This issue: Professionalisation - the struggle within

RELA

European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults

Vol. 2 No. 1 April 2011

RELA

European Journal for Research
on the Education and Learning of Adults

Volume 2, No. 1, April 2011

Linköping University Electronic Press

ISSN 2000-7426

www.rela.ep.liu.se

Editorial board

European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults – RELA

VOLUME 2 NUMBER 1 APRIL 2011

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Editorial: Professionalisation – the struggle within

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The professionalisation of the field of adult and continuing education has been a source of intense debate and controversy in the last few years, although this debate has been patchy over the European nations and perhaps more intense in some areas (cf. Nuissl & Lattke 2008; *European Journal of Education* 2009; Research voor Beleid 2010). Germany, for example, is one of the countries where the 'professionalisierung' has been on the political and academic agenda more than elsewhere (Gieseke, 2005). National and European Union policies argue strongly for an increase in the quality of adult and continuing education through professionalisation (cf. European Commission 2006; Research voor Beleid & PLATO 2008; Research voor Beleid 2010), and the European Commission identifies 'challenges' to be addressed by those who have a stake in adult learning (2006). The Commission plans action to address these challenges and proposes to manage the adult and continuing education terrain by encouraging nations across Europe to accept their arguments for quality improvement through adoption of their performance indicators and benchmarks.

In this debate there has been a tendency to follow the lead of the European Commission and understand professionalisation in terms of functional markers of professionalism – increasing competence, quality and qualification. Other markers, such as those of academic qualification, professional organisation and autonomy have been disregarded. Of course, professionalisation does not have a single definition. It is sometimes conceived as a normative ideal state, corresponding to that of the traditional professions (medical doctors, architects and lawyers). Others argue that the terms 'semi-profession' or 'incomplete professionalisation' express a distinction between the traditional professions and those that do not to fully qualify as professional. Incomplete professions lack some of the requisite markers, for example, professional organisation and entry through academic qualification.

This debate is important in that there are very real social and material implications in accepting the arguments for change implicit in dominant descriptions and discussion. There are questions over adopting specific abstract and generalised notions of professionalisation as the basis for that change. There are, for us, various points for

ISSN 2000-7426

DOI 10.3384/rela.2000-7426.relae2
www.rela.ep.liu.se

struggle for debate and critique. The abstract notion of the 'quality' of adult and continuing education tends to overshadow the questions over the possibilities afforded through the diverse histories and cultures that have given rise to the wealth of distinctive practices which constitute its 'qualities'. From these have emerged different social and cultural functions and statuses for the work of adult and continuing educators in different locations. These are riches that have afforded educators and graduates very specific and contextualised social roles when compared with those emerging from the traditional notion of profession.

Change is happening. The adult education staff active in across the formal and non-formal sectors in Europe were found by the Research voor Beleid and PLATO study to be coping with change in contexts of teaching, contents and teaching methods and in dealing with the emergence of ICTs (Buiskool, Lakerfeld & Broek, 2009). Where some follow the earlier positions of the OECD (2003), the EAEA (2006) and Eurydice (2007) to argue that changes 'imply a demand for new skills and competencies' (Buiskool et al., 2009, p. 148), we take a different tack in searching for qualities. Here we are concerned to identify points of struggle over qualities in specific contexts of practice. We are interested to construct a forum for debate over these, contributing to their identification and discussion over what might be lost and found if policy arguments for change are accepted. We think this can provide a more fruitful point of departure for the discussion over whether and in which sense a professionalisation of adult and continuing education will improve quality.

This editorial for the *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults* (RELA) is written by three authors from differing national adult and continuing education contexts and traditions. Our discussion has been over how to problematise the professionalisation of adult and continuing education in Europe through this issue. There are three foci that we think important for this problematisation. The first is in that through description of the heterogeneous and changing terrain of adult and continuing education we can begin to describe some of its qualities. The second is in that we begin to identify points of struggle significant to researchers from the articles that contribute to this issue. The third is that we analyse the discursive work of the descriptions of professionalism that are put forward strongly through current European policy. All descriptions act persuasively, and it is this persuasive quality that we explore. Taking a discursive and rhetorical approach we highlight the way in which the descriptions from Research voor Beleid (2010) work politically in their positioning of professionals and professional work. We identify some of the likely consequences in the shaping the professional terrain if we become persuaded.

Our editorial is thus written in three main parts and a concluding section. First we consider the diverse contexts and heterogeneity of the professional terrain. This is the construction of a picture of a pluralistic landscape through which to remind ourselves of the histories and diverse emergences of adult and continuing education in different parts of Europe. These inform contemporary meanings and their distinctions and debates in different locations to the extent that it is indeed quite difficult to argue that a general historical overview might even be possible or appropriate. Second, we introduce the articles of this issue and consider the points of struggle which they articulate as issues of concern over the qualities that are found, lost and emerging from specific contexts of practice. Third, we take a discursive turn to consider the European policy notion of professionalisation for adult and continuing education from a discourse analytic perspective and consider the possible effects of its persuasive qualities. We conclude briefly in terms of the points of struggle that emerge from the articles in this issue on professionalisation and introduce the two 'open' articles that are included and which

although not related to this theme are significant in their illustration of the increasing breadth of the research arena.

A diverse, heterogeneous and changing terrain

Taking a close look at the situation of adult educators in Europe, we are faced with a fundamental problem for any attempt at the description of a profession or group of professionals. We can identify only a diverse terrain comprising the disparate practices of a widely heterogeneous group, vastly different educational biographies and roles and states of employment. The work of the adult educator varies significantly depending on the sector in which they work (vocational or general adult education) and their institutional affiliation. Thus adult educators are found working in folkhighschools, commercial institutes, associations and business companies as well as the church, higher education institutions, parties, (political) foundations and labour unions.

In painting this picture, however partial, it is easy to see that adult education is not a profession in any clear way when compared with the usual criteria based on the classical professions. In the introduction we identified the functional markers of competence, quality and qualification as those central to policy and wider debate on professionalisation. The adult educator falls short on certain aspects not only of these but of other markers. For example, there is no clear monopoly on the occupation or type of work that would allow competence in carrying out specific functions to be clearly recognised. There is also no specific professional organisation to initiate and maintain any collective code of conduct for quality and professional correctness. Although there is a scientific knowledge related the discipline or field of adult education on which to base a university-based professional education, certainty in its recognition has been undermined along with that of the foundations of knowledge more generally. It is also difficult to identify a sole and specific responsibility in relation to customers and the wider community that typically marks a profession.

To gain an impression of this difficulty we can look first to the diversity of institutions and agencies, taking as the point of departure the exemplary 'cases' of Scandinavia and Germany. In both, several sectors have autodidact teachers/animators/trainers with a background in the skills or the experience of that sector, most often qualified as educators through courses in teaching skills.

