

Who Publishes What? – A Bibliometric Study of Papers from the Global South in International Journals of Adult Education Research

TIM VETTER

Abstract

On the one hand, the paper follows the approach of mapping the rapidly changing field of adult education research through the quantitative approach of bibliometrics, and on the other hand, it takes up the hypothesis of the underrepresentation of adult education researchers from the Global South in the research field. It focuses on the question of how often adult education researchers from the Global South are able to place their work in indexed international journals of adult education research, what visibility their articles gain, and what topics they address. Methodologically oriented on already conducted bibliometric studies in adult education research, all contributions of authors from the Global South of the years 2000–2020 in nine indexed journals of adult education research were examined for this purpose. The results show, among other things, that perspectives of scholars from the Global South are strongly underrepresented in the renowned journals considered, that the published articles receive less attention than is usual for the journals and that this could also be related to the topics covered.

Keywords: Bibliometrics in adult education research; Global South; Journal Analysis; Open Science

Abstract

Der Beitrag schließt einerseits an den Diskurs zur Kartographierung des sich stetig wandelnden Feldes der Erwachsenenbildungsforschung über den quantitativen Zugang der Bibliometrie an und greift andererseits die Hypothese der Unterrepräsentanz von Erwachsenenbildungsforschenden aus dem Globalen Süden im Forschungsfeld auf. Im Zentrum steht die Frage, wie häufig Erwachsenenbildungsforschende aus dem Globalen Süden ihre Arbeit in indextierten internationalen Zeitschriften der Erwachsenenbildungsforschung platzieren können, welche Sichtbarkeit ihre Beiträge erlangen und mit welchen Themen sie sich auseinandersetzen. Methodisch orientiert an bereits durchgeführten bibliometrischen Studien in der Erwachsenenbildungsforschung wurden hierzu alle Beiträge von Autor:innen aus Ländern des globalen Südens der Jahrgänge 2000–2020 in neun indextierte Zeitschriften der Erwachsenenbildungsforschung untersucht. Die Ergebnisse zeigen dabei u. a., dass Perspektiven von Wissenschaftler:innen aus dem Globalen Süden in den berücksichtigten renommierten

ten Zeitschriften stark unterrepräsentiert sind, die publizierten Beiträge weniger Aufmerksamkeit erhalten als es bei den Zeitschriften üblich ist und dies auch mit den behandelten Themen zusammenhängen könnte.

Keywords: Bibliometrie in der Erwachsenenbildungsforschung; Globaler Süden; Zeitschriftenanalyse; Open Science

1 Framing in the Context of Bibliometric Studies in Adult Education Research

This paper is located in the sub-research area of mapping the field of adult education research. In order to illustrate that in this subfield no attention has yet been paid to the group of authors brought into focus in the present paper, bibliometric studies in adult education research will first be examined.

The emerging cartographies are attempts to map out particular conditions, developments or trends in the rapidly changing research field (Fejes & Wildemeersch 2015, p. 97). Bibliometric analyses mainly use the medium of scientific journals for quantitative access to such overview efforts and are defined by the OECD Glossary of Statistical Terms as “(...) statistical analysis of books, articles, or other publications to measure the output of individuals/research teams, institutions, and countries, to identify national and international networks, and to map the development of multidisciplinary fields of science and technology” (OECD 2008, p.49). Bibliometric data were first taken up as an object of analysis in adult education research by using the bibliometric indicator of citation analysis by Boshier and Pickard (1979). Without explicitly placing their quantitative study in the context of bibliometrics, the authors evaluated the citations of all original articles in the journal *Adult Education Quarterly* over a 10-year period, determined the influence of individual scholars, and listed the most cited scholars. Field et al (1991) and Gillen (1993) adopt Boshier and Pickard’s methodology for their citation analyses in other journals of adult education research. The main focus of both papers was to explore the opportunities and limitations of citation analysis for measuring quality in adult education research. Both studies come to the conclusion that the evaluation of citation numbers only allows a very limited view of quality.

While the authors are concerned with assessing the evolution of adult education research into a distinct research field, the citation analyses of Gillens (1994) and Robinson (1996) take a geographically narrowed approach with a focus on Canada. In addition, the authors also choose divergent data sources with conference papers and master theses.

In addition to citation analysis, productivity analysis plays a major role in the context of bibliometrics. The number of publications by scholars, institutions or research groups is often evaluated as a productivity indicator in this context. In adult education research, this analysis was first conducted by Rachel and Sargent (1995) focusing on North American adult education research institutions with a focus on five journals

also located in North America. The first author repeated this evaluation for other time periods and different subsegments of adult education research (Rachal et al. 1996; Rachal & William 2005; Rachal et al. 2008) although the North American focus remains.

