the learners (e.g. GP-04, pos. 93; MP-08, pos. 77; UL-12, pos. 23). Accordingly, the facilitators and trainers are granted a leap of faith while being indirectly controlled through the institutional arrangement of learner feedback. Learner feedback is mostly referred to as the aforementioned "vote by feet", i.e. everything is fine "as long as we don't hear about any complaints" (GP-04, 93), but standardized evaluations also come into play here (GP-03, pos. 84; UL-12, pos. 23).

Only in some cases, the actors mention a fundamental, non-personalized trust in the overall expertise of adult education facilitators and trainers (GP-06, pos. 104; MP-08, pos. 77; GP-15, pos. 30/31). For instance, one planning actor explains that their organization leaves the content design mostly to the trainers instead of working with standardized curricula "since we rely very much on the expertise of the trainers" (MP-08, pos. 13). It is worth noting that this form of general trust in the expertise of facilitators and trainers, i.e. trust in the profession, seems to be quite weak. Considering the discourse on profession and professionalization in adult education, this observation might be explained by the yet developing professionalization of adult education teaching staff (Schrader et al. 2019). Most importantly, there is no standardized qualification for facilitators and trainers (ibid.) which might serve as an institutionally established objective clue for granting trust. Instead, more personalized approaches to trust prevail in the coordination of action (see section below). One trainer seems to note this lack of trust regarding the professional status of adult education teaching staff and even formulates the desire to be recognized in his "profession" and that the planning staff should acknowledge that he, as a trainer, knows best what format is needed "and that they can trust in that" (GL-16, pos. 75).

In relation to that, one planning actor explains that trust can easily be granted when it comes to educational offers with a clear curriculum and a clearly defined area of expertise (e.g. "camera trainings", GP-15, pos. 111) while more control is needed in knowledge areas that are less regulated, e.g. "the field of ethics" (ibid.). Accordingly, institutional arrangements in the form of different "forms of knowledge" (Schrader 2003, 228) might also serve as anchor points for the coordination of action between teaching and planning staff in adult education. Furthermore, one planning actor mentions trust in the institutional arrangement of the facilitator community, i.e. that the facilitators resolve any issues "among themselves" (MP-11, pos. 65) thus providing a stabilizing control mechanism. However, the interviewee states he regards this form of institutional trust as the only, but not ideal, option since his resources for control and intervention are very much restricted due to a lack of time considering the number of facilitators he is responsible for. This observation might point to the relevance of pro-

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fessional learning communities (Herbrechter et al. 2018) not only as a means of professionalization but also of relieving and stabilizing coordinative processes.

Personal Trust

In contrast to institutional trust, personal trust appears much more dominant across different reproduction contexts in the given sample. It can be observed that both facilitators and trainers and planning actors share the perception that their coordination of action is often regulated and stabilized through personalized shared experiences (e. g. SL-05 pos. 48; GP-06, pos. 104; MP-08, pos. 77; ML-18, pos. 13; ML-17, pos. 32). For instance, one interviewee who works in a human resources position for a large international company states that "it has a lot to do with trust and cooperation" (UP-14, pos. 119) and while new trainers are supervised quite closely, trainers with whom a solid basis of cooperation has developed over time are trusted completely. Here, trust in the expertise of the trainers does not build on a certain qualification but is developed through repeated good experiences thus providing solid objective clues for trust: "And when I know it's working, why would I interfere, do it, do it, you are the expert, you have proven that to me, I already know that" (ibid., pos. 121). In one case, a trainer even explains that personal trust gained through longstanding cooperation might replace processes of clarifying the mandate and objectives (UL-12, pos. 42) which usually serve to build trust and to negotiate and coordinate expectations and responsibilities regarding the development of an educational offer (Schneider 2019).

The pivotal function of recruitment processes and processes of clarifying the mandate and objectives in building trust which has already been pointed to by Schneider (2019) is further underlined in the given sample (e. g. GP-15, pos. 113; GL-16, pos. 33). One trainer exemplifies this observation by stating: "[...] we talked about what should be the outcome and we trust you with the process" (ML-17, pos. 19). During such clarification processes in which trust has yet to be established, power dynamics usually come into play (see chapter 4.2).