- *Folk High Schools/Heimvolkshochschulen*: The teachers are usually also school teachers, qualified for primary or secondary formal education; they may have academic qualification but no specific teacher education. There are various 'cultural workers' with an experience from social movements, cultural institutions, artists and so forth, with most being in full-time employment.
- *Evening classes and liberal adult education*: Teachers are often school teachers or particular specialists who teach specific skills (technical, language, sport, arts and culture, health and body) to adults. Some have full-time employment, others are part-time employees, and the training background for the job mostly a variety of optional courses. Further organising institutions and organisations have clerical and organisational staff that may be full or part-time, formally qualified or not.
- *Trade unions and civic organisations education:* Teachers are often holders of honorary posts or experienced organisers in these unions and organisations.

Trade unions in some countries have their own comprehensive training of trainers and some organisations (political parties) likewise.

- *Vocational education and training*: These teachers may be craftsmen/technicians, primary school teachers or academic teachers. Most are full-time employees. In Germany and Scandinavia vocational teaching is a profession with a full education and basic curriculum – in most countries teacher education is an optional addition to the subject knowledge specialty of teachers, through a variety of optional courses.
- *Basic adult education for adults/Volkshochschulen*: Teachers often hold a teacher education and are full-time employees. They normally define themselves as teachers.
- *Professional continuing education and training*: This is continuing education for the updating and/or retraining of professionals in the widest sense, most often in form of optional training courses or in-service training. Teachers and trainers are most often members of the same professional groups who occasionally teach, or specialists with relevant expertise for the profession. Teachers in more systematic education like certificate and diploma courses at colleges are normally full-time employees.
- *Human resource development and business consultancy*: Those involved here are involved in in-service training, guidance and HRD and have differing backgrounds – mostly with managerial education, some with psychological or pedagogical training.

There is no surprise then that no clear occupational image, monopoly of competence or functions exists. The differences between institutions, orientations, educational aims and didactic models are too huge. As a result there are distinct job titles (adult educator, trainer, teacher, lecturer, educational manager, coach etc.) and accepted ways of approaching the work entailed. Diverse histories, purposes and traditions leave a legacy of tension between the aspirations of the adult and continuing educators and the relative status of the knowledges, approaches and models that circulate in these locations.

Even though there are no easy generalisations to be made, much adult education in Europe originated in social and cultural movements and grassroots developments as the voluntary action of laypersons (Gieseke, 1989; Olesen, 1989). However, there are clear distinctions between the traditions of adult education in the northern and southern nations of Europe, those of the Baltic states and Central-Eastern Europe (Jögi & Gross, 2009) and the western European nations, and then of course there are also wide distinctions between countries in these national groupings. The Nordic countries are suggested to have the most distinct tradition (European Commission, 2006), with the western European countries differing more in approach than in ends. In Germany, as in many other nations, adult education emerged in three movements or strands (Dausien & Schwendowius, 2009): a bourgeois liberal education movement from a little earlier in the 19th century; a workers' education strand of the mid 19th century with emancipatory aims, and a further or vocational education strand emerging through industrialisation. The trends, impetuses and meanings of professionalisation are as varied as are these traditions.

In those types of adult education that have emerged as institutionally based (for example, general adult education in Germany and the Nordic countries, and some types of training and professional continuing education) the teaching of adults has become a regular full-time employment. However, in contrast to this and in other educational sectors most adult educators do not have permanent positions. Employment conditions

in adult education are therefore heterogeneous and employment may be permanent, temporary, full-time, part-time or voluntary. Where the conditions of employment and initial qualification of its members are taken as markers of a professional group, there is a lack of professionality in adult education. In some cases adult educators have qualifications as teachers, but in others expertise is based in the profession being taught (e.g. a technical or commercial vocational education, one of the traditional professions, etc.) and perhaps equally in some locations on prior experience of teaching. Yet the last decades show clearly that an academisation through qualification is taking place.

Continuing education, by contrast to adult education, can be described as emerging from the apprenticeships of the trades. Organised formally in the 20th century as institutionally-based education for vocational workers, it involves the return of workers to institutional education for mid-career qualification enhancement, or ongoing education offered in the workplace. Often then continuing education has been defined as education subsequent to that needed for the entry of adults into a vocation or profession.

Professionalisation could then be argued to be the elevation of the voluntary activity of the unqualified community-based adult educator to that of the paid work of semi-professionals or professionals, now formally qualified as educators and working in communities, educational institutions or workplaces. That professionalisation exists is perhaps evident in that other professionals – engineers or accountants or psychologists – who take up a full-time employment as teachers within their field of expertise would now most often have to re-qualify to become professional educators. However, and complicating the picture further, in many cases the agents of adult and continuing education specifically reject the label of professional, identifying themselves as 'amateurs' in the literal sense, as they are committed to the task because of their social and cultural belonging to a community, or social or emancipatory cause.

Into this mixed picture new developments in adult education seem a challenge for professionalism. This includes the support of new learning cultures, the creation of learning environments and arrangements to allow for formal, informal, self-directed and media supported learning processes, the strengthening of educational counselling and new forms of monitoring, stronger support for motivation in learning, in 'learning how to learn', cooperation and networking between educational institutions and different areas of education, and increasing division of labour calling for organisational competences, educational management, quality management, and so on. A question emerging from change is that over the content of programmes for the professionalisation of adult educators when there is such diversity and where change is ongoing. For a long time a normative ideal has prevailed: the aim has been for teachers to gain new and better understandings. But this has proved to be inapplicable in many ways, in part because of diversity and change, but also as raising learning standards through courses does not necessarily lead to improvements in professional practice. Studies show that continuing education has to be personally relevant, and focus where teachers feel uncomfortable with their professional actions. In the light of the diversity of the terrain and this sort of empirical evidence, it has become apparent that there is no clear knowledge content upon which to base a profession.

It is a paradox that as adult education becomes central to debate about lifelong learning, it loses institutional contour and visibility. Sporadically this is described as a process of differentiation or 'de-differentiation' in the blurring of previous boundaries and definition of new ones. As education and learning become integral to society they leave their traditional institutional contexts and are bound up elsewhere. The danger for professionalisation is that the job profile of and knowledge for the adult educator becomes more and more nonspecific.

Points of struggle

The title of this issue, 'Professionalisation – the struggle within', indicates tensions and contradictions in debate and as policies and wider changes influence the terrain. We have called these 'points of struggle'. Although some have wanted to develop common understandings of the professional and professionalisation we argue that these points of struggle make unity difficult to achieve, and may be not fruitful either. There is for us a tension between proposals for unity and quality and those struggles over the qualities that may be lost and found in the processes of change. Tensions and contradictions emerge with differing concerns and purposes within and between contexts that have very different traditions and policy and practitioner emphases.

Moves towards professionalisation across this differentiated terrain appear in some locations to have reached only those involved in the planning and organisation of adult education. Questions of professionalisation have therefore focused on organisational processes derived from the innovation models of quality management. Adult teaching is still therefore mostly considered the task of part-time and freelance teachers or lecturers. The prototype adult educator therefore has in some locations been the full-time educational manager, responsible for planning, organising and evaluating educational offers.