It is only with Larsson's (2010) citation analysis that bibliometric work emerges in the field, both explicitly as such, and adding analytical complexity by broadening perspectives. For example, Larsson (2010) takes a geographical perspective on the citations of three indexed international adult education research journals and intertwines this with an analysis of actor networks. The study can thus not only prove the dominance of anglophone authors, but also a dominant (citation) network of the same. Confirming findings are those by Fejes and Nylander (2014), who focus particularly on the top cited authors in three adult education journals between 2005–2012, and Larsson et al. (2019). Adult education research is thus largely anchored in national or language-bound discourse spaces (Schüßler & Egetenmeyer 2018, p. 1074). More recent studies use sources obtained through bibliometric data collection processes to link qualitative (Fejes & Nylander 2015; Käßlinger 2015) and quantitative content analyses (Nylander et al. 2022). The work with a linked qualitative content analysis is methodologically oriented (content algorithms) to the field-forming work of Taylor (2001) and Long (1983).

All of the bibliometric studies in the field of adult education research have a number of defining parameters in common with regard to the data basis and the findings generated. Thus, all studies focus on publication organs (journals and conferences) whose place of origin and publishing can be assigned to the Global North. The focus (with the exception of Nylander et al. 2022) is particularly on those contributions that are especially successful from a bibliometric point of view. The results show, among other things, that especially authors whose institutional locations can be assigned to Anglophone countries of the Global North dominate the journals and conferences. Fejes and Nylander (2014; 2017) speak of an anglophone bias here: "Knowledge produced in other locations than the Anglophone regions is to a high extent invisible in the wider scientific conversations, either by not being published in these journals in the first place or by not rendering much scholarly attention" (Fejes & Nylander 2017, p. 6). This invisibility is reinforced by the benchmark character that seems to be inherent in bibliometric analyses. In order to be able to generate a more accurate picture of explanatory contexts of the underrepresentation of authors from countries of the Global South, a bibliometric study of this group of authors is needed, with the addition of a content-analytical evaluation of the published contributions of this group. In the neighboring discipline of sociology, such a discourse is already more advanced with the help of a perspective critical of colonialism (e. g. Alatas 2003). More specifically, in the context of academic publishing, the phenomenon of academic colonialism takes hold. The term represents "(...) how states that occupy the center where knowledge is produced, transmitted, and ordered have successfully forced scholars in peripheral states to accept their dominant relations in thought and ideas by standardizing, institutionalizing, and socializing academic disciplines in an inequitable academic division of labor on a global scale" (Shih 2010, p. 44). Papers produced at the center receive

more attention and recognition than papers produced elsewhere (Lengyel 1986, p. 474). Thus, to strengthen the perspective of academic neocolonialism or imperialism in adult education research, this paper can provide helpful supporting indications.

The need for the exploration of the described desideratum is also underpinned by the explorative examination of adult education research articles in potential predatory journals by Vetter and Schemmann (2021). The paper highlights that, in addition to authors from North America, scholars from the Global South, in particular, publish in potential predatory journals, often focusing on issues that are characteristic of countries in this category, such as poverty (especially in rural areas), a high rate of analphabetism, a high infant mortality rate, a low level of democratization, great political instability combined with crime, and a great importance of agriculture (Jaselskis & Talukhaba 1998; Neubacher & Grote 2016; International Fund for Agricultural Development 2021). Thus, if it is true, as indicated by the findings of Vetter and Schemmann (2021) and other research (Kurt 2018; Cobey et al. 2019; Demir 2018), that predatory journals are not only a business model but also a means for scholars, one of which is to meet increasing publication pressures, there is reason to fear that perspectives on adult education research are underrepresented in legitimate OA journals of adult education research. This hypothesis connects to the desideratum of bibliometric surveying of adult education research and thus additionally supports the endeavor of this paper to examine publications by authors from the Global South in internationally focused adult education research journals via a bibliometric and a content analysis approach. The focus is on the question of how and which authors from the Global South are present in indexed international journals of adult education research and with which articles. The question of *how*, the question of *who*, and the question of *what* will be answered as follows. The representation of research on adult education in countries of the Global South in the nine “most important” international journals on adult education research was determined by a manual analysis of the volumes 2000–2020 of all papers, as well as by an analysis of the retrieval and citation numbers. Following Vetter and Schemmann (2021, p. 89 f.), more detailed data on the authors (*who*) were extracted through the generated bibliometric data to get an impression of the academic experience of the authors by evaluating the academic grades at the time of the publications. The question of the topics covered (*what*) in the identified papers is determined via a qualitative approach, methodically taking into account the aforementioned preliminary work.

Thus, this paper is further divided into a section on the methodological operationalization of the described basic questions in the same order, a descriptive explanation of the findings, and a subsequent discussion of the same.

