

# **SYMPOSIUM**

**Looking back and moving forward: learning  
and transformation in communities**

**CPH 2019 – Conference on Literacy (5<sup>th</sup> Aug 2019)**

# Overview

IRENE Cennamo

**Community-based learning(s)**

SILKE Schreiber-Barsch & WIEBKE Curdt

**Whose voices matter? Adults with learning difficulties as delegitimised clientele of adult basic education research and practice**

MONIKA Kastner & RICARDA Motschilnig

**Transformative learning in adult basic education**

# Empowerment and Democratisation

Critical-emancipatory heritage > **baseline for our theoretical and methodological approach**

1. Transformative learning in Adult Basic Education (ABE)
2. Community-based participatory research (CBPR) as a space for joint (transformative) learning

# The concept of transformative learning

- First Austrian programme (1990 – 1995): Mezirow’s “perspective transformation” for explaining participants’ decision to enrol in the programme (Brugger et al., 1997)
- Transformative Learning Theory (TLT) as a theoretical framework for understanding adult learning on an individual level > *perspective transformation* of frames of reference based on critical self-reflection and self-examination (Mezirow, 2006)
- TLT was extended – beyond cognitive dimensions: depth psychology, structural developmental, social emancipatory, and cultural-spiritual approaches (Fisher-Yoshida, Geller, & Schapiro, 2009)
- TLT is about both: individual transformation AND social change (Cranton & Taylor, 2012)

# ABE: Learning processes and outcomes (1)

- overcoming personal, social, and situational barriers > learners' stories illustrate facets of transformative learning (Wright et al., 2007)
- “deep learning” > possibility, empowerment, ownership, and new awareness (King & Heuer, 2009)
- lifechanging journeys (Johnson et al., 2010)
- “affective power” and “learning care” > “making new relationships with themselves, with others and with their past” (Feeley, 2012)

Conclusion: ABE (as seen through the lens of TLT) is about human development, growth and blossoming, covering cognitive, emotional and social, even spiritual dimensions

# ABE: Learning processes and outcomes (2)

Who transforms? Only the learner?

Transformative learning is seen most of all on the *learners'* side and is widely understood as *individual* transformation

# Community-based Participatory Research (CBPR)

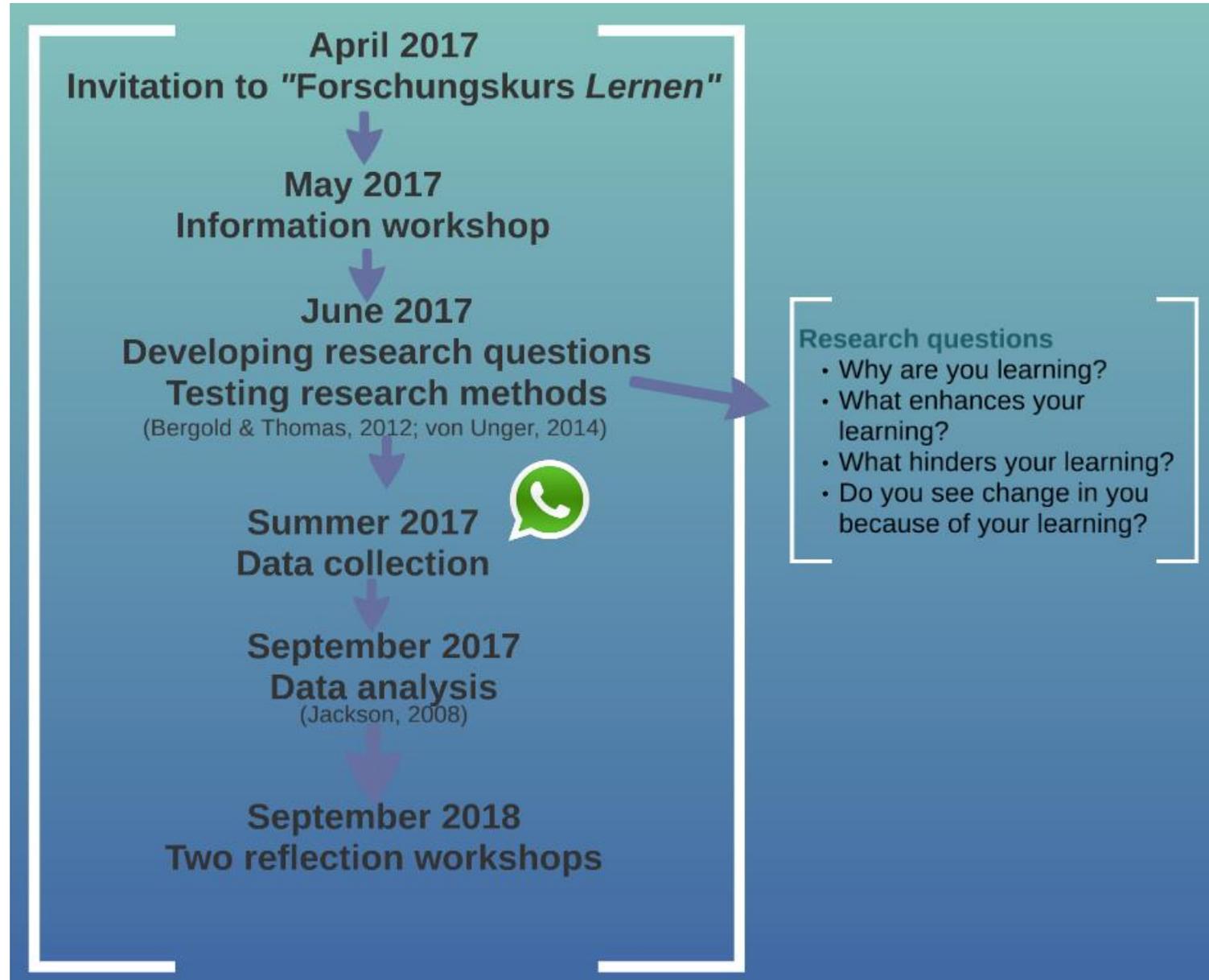
*CBPR offers a space for individual learning of **all** participants and for **collective** learning*