Egetenmeyer and *Käpplinger* in their article *Professionalisation and quality management: struggles, boundaries and bridges between two approaches* for this issue identify this struggle between the distinct understandings of professionalisation – as pedagogy and as quality management – as key in contemporary debate. They argue that there are distinct differences between approaches of quality management and professionalisation which are blurred within contemporary discourses. Through a comparison of these approaches, they examine the merging of this in contemporary discussion and by Research voor Beleid (2010) in its identification of 'Key competences for adult learning professionals'. Differences are lost in this. Arguing that these two discourses have quite distinctive historical and disciplinary locations and logics, they see them as essential to maintain – maintaining boundaries here in order that the differing interests can be visible as conflicts of interest, and thus available for mediation.

There is a question over what gives rise to the strong political and bureaucratic concern about professionalism which has resulted in a number of national and supranational (EU) initiatives. They appear to emerge from concern for functionality and quality. The idea put forward is that the qualification of teachers and trainers and other agents in the sector is key to the successful development of lifelong learning and building of the knowledge society.

In the context of European Union strategy, adult educators are positioned to play a key role in implementing lifelong learning. However, in some domains (labour-market training or education for unemployed people) there are tendencies towards deprofessionalisation. There appears to be a point of tension here and for Lorenz Lassnigg in this issue and unease concerning the relation between the development of competencies and processes of professionalisation. Debate over the professionalisation of a group appears stifled by this policy focus on the continuing education of individual adult teachers.

Lassnigg in his article *Contradictions in adult education structures and policies in Austria: their interrelation with the professional development of educators* argues that competence development and quality assurance approaches to professionalisation in Austria are not guaranteeing the professionalisation of the field. He identifies a set of

contradictions embedded in educational policies and the practices that emerge through the development of a lifelong learning strategy. The consequences of which is to inhibit the achievement of the lifelong learning strategy as well as the professional development of adult educators.

The concern for professionalism is aligned with an interest in mobilising human resources at the heart of the lifelong learning agenda. Whereas it is possible to see increasing overlap and synergy between different sectors of adult education and training, the unified domain implied through policy arguments for a competence framework is still so far from reality that to define institutionally-based joint development seems a little far-fetched. Professionalising in the sense of quality improvement appears to presuppose an unquestioned idea of quality and assume the possibility of implementing change in education and training from above.

A point of struggle appears to emerge in moves towards professionalisation through university qualification and the adoption of competency frameworks. *Aileen Ackland* in her article in this issue, *The eye of the storm: discursive power and resistance in the development of a professional qualification for adult literacies practitioners in Scotland,* takes up a discursive approach to critically explore the play of power at one site in this point of struggle between practitioner associations, university authorities and regulatory bodies. This is at a moment where adult literacy tutors in Scotland for the first time became required by national policy to engage in a process of professionalisation through formal university-based teaching qualification, as response to policy concern over the problem of poor population literacy figures in comparison to neighbours. This constructed a site of struggle at this location whereby both language and power relations became reconfigured. Adult education associations, or as they are called here 'practitioner services' became redefined in this process. Ackland thus explores how previously diverse and unregulated work of various adult education services in Scotland (offered as local authority adult basic education services, community learning and development services, adult education voluntary organisations, Further Education Colleges and the prison education services) became reconfigured and renamed 'adult literacy' work. Previous distinctions between the values and purposes of these heterogeneous services have become lost as they were redefined through the competency descriptions that were devised. Ackland tells us of the forms of alliance and resistance entailed.

There may then be much at stake in attempts to bring together a heterogeneous field through the development of professional qualifications and accreditation programmes which adhere to common descriptions of competence. We saw this also in Fragoso and Guimãraes (2010) discussion of this situation in Portugal where they argue the loss of capacities for innovation through emancipatory discourses of professionalism. In this issue, Ackland illustrates that valued distinctions symbolising value and theoretical differences between the work of professionals in the field can be elided through processes for the derivation of benchmark statements. She argues that adult educators may risk promoting the projects of management that they seek to avoid through conceptualisations of professionalism that emphase heteronomy. She points to a process of change in this location, where a social practice literacy perspective, one that saw literacy as socially constructed and political, became taken up through policy and a site of discursive contestation in the exercise of power in this process of professionalisation. Through the development of a field of knowledge, university-based and other teaching programmes appear as vehicles for the reconfiguration of the discursive field in specific locations, and even though the outcome may not be certain.

There is perhaps a related issue over whether the building of knowledge and standards of quality are related to universities or to the lay practitioner organisations like associations for adult and continuing education, church or political organisations. Universities' engagement with the field of adult and continuing education in some senses 'requires' the development of a field of knowledge through research. Practitioner associations on the other hand have understood themeselves as fostering quality and professionalisation through advocacy in the field and recognition of competence.

It is difficult to be against the arguments for professionalisation that are put forward through policy. Although there are those who would prefer to be against it – either in that their work requires them to belong to the community or to take up emancipatory cause – this appears a hard position to successfully hold. Common understandings of competence in professionalism perhaps make it difficult to suggest that one would prefer to be without it. And, in even posing a question over what that professionalisation might entail, as we do here, there is an encouragement of discussion of professionalisation which acts to put professionalisation more securely on the agenda as some 'thing' that *might be* accepted.

What may help is the development of empirical understandings of processes of professionalisation in situations where these are not formally governed. It is clear is that people do act with values and purposes and develop knowledge of what they do when teaching adults. However, we know little about these motivations and processes. Professionalism may not depend on the achievement of formal qualifications. Different forms, whether or not incomplete or semi-, may emerge very differently in different contexts; individuals are influenced by the institutional and social contexts in which they are located for the development of their senses of professionalism. There are thus questions over what these might be. What are the ways in which a professional identity may emerge and be expressed?

Cornelia Maier-Gutheil and Christiane Hof in their paper *The development of the professionalism of adult educators: a biographical and learning perspective* in this issue investigate the development of the pedagogical professionalism of adult educators' by comparing the narratives of individual teachers at different times in their lives. Professionalisation here is taken to be the acquisition of systematic pedagogical knowledge in adult education. The investigation offers insights into differences in forms of professionalisation and professionalism that emerge through the life-course and the influence of context in this. Professionalisation may thus be found in an intentional process of professional learning by an individual, which, for example, results from a perceived discrepancy between knowledge, ability and the requirements of a changing world. Alternatively, professionalism for some individuals might not ever be explicitly developed.

In the following section we analyse different possible versions of arguments for a professionalisation agenda for adult educators, focussing initially on the argument in the report commissioned by the European Commission (Research voor Beleid, 2010). It is our assumption as we have already discussed that this discourse reveals certain strategies and agendas, but also that it acts in persuading us that we should accept its version of the agenda. Through the focus we have adopted for this analysis, we therefore seek to examine the rhetorical work that this and alternative arguments or descriptions might be said to attempt in positioning professional work in particular ways and in representing certain views of practice and practices as professional. We draw on resources that allow us to consider the work of rhetoric and discourse that have informed previous writing (cf. Nicoll & Edwards, 2004; Nicoll & Harrison, 2003;

Nicoll, 2007). This analysis points to the power of persuasion in the shaping of the socio-rhetorical networks in which adult educators participate.