2 General Data Basis and Data Collection

The Journal Citation Report (JCR) and the SCImago Journal & Country Rank (SJR) were used to select the most relevant journals in adult education research. Both prod-

ucts aim to map the quality of scholarly journals from different disciplines through different calculation methods. The JCR is a citation-based ranking and uses the Journal Impact Factor (JIF) (Woll 2011, p. 73). This value indicates how often other journals cite an article from the journal under investigation in relation to the total number of articles published there (Kretschmann, Linten & Heller 2013). Due to the implementation of the JCR in the multidisciplinary database Web of Science, which ranks next to Scopus as the largest and most relevant scientific database, the JCR is highly relevant for the assessment of international journals of different disciplines, including educational sciences. The SJR uses the Article Influence Score as a central assessment parameter. It evaluates the influence of a journal on the basis of a network analysis, which assigns a higher weight to citations from highly cited journals than to citations from less cited ones. Thus, this weighting places more emphasis on the prestige of a journal (Kim & Chung 2018, p. 19). The SJR is again implemented in Scopus.

Through the two aforementioned sources, nine journals were extracted in June 2021 that could be classified as adult education or continuing education research through their titles. Not included were journals that deal with other topics or target groups in addition to the relevant topic and target group and make this clear via the title, as well as journals that explicitly focus on continuing education in other disciplines. The journals *Adult Education Quarterly* (AEQ), *International Journal of Lifelong Education* (IJLE), *Studies in the Education of Adults* (SEA), *Studies in Continuing Education* (SCE), *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* (AJAL), *International Journal of Adult, Community and Professional Learning* (IJACPL), *Journal of Further and Higher Education* (JFHE), *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults* (EJRELE), and the *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education* (JACE) were thus included in the final analysis since they meet the criteria described and as such represent highly reputable international adult education research journals.

In all journals, volumes from 2000 to 2020¹ were manually screened for articles authored or co-authored by authors from the Global South, and articles that placed countries of the Global South at the thematic center were identified. Only original articles and systematic literature reviews were considered. Editorials, Comments, or Book Reviews were not integrated.

To identify countries of the Global South, the list for developing countries and territories was used. The OECD list of developing countries and territories for the reporting year 2021 was used to determine the countries of the Global South. The classification is based on the countries' per capita income (OECD 2021). Although the OECD uses the evaluative term "developing countries", it offers clear guidelines for classifying individual countries in this group in contrast to the Global South. Analytically, the list therefore offers greater advantages and, with few exceptions, is also congruent with country overviews that work with the term Global South.

¹ The journals IJACPL, EJRELE, and JACE have only existed since 2013, 2010, and 2001. Therefore, they were included from the respective first issues up to incl. 2020.

Finally, only those articles exclusively written by authors from countries of the Global South and not submitted in co-authorship with scholars from developed countries have been included in the final analysis.

As the objective of this study is not to make statements about individual journals and their geo- and science-political conditions, but to generate findings about a specific group of authors within the entire discipline of adult education research, the identified papers are not classified according to journals or analyzed taking into account the publication organ. Rather, the papers are considered as a common data set that allows drawing conclusions about the representation of a group of authors in relation to the entire field of international adult education research.

2.1 Identification and Evaluation of Bibliometric Data on Papers and Authors (How and Who)

For all identified papers, data were obtained related to the authors and the contributions themselves. On the author side, the author names, their formal qualifications, and the locations of the research institution where the authors were working at the time of publication were recorded. On the contributions side, the titles and keywords were identified. In order to enable the later evaluation of the content, all relevant contributions had to be obtained in full text form.

In order to get an impression of the visibility and relevance of the examined contributions by authors from countries of the Global South, the respective data on downloads and citations on the homepages of the nine journals are included. The collection of these indicators took place between 09/26/2021 and 10/01/2021. For the journals AJAL, IJACPL, and EJRELE, the information on downloads and citations are not provided or incomplete and are therefore not included in the analysis. Downloads and citations are set in relation to the average of all articles published in the same year of the same journal. 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. Finally, it can be determined for each article whether it was over- under- or averagely retrieved and cited compared to the whole year.

When evaluating the bibliometric data of the authors, no weighting was made with regard to first and second authorship. For example, if a paper was authored by two or more authors from different countries in the Global South, the locations were included in the evaluation in equal proportions. The formal qualification of the authors was recorded individually for each author and co-author in order to ensure comparability with the corresponding study for potential predatory journals by Vetter & Schemmann (2021).