Complementary to these and the previous findings on institutional trust, it becomes obvious that (personal) trust sometimes appears not as a matter of choice but as the only option. For example, one facilitator who works for different adult education centers, explains that the department head at one of the adult education centers trusts her due to a lack of time resources for any form of close supervision or professional exchange (SL-05, pos. 48). Accordingly, structural arrangements within the organization potentially modify the coordination of action and the mechanisms of social control. In addition, not only organizational structures serve as modifiers but personal, actor-specific characteristics as well. For instance, a trainer describes that there might be planning actors with a distinct need of control and information which she cannot fulfil and "the only thing that helps is the fact that they trust me" (ML-17, pos. 53).

To sum up, trust serves as a crucial mechanism of social control in the coordination of action. The planning staff often finds objective clues that support taking the risk of trust either in institutional arrangements (system of learner feedback, profession and professional community, knowledge structures) or, more frequently, in the indi-

vidual person based on shared experiences and agreements in the context of recruitment and mandate clarification processes or through a more longstanding cooperation while the latter might further be shaped by both individual and organizational factors.

4.2   Power

System Power

Complementary to trust, mechanisms of power regulate the coordination of action between teaching and planning staff in that choices of action are influenced. While institutional trust refers to the reliance on strong institutional arrangements making deviant behavior of a trustee improbable, system power represents manifest structural conditions shaping an actor's behavior options. System power can often be found in the form of predefined curricula and other standards or structural frameworks for the educational program thus representing "technical systems, standards and procedures" (Bachmann 2002, 9). Such frameworks might either be provided by an actor in the institutional environment of the organization, e. g. ministries as public principals (e. g. SL-09, pos. 4), or they can be rooted in the organizational structure itself, e. g. in the form of standardized trainings in a company (e. g. UL-10, pos. 13).

Here, it becomes obvious that patterns of social control might actually vary depending on the reproduction context. In the given sample, it can be observed that system power is often perceived by actors in the reproduction contexts "state" and "companies" in which mandates serve as the main means of gaining resources. Accordingly, the structural framework might be tighter and more powerful here since the outcome of an educational program is directly linked to a specific mandate and thus to the securement of resources. Furthermore, the regulatory framework of single educational offers might be controlled through system power. This can be exemplified by the case of integration courses offered (amongst others) at adult education centers in Germany. The learning objective, the content and the learning materials are prescribed by the ministry and there is an obligation to report about the learning processes which directly affects the coordination of action between facilitators and planners since they need to be in close communication about what happens in the courses (SL-09, pos. 4). In addition, any educational offer working towards a formalized qualification is pre-structured by means of system power (e. g. MP-11, pos. 19, GP-04, pos. 103). For these kinds of offers, there are predefined curricula and standardized exams relieving the coordinative complexity for both actors and making deviant behavior of the facilitators and trainers less probable.

Furthermore, organizational conditions might shape the actors' scopes of action for example through "inflexible business practices", "standardization" or "structures of hierarchy" (Bachmann 2001, 352). Organizational routines, practices or rules can influence the process of educational program development mostly with regard to the content and temporal structure of an educational offer (UL-10, pos. 13/19; UL-12, pos. 16). Some utterances of the interviewees might even indicate that there are certain organization-specific preferences, or even cultures, of how educational offers are set up. For instance, one interviewee mentions "there is one agency that is super strict, they are

very, very strict" (ML-18, pos. 14) and another trainer explains that it depends very much on the organization and some "want to know everything from A to Z" (UL-12, pos. 20).

Interestingly, some facilitators and trainers problematize mechanisms of system power since it restricts their professional autonomy. One interviewee feels "confined" (GL-16, pos. 36), another one describes a feeling of being "cooped up in a corset" (UL-10, pos. 19) and even though system powers prescribe certain directions, it is still up to the facilitators and trainers to re-interpret these by means of their personal powers: "So, I do take liberties but the goal is, eh, prescribed [...]" (SL-09, pos. 14).