Analysis of discourses of professionalisation: competence, reflection and expertise

The report commissioned by the European Commission (Research voor Beleid, 2010) proposes the professionalisation of adult education for Europe through a competent and reflective professional. We argue that this helps shape the possibilities that may then emerge in particular ways, and exclude the possibilities of alternative forms of professionalisation. It is difficult to be against the notion of professional development itself, but audiences are mobilised in descriptions such as this. What audience is mobilised and how it is dependent upon the extent to which different individuals and groups are persuaded that a particular discourse is about and for them; that they are being invited to participate in the practices of a certain socio-rhetorical network. The discourse analysis that we use to examine this particular proposal, poses the questions of To whom the text or discourse is addressed? and How are they positioned? This is important, as 'one of the means of persuasion is making arguments with which the audience may already agree, in order to create a sense of identity between the implied author and the implied audience' (Leach, 2000, p. 210). A polyvalent discourse of professional development can enable a range of interests to be mobilised as a supportive audience, as different interests are translated into a common cause.

Different notions of professional practice and professional development attempt different things and have material effects. Different audiences are mobilised in different discourses, including potentially groups beyond those of the profession through which the profession may then be held to be accountable and subject to scrutiny. In the process, different notions of the professional are inscribed, positioning the professional in particular ways, and contributing to the changing relationships between social groups, adult and continuing education professionals.

The report by the European Commission (Research voor Beleid, 2010) identifies and describes key competencies that are intended to be used for what they call 'adult learning professionals' right across the European nations. Here the diversity of the practices and multiple histories, cultures and traditions involved are identified as obstacles to be overcome. From this positioning of diversity as the problem, an argument is constructed that it is to be through a professionalisation of the sector, achieved through unification and founded in the identification of 'common elements' of work, that a solution is to be found. This is a solution that can be reached in the construction of an 'adult learning professional' who can now be 'dedicated' to the task (Research voor Beleid, 2010, p. 3). By implication then, this argument positions the adult educator as a unified group and as not yet professional or even perhaps dedicated:

> Recent European wide studies show that the adult learning sector is very diverse. This diversity can be seen in the various target groups of adult learning, subjects covered by adult learning courses, but also in the professional pathways to becoming an adult learning professional, the employment situation of adult learning professionals and furthermore, in the competences required for working in this sector. This diversity makes it difficult to develop the sector as a whole and in particular a dedicated profession - adult learning professional (APL).

> To partially overcome the 'hampering diversity' it is important to identify common elements in the work adult learning professionals do and the key competences that come with carrying out their key activities. The Member States recognised this need and the European Commission therefore commissioned a study on key competences of adult learning professionals that can be used as a reference for developing a professional profile for staff working in the sector and thus improving the quality of adult learning. This report presents the outcomes of this study. (Research voor Beleid, 2010, p. 9)

It is through this kind of representation of urgency for change within policy description – of a common problem to be overcome – that a strong positioning and pressure can be attempted by policy makers in the unification and management of a diverse terrain. It is constructed rhetorically as an 'exigency', an urgency, for change. It acts to construct a population to be managed and a direction for change through the identification of the 'obstacle' as a problem, and the key competencies as its solution. By identifying 'common elements in the work adult learning professionals do' quality can be measured and improved. Overcoming the hampering diversity is represented as simply necessary.

This positioning of diversity as the problem to be overcome is not the only formulation. In South-Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece and Turkey) it is the changing political perspectives and prescriptions that are identified as the problem (Zarifis, 2009). Dausien and Schwendowius (2009) suggest that in Germany, because of diversity, the providers at the local level are those best able to respond. Guimãraes (2009) considering Portuguese provision argues that diversity provides for the necessary quality, and that professional autonomy in situated contexts of adult and continuing education is important. By identifying a problem and by naturalizing change in relation to this, policy descriptions (as all descriptions including our own) assume not only a certain force, but hide their own work as a form of action in the world. They hide the social practices that help persuade that certain changes are necessary and should happen. This is then a struggle over specific and competing descriptions of problems and solutions, where the tension might be characterised as one between those for unification and those for maintenance of heterogeneity and autonomy.

This points to the rhetorical work of descriptions in positioning professionals and professional work in particular ways and representing certain views of practice and practices as professional. By adopting particular narratives for the professionalisation of the sector across Europe political work is being done. By constructing diversity as the obstruction in policy descriptions, adult educators are positioned in two key ways in this particular text (Research voor Beleid, 2010). First, as not already professional, and, second, as needing to be professionalised by reference to a standard set of generic competence descriptions. This positioning is highly significant in that the adult and continuing educator then becomes available for lifelong and professional education and learning and the generic shaping of the identities, knowledge and practices that this entails. With this shaping, and standardisation through competency descriptions (cf. Nicoll, 2007), adults and societies *themselves* become available for unification and shaping – indeed we see this from Fragoso and Guimãraes (2010) and Ackland (2011) in this issue.

There is a strong logic to policy arguments for competent professionals. Competent professionals are required to demonstrate that they can do what they claim they can do, and maybe sometimes, what is claimed by others that they can do (as in Research voor Beleid 2010 perhaps, for example). Through the work of Research voor Beleid (2010), standards of competence have been developed for the adult educator from evidence of what already competent practitioners do in their arenas of work. The invitation is that assessments and curricula are to be aligned with these standards, the logic for which is

strong and standing in sharp contrast to a perhaps more reified discourse of the professional as technical expert. Professionalism as the demonstration of competence appears more empirically and experientially secure than technical expertise, as appropriate levels of behaviour can be determined through functional analysis.

People are aware that much that is important is not available for description and analysis in this way. What is identified as competence is only what can be easily identified through job analysis, described and measured, and that what lies outside of this may become forgotten. Thus, while there are calls for greater transparency for the European sector through systematic description of outcomes and competences, and compatibility with national and European frameworks (Buiskool et al., 2009, p. 159), there is also a question over 'what visibility conceals?' (Strathern, 2000, p. 315). At the same time, for Strathern (2000), a logic for visibility sits in tension with and fabricates its opposite – a feeling of lack of trust. However, this trust is necessary for professional performance. Without trust that the professional will act professionally, logic requires that they must demonstrate that they are trustworthy. A discourse of competence as professionalisation fabricates the very distrust necessary for its maintenance. In a sense then there is a discursive struggle over whom to trust, embedded through a discourse of competence as that of professionalisation.