2.2 Content Evaluation of the Contributions from Authors from Countries of the Global South (What)

For evaluating the content-related data of the articles identified as relevant, the inductively developed categories of the bibliometric study of frequently cited articles in adult

education research conducted by Fejes and Nylander (2019, p. 123) were used. This adoption is necessary in the context of the present study as multi-perspective category formation to increase reliability was not possible due to limited resources. Accordingly, the present evaluation captures the respective method underlying the relevant work as well as the study contexts and objects. The broad subcategories in the superordinate segments “method”, “context” and “object” from the named study by Fejes and Nylander (2019) also proved to be largely congruent for the extracted corpus of the present paper. Concerning the method, on the one hand, qualitative approaches were not differentiated and subcategories were still replaced by “historical”, “theoretical formulation”, “descriptive”, “experimental or quasi-experimental”, and “teaching of practice” from Long’s (1983, p. 83) bibliometric study of adult education research conference proceedings, which K apflinger (2019, p. 162) also draws on in his analysis of conference papers from adult education research. Regarding the evaluation of the objects of study, the analyzed papers in the context of the present study resulted in the need for the addition of the categories “Women” and “Indigenous and rural population”.

In order to do justice to the specificity of the selected sample with regard to particular content in addition to the subcategories added and to reduce the risk of a Eurocentric or neocolonial academic bias, the papers were further evaluated according to topics that are characteristic of countries in the Global South. Since there is no generally shared overview of such characteristics, the individual categories of this evaluation part are to be judged as fragmented and thus unsystematic and not included in table 2. The first category refers to the most common reading of the Global South according to Schneider (2017, p. 21), which emphasizes structural underdevelopment and poverty compared to the Global North. Thus, the first thematic category is “Poverty”. The economic disadvantage of countries in the Global South often also depends on colonization by, or ongoing dependence on, a country that is now classified as part of the Global North (Henningsen 2021, p. 3), so another thematic category is “(De)Colonization”. Since severe population poverty is usually accompanied by a poorly developed health care system (de Carvalho et al. 2020, p. 280), the category “Diseases” is included. From a geographical perspective, it seems characteristic of the Global South, in contrast to the Global North, that a significant proportion of the population lives in rural regions rather than metropolitan areas, and that the proportion of the rural population continues to increase despite the trend toward urbanization (United Nations 2019, p.13). Therefore, another thematic category is “Rural Population”. “Literacy” was also added as an important category of adult education research.

3 Number of Identified Articles and their Visibility (*How*)

Out of the 3,747 papers in the nine journals studied, 318 papers were identified that were authored (with participation) by authors from countries of the Global South, or

that placed countries of the Global South in the thematic focus. 64.78 % (n = 206)² of these papers were written exclusively by authors from the Global South and are therefore also relevant for the in-depth analysis. 21.38 % (n = 68) focus on countries in the Global South but are written by authors from countries in the Global North. The remaining 13.84 % (n = 44) were submitted by teams of authors based in countries of the Global North and South at the time of publication.

The analysis of the download numbers shows that across journals, of the 168 evaluable articles originating from authors in countries of the Global South, 80.36 % (n = 135) had lower download numbers than the calculated trimmed mean of all original articles of the same year in the respective journal. In contrast, only 19.64 % (n = 33) received above-average attention.

Looking at the citations, this significant discrepancy is more moderate, since a binary distribution is broken by 14.88 % (n = 25) of the contributions that reach the calculated trimmed citation average of the corresponding year, rounded down or up. Nevertheless, 58.33 % (n = 98) of the evaluable contributions are below this average. 26.79 % (n = 45) are cited more frequently than average.

3.1 Characteristics of Authors from the Global South (*Who*)

The countries of the Global South do not form a homogeneous group (Dawar 2001, p. 138). This refers not only to cultural or historical parameters, but also to the strongly economically narrowed definition of the OECD, which underlies the present work due to clear inclusion and exclusion criteria compared to social science or humanities definitions of the Global South. It distinguishes between Upper Middle Income Countries and Territories (UMIC), Lower Middle Income Countries and Territories (LMIC), Low Income Countries (LIC) and Least Developed Countries (LDC), thus still using the evaluative term “developing countries”. As can be seen in Table 1, most of the contributions have originated in research institutes from UMICs. In the OECD list, UMICs account for 39.44 % (n = 56) of all developing countries. Thus, in the case of the present survey, there is a slight overrepresentation of this highest-income group of countries in the Global South.

