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

CPH 2019 – Conference on Literacy (5th 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

Monika Kastner & Ricarda Motschilnig
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
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

April 2017
Invitation to “Forschungskurs Lernen”

May 2017
Information workshop

June 2017
Developing research questions
Testing research methods
(Bergold & Thomas, 2012; von Unger, 2014)

Summer 2017
Data collection

September 2017
Data analysis
(Jackson, 2008)

September 2018
Two reflection workshops

Research questions
• Why are you learning?
• What enhances your learning?
• What hinders your learning?
• Do you see change in you because of your learning?
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! 😊
References