Within discourses of competence, those of reflection have had a tendency to emerge. There is perhaps an important conceptual compromise possible between the positioning as competent professional and the defensive identification with the amateur position that we identified earlier. The polyvalence afforded in the positioning of reflection with competence in policy arguments and descriptions of standards can enable a range of interests to be mobilised and different interests to be translated into a common cause. In the identification of key competencies for the adult and continuing educator across Europe, Research voor Beleid (2010, p. 12) propose a generic competence of reflection applying across all domains of activity in the sector and as intrinsic to the autonomy and comportment of the lifelong learner: 'Personal competence in systematic reflection on one's own practice, learning and personal development: being a fully autonomous lifelong learner'. For adult and continuing educators, as others, this discourse of reflection may seem an attractive positioning, as it appears both indicative of serious thinking and the capacity for autonomous judgements in the uncertain and diverse situations of practice.

The notion of professional work as reflective practice has had a trajectory of its own (Schön, 1983). Although it may arouse a positive emotional response and appear logical, it also does specific rhetorical and positioning work. Here a diversity of practice is acknowledged, as the professional is positioned in the complex and messy world of practice. It is the decisions and judgements of the professional that are brought to the fore for consideration in reflective practices, even although these may require more intuitive than deliberative action (Eraut, 2000). As Parker (1997) argues, this positions the professional as adopting an open-minded and questioning approach to practice, but also potentially encourages the emergence of a culture of loss of certainty and doubt. Neither is reflection the free, autonomous, practice that it is often represented as, as we are always already shaped through our social and discursive contexts. Systematic forms of reflection carry with them assumptions and values through which our own are made available for questioning; they are technologies through which assumptions and values are made available for reconfiguration in ways that are also constrained. Indeed, reflection can be positioned as a technique to be applied to situations, a competence to be practised, or as an embedded and embodied practice – each shaping autonomy in particular ways. What may emerge in the suggestions for the competence for adult

educators in Europe by Research voor Beleid (2010) is not certain, but reflection may tend to invite individuals to make themselves available for categorization and improvement in terms of the competence frameworks and prescriptions that are represented as quality indicators. This inscribes their vocabulary and categorizations into the discourses and reflections of practitioners.

We find a point of struggle between the newer call for lifelong learning in the European space, and a previous discourse of expertise. Expertise as a form of professionalism and professionalisation is linked to a model of technical rationality (Eraut, 1994). It has relied on understandings of an initial education and training for life. Here we find the struggle – for, how can an expert continue to be expert if he or she is not at the same time a lifelong learner? To put this in another way, how can a lifelong learner be considered an expert? The description of the urgency of change that we considered above as necessary in discourses of professionalisation, embedded as it is through a policy discourse of lifelong learning in Europe, undermines the logos, the seriousness, of discourses of professionalisation through expertise. This may suggest in part why discourses of expertise have appeared less convincing over the last decades. Although as much a reason might be a cultural resistance among adult educators and discourses against the generalizing of experiences, and a 'prejudice' of discourse towards practice as situated and thus unique. However, the description of the urgency of lifelong learning undermines discourses of expertise only in certain ways. This does not necessarily displace the notion of the technical expert for two reasons. Although a discourse of expertise has traditionally been premised on entrance into the profession through initial education and as the learning of necessary theoretical knowledge and then application within the place of work, opportunities for continuing professional development can still emphasize the learning of theoretical knowledge as the basis of practice. This basis of learning can still be provided away from the workplace and then applied within it. This can be done simply on a continuing basis, rather than it being based on initial education alone. Hence a discourse of expertise, premised on a naturalised discourse of change and embedded in a wider discourse of the need for lifelong learning helps construct a requirement for more and continuous learning.

Conclusion

This issue of RELA also contains two individual articles not related to the theme of professionalisation. They illustrate the increasing breadth of the adult learning research area, and also, each of them, demonstrate a well defined method applied on an empirical case study. In the first article, *In the framework of videoconference classrooms at local learning centres in Sweden*, Ulrik Lögdlund from Linköping University explores the practice of videoconferencing based on ethnographic observation in classrooms at local learning centres. The study is focusing on communication and the role of the teacher in a videoconferencing class, and reveals the particular consequences of the absence of proper back-channel cues and low feedback. The teacher becomes an actor in class trying to break through the barriers of the mediating technology and the practice is described as a learning space imbued with the rationale of communication technology. The second article in the open pool, *Competing discourses and the positioning of students in an adult basic education programme*, written by Anne Winther Jensen, Roskilde University, received the 'best PhD paper award' at the ESREA triennial conference in Linköping in September 2010. It presents a case study of the learning processes of students' enrolled in an adult basic education programme in the social and

health care sector in Denmark. The issues being researched are how the students are positioned and position themselves in relation to the discourses which are available within the school based part of the education programme. The study draws on concepts of positioning theory, i.e. a poststructuralist approach. The empirical analysis of observations, interviews and document studies reveals a competition between opposing discourses mobilised in the programme, and uses this observation to understand processes of inclusion and exclusion of students in the programme.

We have been concerned to identify points of struggle over qualities that may be lost or emerge if policy arguments for change are accepted. Will a professionalisation of adult and continuing education improve quality? In what sense might this be so? To begin to answer these questions we have argued that we need descriptions of the terrain of adult and continuing education and research indicating these struggles and qualities in various locations. In this issue, as articulated by Egetenmeyer and Käpplinger, there is a loss of qualities in a tendency for discourses of professionalisation to have become oriented to those of quality management. For Lassnigg, there is a struggle in the contradictions between adult education structures and policies and their lack of success in supporting the professional development of educators' in the Austrian case. For Ackland, there are qualities lost in the discursive struggles entailed in the implementation of teaching qualifications and as practitioner services became reconfigured in Scotland. For Maier-Gutheil and Hof, there are quite different qualities emerging in the different forms and identities of professionalisation that they identify. These critical thoughts over the struggles and qualities entailed, widen the possibilities for debate and for consideration of our own responses to calls for professionalisation. The focus on professionalisation and increasing quality through generic competence descriptions is important and has real social and material consequences. Thus our responses need to be considered.

Further discussion over how changes influence the many adult educators, trainers and organisers is also important. Which competences are developed in specific contexts and which collective reflections are being developed apart from those emphasising the local and specific and the need to remain amateur? The classical notion of the professional entails a collective responsibility and an organisational safeguarding of autonomy. We do not yet know if the developments in diverse sectors and contexts make some notions of the professional more relevant than others for understanding work and in building work identities. These could take the professionalisation debate in quite other directions than have the policy ideas that have tended to set the scene so far.

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European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults, Vol.2, No.1, 2011, pp. 21-35

Professionalisation and quality management: struggles, boundaries and bridges between two approaches

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Abstract

The quality of adult educators is on the agenda of European educational policy and the scientific community in Europe. In these contexts, professionalisation and quality management are often conflated. This paper is based on the hypothesis that quality management and professionalisation follow two different approaches. The paper outlines the two approaches with a focus on their two different logics. After a brief comparison of the two approaches, the paper examines the conflation of these two approaches in the expertise Key competences for adult learning professionals (Research voor Beleid, 2010). The paper ends with a plea for acknowledging the boundaries between professionalisation and quality management, and shows ways of building bridges between them without neglecting their essential differences.