Table 1: Mapping of the identified authors along the OECD-systematics for developing countries

LDC	LIC	LMIC	UMIC
Eritrea (L) (2)	Zimbabwe (2)	Egypt (2)	Argentina (2)
Ethiopia (L) (1)		Eswatini (1)	Belarus (1)
Lesotho (LM) (5)		Ghana (10,33)	Botswana (19.5)
Nepal (LM) (1)		India (7)	Brazil (7)
Uganda (2)		Indonesia (UM) (4)	Ecuador (1)
		Jordan (UM) (2)	Guyana (1)
		Morocco (3)	Iran (3)

2 IJLE=75 relevant articles (9.14%), JFHE=29 (3.18%), JACE=25 (9.19%), AJAL=22 (4.37), AEQ=15 (4.24%), SEA=14 (5.32%), IJACPL=13 (14.29%), SCE=9 (2.34%), EJRELE=4 (2.72%)

(Continuing table 1)

LDC	LIC	LMIC	UMIC
		Nigeria (27.5) Philippines (3) Papua New Guinea (0.5) Ukraine (1) Vietnam (2) Kenya (1)	Iraq (1) Jamaica (2) Colombia (1) Lebanon (2) Malaysia (11) Mexico (3) Namibia (3) Serbia (1) South Africa (60.16) Thailand (2) Turkey (8)
11 (5,34%)	2 (0.97%)	64.33 (31.23%)	128.66 (62.46%)

A total of 259 authors are attributable to the 206 articles. 22 authors appear more than once as authors in the nine journals studied between 2000 and 2020. At the time of publication, 92.58 % (n = 237) authors were employed at universities. For 11 authors, no organizational assignment at the time of publication could be determined.

Considering the formal qualifications of the authors at the time of publication, the high proportion of highly and maximally qualified persons is striking. The distribution shown in Figure 1 makes a rough structural distinction between the rank of professor, the academic title of doctor, and master’s and bachelor’s degrees.

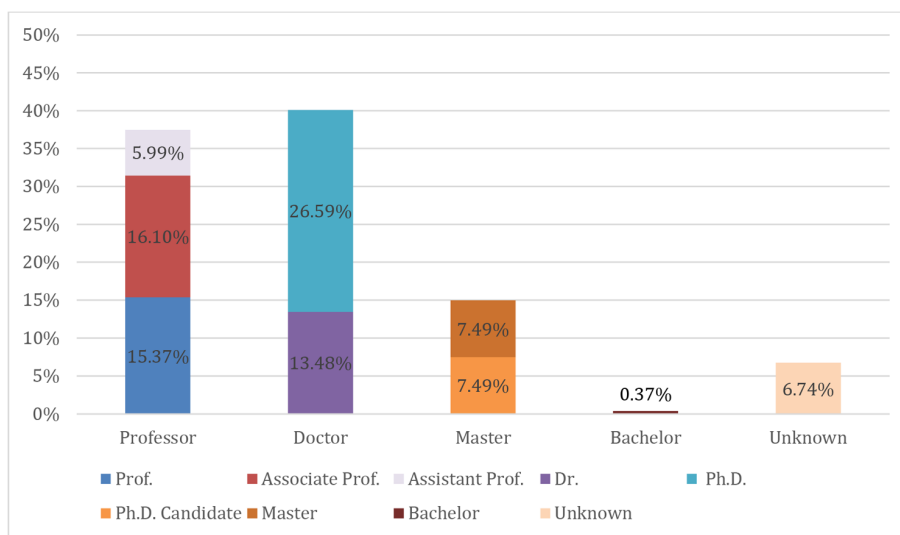


Figure 1: Academic titles of authors identified as relevant in percentages

3.2 Contents of the Contributions by Authors from Countries of the Global South (*What*)

The overview of the contents along the supercategories Method, Context, and Object in Table 2, oriented to Fejes and Nylander (2019, p. 123) and Long (1983), shows that the identified papers predominantly focus on learners in certifying public-formal learning settings by means of qualitative methods. The dominance of classical teaching-learning situations is strengthened by the likewise dominant role of teachers as objects of scientific work.

Focusing on the methods, it is noticeable that qualitative methods clearly dominate the work of adult education researchers from the Global South. Since the Literature Reviews are all not systematic but rather narrative in nature and the category Technique or Practice also includes qualitative contributions, 44.17% ($n = 91$) can be described as methodologically qualitative. If, as in Fejes and Nylander (2019, p. 123), the conceptually and theoretically oriented articles are also included in this category, this would affect the subcategories Theoretical formulation, Descriptive and Historical in the present study. Thus, the proportion of qualitative papers increased to 72.82% ($n = 150$) compared to 27.18% ($n = 56$) that used quantitative methods or mixed methods to generate results. Most quantitative or mixed methods papers were published in the JFHE. Assigning the nine methodological categories to either empirical or descriptive approaches, 54.37% ($n = 112$) chose an empirical approach and 45.63% ($n = 94$) chose a descriptive approach. Descriptive contributions are often “country portraits” (Field et al. 2019, p. 188) in which authors provide an overview of the goals and dynamics of national adult education developments. Exemplary contributions include those by Oduaran (2001), Preece & Ntseane (2004), or Hoppers (2013).

Focusing on the contexts of inquiry, Schools & University mainly focuses on formal learning settings in public settings, followed by nonformal learning contexts. Contexts often targeted from the perspective of the Global North, such as the workplace or digital space, on the other hand, are poorly represented at 9.95% ($n = 20.5$).