## ***Research Seminar on Learning***

- 9 former and current ABE participants
- 3 programme managers/providers
- 1 adult educator
- 1 social education worker
- 2 university-based researchers (Monika & Ricarda)



# Project flow



# Interconnectedness of ABE and CBPR

Shared concept of a **critical-emancipatory praxis**:

Promoting (self-)empowerment, learner-centredness and enhancement of competencies, following Paulo Freire's work (Schreiner et al., 2007), substantiate participatory approaches aiming at emancipation, social justice and democratisation (von Unger, 2014)

Kastner, Cennamo, & Motschilnig (forthcoming)

# A disorienting dilemma: power dimensions in learning settings

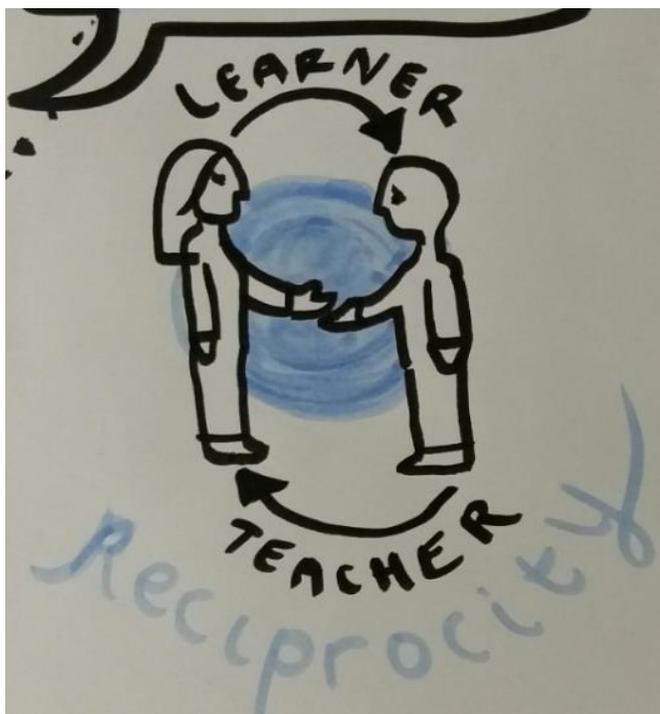
...embracing disorienting dilemmas as fruitful and creative drivers for transformation (Kastner, Motschilnig, & Cennamo, 2018)

Ronnie explained:

*“We are at eye level with the adult educator [in ABE]. She does not treat us like pupils. We are like-minded peers. That’s why I didn't get involved with the topic [here], because I don't want to go back to school. Because the topic [school] was not right for me now [to discuss it here]. Because the school is ticked off for me – in fact, for a long time.”*

# The power of dialogue and reflection...

The purpose of participatory research approaches according to Etmanski et al. (2014) is “not simply to document the world’s injustices, but to transform them”...



*Thank you for listening!* 😊

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