Keywords: professionalisation; professionals; quality management; standards; key competencies

Introduction

In European Union (EU) documents, adult education and learning was for a long time only included in general discussion of lifelong learning. Adult education and learning in its own right has only been addressed in EU documents since 2006. Two documents in particular – *Adult learning: It is never too late to learn* (European Commission, 2006) and *Action Plan on Adult learning. It is always a good time to learn* (European Commission, 2007) – focus specifically on adult education and learning. In both documents, the question of how to ensure quality in adult education can be found (European Commission, 2006; European Commission, 2007). The 2006 document

ISSN 2000-7426

DOI 10.3384/rela.2000-7426.rela0058
www.rela.ep.liu.se

draws a broad picture of quality in adult education, including teaching methods, staff, providers and delivery as aspects of quality in adult education. The 2007 document identifies the staff involved in delivery as 'the key factor' for the quality of adult education. It announces the developments of standards for adult learning professionals as well as for providers and for the accreditation of providers. The idea is to develop quality in adult education by setting standards.[1]

In 2010 the study *Key competences for adult learning professionals* was published by the European Commission (Research voor Beleid, 2010). It proposed a framework of competencies for adult learning professionals. Within this framework, seven so-called 'generic' competencies and 12 specific competencies were described. These competencies should be fulfilled in a summative way by the staff of each adult education provider. The study set out competencies which adult education providers should fulfil at an organisational level and competencies which individuals should fulfil personally. With this study the EU is fostering its plan of formulating competencies as standards for adult learning professionals (European Commission, 2007).

Taking into consideration the discussion on adult education professionalisation and on quality management in adult education, this paper is based on the argument that there are two different logics: the logic of professionalisation; and the logic of quality management. Professionalisation focuses primarily on the development of people and specific groups of people working in a field of action; quality management focuses on the development of an organisation and its processes, often with the goal of a certain standardisation. In the present European discourse, we see a danger of the quality management approach dominating the professionalisation approach. In order to improve adult education significantly in daily practice beyond an inflation of quality certificates as proof of performance, we propose to consider and discuss seriously the advantages and limitations of both approaches. Therefore, our paper follows the core questions: what is the logic behind the approach of professionalisation on the one hand and quality management on the other? How can both of them contribute to an improvement in adult education?

Therefore, we elaborate firstly on the logic of the approach of professionalisation in adult education. Secondly, we outline the logic of the approach of quality management. Thirdly, we outline differences, struggles and boundaries between these two approaches. Finally, we try to build bridges between professionalisation and quality management.

Professionalisation in adult education

The term 'professionalisation' can be understood in various different ways (Gieseke, 2010). In this paper it should be discussed as a process. In the discussion of professionalisation in the educational context, this process is focused on two different perspectives: one perspective refers to professionalisation as the process for developing a profession (e.g. adult education); and the other perspective understands professionalisation as a process of developing professionalism for people working in a specific field (e.g. adult education). These two processes do not contradict each other. Nonetheless, their primary focus is different, as will be explained in the following section.

Professionalisation as a process towards developing a profession

The term 'profession' has its roots in the early modern age in continental Europe. According to Stichweh (1996), the development of professions is embedded in the transition of the society of the Middle Ages to a functionally differentiated society. The universities of the Middle Ages had four faculties: the faculty of philosophy offered the degree of 'magister', which gave access to the three other faculties – law, medicine and theology. Graduates of these three faculties belong to one of the three original professions. A profession implies several privileges for its members. In the twentieth century, characteristics of several professions were researched by sociologists studying various professions. From the perspective of power, the universities and their established professions brought a new, independent power into the context of the state and society.

According to Mieg (2003, 2005), the Anglo-American discussion uses the term 'profession' for professionally organised groups. This means that the way a qualification is acquired and the access to the market, as well as the standards for its performance, are clearly defined. In Anglo-American contexts, professions are normally developed by the initiative of groups (bottom up), whereas the development of professions in continental European contexts is seen traditionally in a top-down way by the state. Observing professions in central Europe, there are several hints that the top-down ways are dissolving and that bottom-up ways are becoming stronger nowadays (e.g. the strength of professional associations).

In a classical way, a profession is described by several characteristics. There are lists which name up to 28 characteristics (Perks, 1993, pp. 12-14). The most common characteristics are:

- scientifically based specialist knowledge with a specific subject terminology
- theory-based academic qualification pathways
- specific norms and codes of ethics
- professional autonomy
- client-based and social interactions
- self-control by professional associations
- supporting public welfare.

Professions are researched from several theoretical approaches. Depending on the theoretical perspective, some characteristics are more prominent than others. From a system-theoretical view, Stichweh (1996) focuses on client orientation. Oevermann (1996) develops a perspective of an ideal type of professional action, so professional autonomy, academic qualification and professional socialisation are at the centre of his approach. Freidson (2004) understands professionalism as the third logic beside the logic of the market and the logic of hierarchical administration. The characteristic for professions is that their logic is based on the specific, complex professional action of a professional group. Because of this, professionals are characterised by their self-organisation and by the self-regulation of a professional group. Based on this sociological discussion, professionalisation would mean to develop a joint framework of adult education as a classical profession. Looking, for example, at Germany, one of the first countries with an institutionalised education for adult educators, we will show some efforts that have been made to develop adult education as a profession.

In Germany, adult education has been understood more as a mission than as a profession for a long time (Nittel, 2000). First discussions and activities in the 1920s

intended to qualify people for teaching adults (in the so-called 'Deutsche Schule für Volksforschung'). During this time, adult educators were normally people who already had another qualification. For example, school teachers, priests or university professors were engaged in teaching adults. So until the 1950s the idea that adult educators did not need a specific vocational training or even an academic qualification was prevalent. Life experience was considered to be more important than an educational qualification (e.g. Weniger, 1952). This was strongly rejected by Schulenberg (1972) and theoretical reasons for this rejection were given in detail.

During the 1960s and especially in the 1970s, initiatives to enhance professionalisation multiplied in Germany. At university level, a framework for a diploma programme in educational sciences with an emphasis on adult education was developed. This was introduced in several German universities during the 1970s after the decision of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the German Länder (Kultusministerkonferenz, 1969). These developments secured a basis for understanding adult education in the context of education as a science, whereas in the Anglo-Saxon countries it is understood more as technique or art.

During the 1960s and 1970s in Germany introductory seminars and self-study material were developed by the Educational Institute of the German *Volkshochschule* for people working in adult education (Gieseke, 2010; Heuer, 2010). Through the expansion of adult education in the 1970s there was a goal to develop a profession of adult education for staff of the *Volkshochschule* (which was described by the term '*Verberuflichung*'). During that time, adult education providers started to develop programmes to qualify their teachers. Even today, adult education trainers still normally come from professions other than education or adult education. Nowadays, there are around 50 universities in Germany offering adult education as an academic subject. These developments in professionalisation can be understood as initiatives to develop adult education as a classical profession.