The impression of the relevance of formal learning settings is supported by the connective view of the objects of study. The majority of the contributions located in the school or university context focus on learners (students) and teachers.

The separate evaluation of the contributions along typical topics for countries of the Global South shows moreover that 20.39% ($n = 42$) focus on such topics. Dominant topics are Literacy 35.31% ($n = 14.83$), Rural Population 18.64% ($n = 7.83$) and Poverty 11.50% ($n = 4.83$).

The following chapter discusses the findings of the three results sections with reference to the discourse around (academic) neocolonialism as well as existing bibliometric studies in adult education research. In addition, the content analysis is linked to the visibility analysis to extract more detailed statements about possible success factors of successful contributions of authors from countries of the Global South in renowned international journals of adult education research.

Table 2: Contents of articles by authors from countries in the Global South in nine indexed international journals of adult education research, 2000–2020

Journals	JFHE (n)	SEA (n)	JACE (n)	AEQ (n)	IJLE (n)	SCE (n)	AJAL (n)	IJACPL (n)	EJRELA (n)	Total
Method (how?)										
Qualitative Study	5	7	6	8	24	5	11	9	2	37,38% (n = 77)
Quantitative questionnaires	12	0	6	3	4	1	6	3	0	16,99% (n = 35)
Descriptive	3	1	6	1	15	1	1	0	0	13,59% (n = 28)
Mixed Method	7	3	2	1	4	1	1	0	0	9,22% (n = 19)
Theoretical formulation	1	2	2	2	7	0	1	0	2	8,25% (n = 17)
Historical	0	0	0	0	14	0	0	0	0	6,80% (n = 14)
Review of Literature	1	0	1	0	4	1	1	0	0	3,88% (n = 8)
Technique of Practice	0	1	1	0	3	0	0	1	0	2,91% (n = 6)
Experimental or quasi-experimental	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0,97% (n = 2)
Total	29	14	25	15	75	9	22	13	4	100% (n = 206)

(Continuing table 2)

Journals	JFHE (n)	SEA (n)	JACE (n)	AEQ (n)	IJLE (n)	SCE (n)	AJAL (n)	IJACPL (n)	EJRELA (n)	Total
Context (where?)										
School & University	27	5	11	4	25,5	4	7	9	0	44,90% (n = 92,5)
Nonformal education (NGO's, home, etc)	0	6	2	6	10,5	3	10	2	2	20,15% (n = 41,5)
Policy	0	1	2	0	17,5	0	3	0	1	11,89% (n = 24,5)
Overviews	1	1	1	4	9	0	0	0	1	8,25% (n = 17)
Workplace & Workplace transitions	0	0	3	1	4	2	2	2	0	6,80% (n = 14)
Educational systems	0	1	3	0	8	0	0	0	0	5,83% (n = 12)
E-learning, ICT & IT	1	0	3	0	0,5	0	0	0	0	2,18% (n = 4,5)
Total	29	14	25	15	75	9	22	13	4	100% (n = 206)
Object (who?)										
Student & Practitioners	17,5	2,5	6	4,5	13,5	2	4,5	4	0	26,46% (n = 54,5)
Teachers & educators	7,5	2	4	1,5	11,5	2	4	4	0	17,72% (n = 36,5)

(Continuing table 2)

Journals	JFHE (n)	SEA (n)	JACE (n)	AEQ (n)	IJLE (n)	SCE (n)	AJAL (n)	IJACPL (n)	EJRELA (n)	Total
Workers & professionals	1	4	6	1	8	2	7	4,5	0	16,26 % (n = 33,5)
Nation	0	0	3	0	19	1	1	0	0	11,65 % (n = 24)
Research	3	2	2	3	8	0	1	0	2	10,19 % (n = 21)
Indigenous and rural population	0	1,5	3	2	10	1	0,5	0,5	1,5	9,71 % (n = 20)
Women	0	2	1	3	5	1	4	0	0,5	8,01 % (n = 16,5)
Total	29	14	25	15	75	9	22	13	4	100 % (n = 206)

4 Discussion of Findings

The share of 8.49% representing the Global South in terms of topics or (co-)authorship of all published articles in the nine most influential international journals in adult education research over a period of 20 years has to be considered as very low considering that 80% of the world's population live in countries of the Global South and that the share will increase in many scenarios until 2100 (Solarz & Wojtaszczyk 2015). Taking into account only those contributions that were exclusively written by authors from the Global South, this share even decreases to 5.5%. This is also related to the fact that all nine indexed journals examined were founded in the Global North and publish exclusively in English. Even though English serves as the lingua franca in the countries of the Global South, which are most frequently represented in the present survey, and is in this way familiar to the authors in question, the forcible colonial imposition and the associated “dependency culture” that gains significance via the imposition of English as the language of scholarly communication should not be disregarded. For many scientists from the Global South, language is one among other publication obstacles caused by colonial history (Ferguson 2007).