Personal Power

Personal power, in contrast to system power, is linked to a specific actor and his or her authoritative or allocative resources (cf. chapter 2.1). Mostly, personal power comes into play when content and outline of the educational offer need to be negotiated between the educational manager and the facilitator or trainer and the different perspectives and interests need to be aligned towards the organizational goal (e. g. SP-02, pos. 83; GP-04, pos. 98; MP-08, pos. 22; UL-12, pos. 29). In such processes of clarifying the mandate and objectives, the planning staff usually acts on behalf of organizational aspirations while the teaching staff seems to exert personal power on behalf of personal and professional interests. For example, a human resources manager intends to make sure that the educational offer meets the demands and needs of the company and matches their philosophy (ML-17, pos. 20) or an educational manager in a private, politically oriented adult education organization uses his authoritative resources in order to align the facilitator's concept with their organizational learning culture (GP-04, pos. 50). Furthermore, the planning staff might use their power as long as trust has not yet been established and supervision is deemed necessary (UP-14, pos. 64/117) or in case of deviant, trust-breaking behavior of the trainers: "But if I have the feeling that someone is not adhering to the guidelines at all [...], then he will not be reinstated" (GP-15, pos. 85).

Meanwhile, the facilitators and trainers use their personal power to secure their professional autonomy in order to be able to conduct teaching and learning processes according to their personal and professional standards. Here, two power strategies can be identified since the facilitators and trainers either use their authoritative resources by making the degree of autonomy a precondition for working for the organization at all (e. g. GL-16, pos. 48) or by taking liberties in how they actually realize their educational offers (e. g. SL-09, pos. 14; UL-10, pos. 27). While the first type more directly shapes the opportunities of action for the planning staff in the context of recruitment processes, the latter more implicitly retroacts on the coordination of action. It can be assumed that the liberties taken by the teaching staff only stimulate re-actions in case of negative feedback, either in the form of participants' voices or in the form of failed exams or tasks, i. e. when the organizational goal is perceived to be at risk. Thus, institutional trust prevails on the side of the planning staff without any need for action as long as facilitators and trainers use their personal power in alignment with the organizational objectives. In the given sample, this requirement is usually fulfilled since the facilitators and trainers justify their actions against the background of learner interests

which they anticipate through their professional experience or observe or assess in the context of the immediate teaching and learning setting (e. g. ML-13, pos. 64; UL-10, pos. 130, SL-09, pos. 14).

Apart from professional reasons, this kind of personal power on the side of the teaching staff sometimes seems to be dependent on the personality of the respective actor and their readiness to use that power on behalf of their beliefs and objectives. For instance, one trainer who works for companies repeatedly states that "I regard this as my personal freedom" (UL-10, pos. 27). He strongly dislikes prescribed "schedules" (ibid., pos. 135) and too much involvement by the planning staff is considered "interference" (ibid., pos. 129). Accordingly, he uses his allocative resources, namely the power over his own didactic plans and pedagogical realization of his seminars, and thus reinterprets the power dynamics emanating from the organization and the planning staff. In parallel, another facilitator argues that the plans presented by the planning staff need to correspond with both his values and beliefs and with his work philosophy (GL-16, pos. 48). Since his educational offers in the field of diversity and discrimination are strongly value-based, this might intensify the need for an alignment of personal values and educational plans thus indicating another example of knowledge forms (Schrader 2003) influencing the coordination of action. This case can also be found in a reverse setting with the planning actor using his or her personal power whenever the knowledge field of a certain educational offer is value-based and not clearly defined and the facilitators are more directly instructed and prepared for their work (GP-15, pos. 111).

Accordingly, personal power is displayed by both actors in order to restrict or regain autonomy. However, once a cooperative agreement has been made, the planning staff usually holds crucial authoritative and allocative resources enabling them to "determine[s] which specific mixture of trust and power will dominate the relationship" (Bachmann 2002, 16).

4.3   Mechanisms of Social Control in Adult Education Organizations

In the following, an initial suggestion for an understanding of how mechanisms of social control regulate the coordination of action between teaching and planning staff in adult education will be approached and contextualized. Overall, it can be observed that personalized mechanisms of social control (personal trust, personal power) dominate across different reproduction contexts while institutional or structural arrangements are less prevalent. As a general pattern across different organizational and institutional contexts, it can be identified that coordination mechanisms evolve around processes of clarifying the mandate and objectives which serve not only to negotiate interests and ideas regarding the educational offer by means of personal power but also to build personal trust between the actor groups thus reducing complexity and uncertainty for both actors. Continued good experiences in the cooperation then further stabilize this basis of trust and mechanisms of power are shifted to the background. Recruitment practices oriented towards the fit between a facilitator and trainer and the organizational identity and values have been found to be quite common in adult educa-

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"It has a lot to do with trust…" – Mechanisms of Social Control in the Coordination of Action between
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tion organizations (Ambos et al. 2015) and might serve to initially regulate this trust building process (Schneider 2019).