According to the characteristics of professions, Gieseke (2002) shows through extensive empirical research that adult education cannot be understood as a typical profession; a one-to-one client relationship is not usual. Normally, adult educators are acting with groups of learners and hence the working context is much more complex and less oriented towards the individual. Individuals are responsible for their own learning, and this aspect makes them less dependent on the adult educator. Therefore the logic of a client-orientation, which implies a hierarchical situation between a professional and a client, does not apply to adult education. Even the aspect of professional autonomy is only relative: there is a conflict between the professional group orientation on the one hand and the market orientation on the other. Adult educators are mostly acting in and for institutions. Nonetheless, they are also depending on an adult education market promoted and framed by new forms of governance which introduce voucher systems and similar instruments of well-controlled liberalism (Käpplinger, 2009).

According to the inner logic of adult education, it has to be asked whether the development of a profession is advantageous. It seems more promising to discuss professionalisation as the development of professionalism.

Professionalisation as a process towards professionalism

One of the first definitions of professionalism in the context of German adult education comes from Tietgens (1988, p. 38). He understands professionalism as 'situative competence' and defines professionalism as 'the ability to use broad, scientifically deepened and diverse abstract knowledge adequate in concrete situations. Or

contrariwise: to acknowledge in just these situations which parts of the knowledge could be relevant.'[2] Gieseke (2010) developed this perspective through extensive empirical qualitative research, and defines professionalism as 'differentiated handling with research results of the discipline, together with interdisciplinary knowledge for the interpretation of an actor's situations in a specific practical field.'[3]

It is also interesting to focus on paradoxical and contradictory situations that professionals have to deal with (Dewe, 1988; Nittel, 2000). They have to act professionally in situations where no concrete, applicable professional knowledge is available. Other authors focus on competence-oriented ways of professionalism. For example, Peters (2004) describes the knowledge, abilities, identity and autonomy which a professional should display.

What does this mean for the (academic) development of professionalism for people working in adult education? According to Gieseke (2010), professionals in adult education are characterised by their interpretation patterns, which enable them to interpret situations from the perspective of adult education. Based on these interpretation patterns, professionals are able to act adequately in practical situations. In other words, professionals are able to put on professional glasses through which they can see situations clearly from the perspective of adult education. Therefore a professional action always needs to be an interpretation of the situation by a person with scientific knowledge. Professional action is characterised by an adequate (not a predetermined) way of acting in a specific situation.

Professionalism in this sense means understanding the situation in which professional acting is taking place. It means a holistic understanding of professionals who have to act on the basis of their combined knowledge, skills and attitudes. So professionalisation means educating people working in adult education. The goal of professionalisation is to support the professionalism of the people working in adult education. With this professionalism a further improvement of adult education can be achieved by the professionals. Where the term 'professionalisation' is used below, it means a process towards professionalism.

Quality management in adult education

The concept of quality and its various summative and formative components (quality assurance, quality development, quality management, etc.) have become very prominent in educational discussion in recent years (Hartz, 2008; Veltjens, 2009). When concentrating here on quality management,[4] quality is seen as something like a guiding concept with a universal meaning when talking about adult education (Hartz & Meisel, 2006). This is rather surprising when considering that the term 'quality' does not originate within the educational field, but stems from the field of economics (Law, 2010; Hartz, 2008). However, the predominance of quality and management even within the educational debate is a good example of the increasing predominance of economic perspectives in the perception of a 'market' of adult education nowadays. It outlines to a certain degree the failure of adult education to develop its own terminology and to use quality management in an economic sense.

Turning to the generic meaning of quality, it is interesting to note that the roots of quality management can be found in American and Japanese industry (especially the car-making industry). Starting with external quality control concepts with rather summative functions used by Frederick Taylor for the Ford enterprise at the beginning of the twentieth century, the quality idea extended to all areas of enterprise after the

1960s. This was due to the success of Japanese enterprises and their rather formative quality management with a focus on participative processes after rigorous planning by powerful white-collar expert technicians. Nonetheless, it is important to note that quality management means only that the product has the quality that was intended. For example, even enterprises with an ISO certification can produce cheap mass products with low sustainability. The goals of management are achieved here; nevertheless, consumers might be dissatisfied with the limited performance of a product. Quality management does not have to lead to a good or better product, but to a product as it is meant to be.

Thus, for organisations, quality management is often a process of internal standardisation and external image-building. Both are crucial for the existence of organisations coping with internal and external pressures. These pressures originate partly from political decisions in favour of increased competition between organisations and partly from political decisions in favour of a labour force with often flexible, precarious working conditions (Sennett, 1998). New forms of governance are closely related to the present prominence of the term 'quality management' (Forneck & Wrana, 2005). The introduction of the quality concept into adult education is a relatively recent development, which started in many countries in the 1990s and was connected to an economic shift in adult education (Arnold, 2010). Concepts of market- and customer-orientation from business economics were transferred to adult education. Norms such as ISO-9000 (and later standards) are used in many organisations as a means of standardisation and should apply to almost any business processes, regardless of the products being produced by the organisations. In general, educational organisations started being treated as enterprises and learners started to be seen mainly as customers or consumers in the market of adult education. This perception is very influential, but is also heavily criticised (Forneck & Wrana, 2005). 'The common approach of quality assessment … has been considered by many researchers (e.g. Dill 2007, Harvey & Newton 2007) as having largely failed to address the essence of educational quality' (Law, 2010, p. 65). Education and formation are not seen by critics as products, and learners are not seen as consumers, but as 'prosumers', who contribute actively and jointly in the emergence of education and formation (Arnold, 2010, p. 252). Learners do not pay for a final product, but pay for learning arrangements in which trainers and learners are jointly developing something which can finally result in education and formation. Thus, the concept of quality is enshrined in new forms of governance, which are primarily led by accountability and only secondarily led by improvement (Forneck & Wrana, 2005; Heinrich, Jähner & Rein, 2011).

Overall, 'quality management' is a term which is very much focused on processes, products and controls by standardisation. These processes and products are defined formally according to criteria or norms standards. Thus, quality seems to be a rather neutral term, which can be used in very different ways depending on the context. The central characteristic of quality assurance or quality development is a formalisation of organisational processes. Individual actions should be guided by formal procedures or formal structures, which are often laid down by written guidelines, mission statements or fixed goals. People, interests, professional passion or individual objectives are not apparent, and the individual factor is regulated by this formalism. The negative consequences of quality management that is too rigorous can be self-referentiality, homogeneity, hierarchism and bureaucratism (Heinrich et al., 2011), which stifle innovations. In principle, quality assurance or quality development should help in the organisational execution of tasks regardless of individuals' subjective influence. It is not accidental that discourses about quality are mainly organisation-oriented, rather than

person-oriented. This sometimes makes the quality discourse difficult to understand and often rather socio-technical and very self-referential.