Another reason for the low share of publication volume could be related to the publication funding of OA articles via Author Processing Charges. For example, an analysis of more than 37,000 articles shows that authors from low-income countries prefer to publish in paid journals rather than OA journals because processing charges are often higher in OA journals (Smith et al. 2021). This finding, too, cannot be viewed purely in economic terms, separate from a neocolonial interpretation. Funding opportunities and institutional support for publication in indexed OA journals are significantly better in the academic center (the Global North) than in the periphery (the Global South). APCs provide free access to academic knowledge only for those who can benefit from these funding opportunities, in this way, from the perspective of the Global South, such funding structures tend to revive the vicious cycle of academic colonialism (Sengupta 2021, p. 204). The relevance of the barrier created by APCs is particularly evident in the example of South Africa. With 60.16 contributions, it is the most frequently represented in the present sample. In addition to its colonial history in the British Empire, the financial support provided by the South African government through the Department of Education can also be seen as a reason for this dominance. The department pays its universities a substantial subsidy for each journal article published in journals indexed in the SSCI or SCI (Collyer 2018, p. 11). However, such funding systems simultaneously reinforce the dominance of orientation towards neocolonial quality standards in scholarly publishing.

When articles on adult education research from the Global South still manage to be published in the international journals studied, the examination of visibility and citation shows that they receive significantly less visibility and are also cited less frequently by colleagues on average. The weak international actor networks identified by Larsson (2010, p. 108) in the context of citation networks in international journals of adult education research should actually give reason to assume that the identified dis-

crepancy between authors from the Global South and North should be smaller in terms of retrieval and download numbers. One explanation for this could also be found in academic neocolonialism. Sengupta (2021, p. 203) points out that countries of the Global South have come to be considered mostly an area to be studied and not a place from which to speak.

With the help of the differentiation of OECD (see Table 1), the findings on the authors identified in relation to the geographical locations show that the representation of authors from the Global South is unevenly distributed from an economic point of view. For example, the research organizations of 93.69% ($n = 193$) of the authors identified are located in UMIC and LMIC and thus in the most economically prosperous countries of the Global South group. Of the 11 papers from LDCs, only one achieved more views than the trimmed average of other papers in the same year of the journal.

With South Africa, Nigeria, Botswana, Malaysia, Ghana, the top four countries in the sample are all members of the Commonwealth of Nations where English is the official language. However, from a colonial-critical perspective, this “advantage” of the former British colonies must be seen as the result of the forcible replacement of educational institutions on the part of the colonial masters, which prevented local knowledge production and reception systems from thriving in the Global South. Colonization displaced these local systems in favor of the then emerging science system of the Global North, which has since been institutionalized in practically all countries of the Global South and especially in the former British colonies. This structural overlay, which has hardly been questioned in the Global North, is an example of coloniality (Schmidt 2021, p. 4).

Comparing the findings with the sample of Vetter and Schemmann (2021) ($n = 100$), which is limited to countries of the Global South, it is noticeable that the percentage distribution along the OECD categorization of developing countries is different. Here, 74% ($n = 74$) of the contributions come from authors whose research institution can be categorized as LMIC at the time of publication, while only 24% ($n = 24$) belong to UMIC. When authors from developing countries publish in top international adult education research journals, their workplaces are, on average, in more economically prosperous countries in this category compared to adult education researchers from the Global South who publish in potential predatory journals. The organizational location of the authors is comparable in both surveys. The survey by Vetter and Schemmann (2021, p. 89) indicates that the proportion of highly qualified authors is quite high. If one reduces the data set to the contributions that were exclusively written by authors from developing countries, there is a clear difference to the distribution in the present study. If here 77.53% ($n = 208$)³ of the authors have at least the academic degree of a doctor (or comparable), it is 53.80% ($n = 92$) of the authors from the Global South in potential predatory journals of which also only 30.43%

3 The total number of authors identified differs from the number of academic titles evaluated because eight authors who published multiple times in the nine journals examined at different times reported different academic qualifications over time. Thus, these eight statements are additionally included.

($n = 28$) have a professor title. The high proportion of unidentifiable academic qualifications of 26.90 % ($n = 46$) also leaves room for interpretation in this group. After reviewing name overlaps, it is noted that four authors published in both legitimate and probably illegitimate adult education research journals during the time period studied.