However, as it appears in the given sample, thorough and systematically structured processes of clarifying the mandate and objectives are no standard in adult education. Rather, they seem to be most prevalent in the reproduction context "companies" while in the other reproduction contexts, these processes seem to depend on the individual practice of the educational managers as well as on the format of the educational offer and the organizational interests related to the specific offer. The risk evaluation on the side of the planning actors regarding the trust in facilitators and trainers apparently differs with regard to the educational offers concerned. In some instances, the planning actors more willingly take the risk of simply trusting a facilitator or trainer and start with a 'trial balloon' which is also supported by the structural arrangement of the usual short-term contracts making it easy to terminate an unsuccessful cooperation after a test phase of one course length. These instances of 'trial trust' could be observed in the context of educational offers that relate not only to specified learning goals but also to leisure activities (e. g. sports and health courses) or in contexts where there is no third party involved (e. g. a principal outside of the organization) or, lastly, in cases where no special organizational interest is behind the educational offer.

Furthermore, clearly defined knowledge areas, i. e. knowledge-related institutional arrangements, might relieve the coordinative efforts. Trust is strengthened by the existence of clear knowledge fields while especially "orientation knowledge" (Schrader 2003, 244) seems to challenge the coordination of action and require profound communication and exchange between the two parties in the context of which personal power shifts to the foreground again.

Accordingly, personal trust and processes of clarifying the mandate and objectives usually compensate weak institutional arrangements in adult education since facilitators and trainers are usually only loosely tied to the organization and its goals, there are no qualification standards (Schrader et al. 2019) and also no generally valid definitions of the success of teaching and learning processes (Hartz & Meisel 2011) which might serve as stabilizing arrangements for trust. The coordination of action between teaching and planning staff in adult education organizations is therefore not only rooted in questions of organizational governance but also directly linked to the discourse on profession and professionalization in adult education. Instead of profession-related arrangements, institutional trust can often be found in the form of trust in the learners, i. e. that the educational managers rely on the learners to verbalize negative feedback or utter concerns creating a "control body of content participants" (Schneider 2019, 204). Accordingly, the common orientation of planning and teaching staff towards the learner interests helps in setting up a stable framework, a "world-in-common" (Bachmann 2002, 6) for the coordination of action.

Finally, these patterns are in some cases further shaped and complemented by system power. This mechanism often appears when there are strong influences from the institutional context of the organization, mostly when the resources are secured by means of orders in the reproduction contexts "state" and "companies" or whenever cur-

ricula are regulated and oriented towards common qualification standards, for example in the context of vocational education. Furthermore, the organizational setting co-structures the actors' scopes of action and their coordinative activities even to a point where one might assume that underlying organizational cultures of educational planning (and teaching) might take effect here (see Franz 2017, Dollhausen 2008).

5   Conclusion and Outlook

With regard to the question of how mechanisms of social control regulate the coordination of action between adult education teaching staff and planning staff in adult education organizations, it can be concluded that there appears to be a conglomerate of power and trust with a personalized pattern in the foreground while institutional arrangements (yet) seem to remain mostly latent and system power appears in isolated cases only. This also demonstrates the multi-level framing of the coordination of action between teaching and planning staff since their coordinative practices are shaped both by the learners on the micro level, the organizational context on the meso-level and by institutional arrangements in the organizational environment.

In the present study, the focus has been set on exploring mechanisms of social control in adult education organizations across different contexts. The study might serve as a starting point for further engaging in research on coordinative practices in different settings and from various discourse perspectives in order to advance both scientific knowledge and professional practices. For instance, further research might focus on identifying "regimes of organizational control" (Bachmann 2002, 20) in specific adult education organizations by means of a case study. This might inform both the discourse on coordination of action and the organizational discourse in adult education by producing knowledge on how coordinative practices and organizational characteristics are interconnected. In addition, following initial hints to differences with regard to reproduction contexts in this study, future research might further engage in analyzing coordination of action in different institutional settings, for example by means of contrastive designs.

Finally, having established that the coordination of action between teaching and planning staff in adult education organizations is directly linked to the issue of professionalization, it is up to future research to examine how efforts of competence validation (e. g. Autorengruppe GRETA-Konsortium 2022) might affect not only processes of recruitment but also of cooperation and whether such competence frameworks might, for instance, increase institutional trust and thus promote resource efficient coordinative practices.

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