The results of the content aspects “method”, “context” and “object” shown in Table 2 roughly reflect findings of the entire research field. The strong focus on qualitative research approaches is also confirmed in the interpretive literature review on the Scientific Field of Adult Education by Rubenson and Elfert (2019, p.23) in reference back to other bibliometric studies in the field. However, with regard to the high proportion of articles that follow a quantitative or mixed method approach, a difference to current bibliometric analyses can be diagnosed. Here, there is an overall lack of mixed method and an almost complete absence of purely quantitative studies (Rubenson & Elfert 2019, p. 23). The high proportion of descriptive papers also seems anachronistic in light of past bibliometric studies. In this context, however, the present paper uses a different definition of descriptive papers than was used in the journal analysis by Long & Agyekum (1974, p. 116), who identified a high proportion of such papers. While the authors here included articles that illuminate relevant fields of adult education from an exploratory descriptive perspective using qualitative and/or quantitative methods, this paper understands descriptive articles to be those in which the authors describe important facts or a fact whose relevance to the scholarly community is argumentative (Orlikowski & Baroudi 1991, p. 6).

In summarizing the contexts and objects of inquiry, the strong focus on formal learning settings is striking. A large proportion of the articles, which are in school or university contexts, focus on learners (students) and teachers in them. When comparing the results of both categories with the research of Fejes and Nylander (2019, p. 123), who looked at the top-cited articles in three journals, which are also implicated in the present research, enormous differences emerge in terms of frequency distribution. In terms of contexts, the articles in the sample of Fejes and Nylander (2019) much more frequently take Workplace & Workplace transitions and E-learning, ICT & IT into account. Adding the evaluation of content considered typical for the Global South, it becomes clear that 20.39 % of all contributions deal with topics such as Literacy, Rural Population, Poverty or even HIV. The visibility of these contributions is comparable to that of the entire sample (81.82 % have lower download numbers and 78.79 % are cited less frequently).

Moreover, when the content evaluation and the access and citation figures are considered together, it is possible to draw conclusions about indicators of success by looking exclusively at the articles that are accessed and cited more frequently than average. Among the total of 19 articles that were both cited and viewed more frequently than average, there are only three articles whose results show a strong dependence on the survey location, which always also corresponds to the localization of the authors' university. This finding suggests that international visibility is increased by maximizing the generalizability of the findings. In contrast to the entire sample, this

group of articles is dominated by mixed methods and quantitative research approaches as well as theoretical formulations. Compared to Fejes and Nylander's (2019) study, the findings suggest that authors from the Global South, in contrast to authors from the Global North, need to adopt more quantitative approaches to gain visibility.

5 Conclusion

This paper was able to explore the “terra incognitas” of adult education research in the Global South in excerpts through the bibliometric analysis of the nine most relevant international adult education research journals. It became clear that the perspectives of this group of authors are substantially underrepresented on the international stage of adult education research discourse examined through indexed adult education research journals. The “Anglophone bias” noted by Fejes and Nylander (2017) expands into a *socioeconomic bias* or, more pointedly, a *neocolonial bias* when the present findings are taken into account, and limits the degree of openness of the international discourse of adult education research. With its highly specialized communication, the science system of adult education fulfills a certain function in the world society, namely its supply with new and reliable scientific knowledge. Following Schmid's (2021, p. 3) assumption that researchers thereby represent the interests of the local population at the research location at least to a certain extent, and that the interests of the population in the “Global South” differ more or less from those of the population in the “Global North” because of different cultural and social conditions, it can be assumed that the international adult education research system fulfills its function of representing the majority of interests only extremely insufficiently.

The reasons for this bias need to be investigated in more detail in further surveys. A comparative bibliometric study of rejected contributions by authors from the Global South could also be helpful in this regard. Regardless of this, the dominant Anglophone scholarly community in general and the editors of international open access journals in adult education research in particular should open up further to the group of authors under investigation. This can be achieved, for example, by increasing the number of special issues with a geographical or thematic focus for authors from the Global South, by critically reflecting on the submission criteria from a neocolonial-critical perspective or by entrenchment of collaboration between researchers from the Global South and the Global North as Alordiah et al. (2021, p. 487) call for in their study related to Nigeria and Africa as a whole. Special financial support measures can also reduce the economic hurdle to publication in an open access journal. For example, Sengupta (2021, p. 205) suggests that differentiated varying rates of APC relative to the location of the author should be introduced.

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Author

Tim Vetter, M. A., is a research associate at the Chair of Adult Education/Continuing Education at the University of Cologne. In the context of his dissertation, he deals with questions of openness, transparency and representation of the international publication system of adult education research. His research interests include bibliometrics of adult education research, adult educational organization research, and workplace learning.

Contact

University of Cologne
Faculty of Human Sciences
Department of Educational and Social Science
Professorship for Adult and Continuing Education
Innere Kanalstraße 15
50823 Cologne
Germany
t.vetter@uni-koeln.de