'Quality' is an overall buzzword, although it is also an 'omnibus term' or a 'container term', which means that the term is often used very differently. The term 'quality' is originally a neutral term which has to be defined, but nowadays quality is often a simple synonym for the 'good' without discussing what is good or bad (Hartz & Meisel, 2006). Particularly lacking is a discussion about whom quality is meant for and what are the real objectives in daily practices. Is quality meant for the government? Or for learners? Or for enterprises? Are the needs of these different stakeholders in adult education identical? How should we deal with different interests? Is there a hierarchy of needs, meaning that some needs are more important than others? Nowadays there is a high level of vagueness in the usage of the term 'quality', which makes it easy to hide the interests of some stakeholders. Surprisingly, there is only little discussion taking place about what is really meant by 'educational quality'. In particular, the objectives and the content of adult education are not reflected in their meaning.

Differences between professionalisation and quality management

The integration of adult educators into organisations shows the necessity of distinguishing between organisational development and professionalism, as Gieseke (2002), Harney (1998) and Nittel (2000) stress. The logics of organisational development and professionalism are different. Which logic leads and improves the day-to-day actions of practitioners? Is it, on the one hand, the logic of professionalism or is it, on the other hand, the logic of organisational development? In this respect we are lacking updated empirical research apart from interviewing directors or quality managers, who often tell legitimising narratives about the success of quality management (Behrmann, 2010; Heinrich et al., 2011). For example, it would be interesting to research real educational processes and the consequences for different stakeholders before and after the introduction of a quality management system.

Professionalisation versus quality management

Based on the explanation above, the logic of professionalisation and the logic of quality management can be distinguished, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Differences between professionalisation and quality management

	Professionalisation as a process towards professionalism	**Quality management as a process towards standards**
Roots	humanities/universities	economy
Focus	People	organisations
Basis of action	patterns of personal interpretation, based on unique cases	defined organisational processes, based on defined standards
Field of acting	social fields	technical fields
Perspective	holistically oriented	oriented towards individual parts
Action orientation	a good way of acting in unique situations	one way/right way

Source: Authors' own design

Table 1 makes clear that both approaches have very different focuses in many respects. Professionalisation originates in the academic area and is person-oriented, while quality management is process-oriented and comes from an economics background. Professionalism as the goal of professionalisation can be developed through a scientific qualification, by professional associations and through a code of ethics. Professionalisation is understood as an ongoing process of a person in social interaction. The personal bases of action are patterns of individual interpretation, which are focused on unique cases. Quality based on quality management concepts is developed through documentation, assessment, objective standards, evaluation and quality assessors. It is characterised by defined and standardised organisational processes. The context of quality management is less complex and is oriented towards individual parts, and processes can be defined by one right way. In contrast, professionalisation is needed for complex situations in which individuals have to interpret the context in a holistic way in order to be able to act adequately. Depending on the situation, different actions can all be adequate solutions.

The approaches of professionalisation and quality management are far from identical and cannot easily be integrated. But instead of discussing which approach is superior, the most valuable approach should be to appreciate both perspectives and to benefit from the different potential of both. A conflation of both approaches implies the danger of a strengthening of organisations (managers) and a weakening of professionals, as standardisation is often a very powerful tool. An introduction of quality management often results in the organisational demand that professionals have to justify their individual actions (Harney, 1998). This is even true when it is claimed that a strengthening of organisations would enhance professional culture (Heinrich et al., 2011). Normally, the opposite is true (Nittel, 2000) – a rather hegemonic quality culture is established, by merging the professional and the organisational perspective (e.g. Ehlers, 2009).

A critical approach towards conflating the organisational and the professional perspectives

Hartz (2008) and Veltjens (2009) describe a development since the 1990s, at least for Germany, in which the discussion of quality has stimulated a turning of the focus away from the professionals and towards the organisations. Quality is connected with the

organisation and not the profession as a starting point. Because of this, it is valuable to analyse precisely the expertise in *Key competences for adult learning professionals* (Research voor Beleid, 2010, for the European Commission), which seems to be becoming a basis for the European Commission in defining adult learning professionalism. In analysing the *Key competences for adult learning professionals* expertise, a conflation of organisational and professional perspectives can be found. This is shown by the fact that the study describes competencies of a person as well as competencies which should be shown by an organisation. The sum of the personal and the organisational competencies are defined as 'Key competences for adult learning professionals'.

Furthermore, the term 'professional' is used for improving organisational aspects in adult education, while the term 'quality management' is used for improving professionalism in adult education:

> The 2006 joint report on progress with the Education and Training 2010 work programme expressed regret at the fact that the professional development of vocational teachers and trainers continues to pose a real challenge in most countries. This coincides with other quality measures such as organisational development. The report could justifiably have extended the expression of disappointment to the professional development of teachers active in the field of non-vocational adult learning. (Research voor Beleid, 2010, p. 18)

> Quality assurance and management within adult learning institutes is indispensable for the professionalisation of the sector. Several national country studies illustrate a demand for more measurements in this field. The study shows that continuous professional development (CPD) and external evaluation only play a relatively small role in quality enhancement policies for adult learning providers. This indicates a need for change. It is necessary to increase external evaluation and pay more attention to the career prospects of practitioners. These strategies support processes of professional development in the sector. They stress the need for practitioners to have professional autonomy in determining their career paths and, at the same time, to be accountable through external evaluation. (Research voor Beleid, 2010, p. 20)

The assumption is that quality assurance and quality management would improve the professionalisation of adult educators. In this way, the organisational and the professional perspectives are conflated. This assumption is rather questionable. So far, there is no solid empirical proof that the introduction of quality assurance and quality management has led to a professionalisation of educators – or even to an improvement in educational quality. Empirical studies focusing solely on the perspectives of management and quality assessors (Behrmann, 2010; Heinrich et al., 2011) are interesting, but deliver mainly self-referential assumptions about the value of quality management.

Quality assurance and quality management are targeted at the organisational level. To assume that improvements on this level might spill over to the individual professional level is far from obvious. In fact, standardisation on the organisational level might even inhibit individual professional development, since standardisation must logically lead to a loss of individual, professional freedom in action, which might be needed in specific situations in complex societies. Even from the perspective of economics this is questionable, as W Edwards Deming outlines in the introduction of his book *The new Economics. For Industry, Government, Education*:

> This book is for people who are living under the tyranny of the prevailing style of management. The huge, long-range losses caused by this style of management have led us into decline. Most people imagine that the present style of management has always

> existed, and is a fixture. Actually, it is a modern invention – a prison created by the way in which people interact. This interaction afflicts all aspects of our lives – government, industry, education, healthcare. We have grown up in a climate of competition between people, teams, departments, divisions, pupils, schools, universities. We have been taught by economists that competition will solve our problems. Actually, competition, we see now, is destructive. What we need is cooperation and transformation to a new style of management. (Deming, 1994, p. XV)

This fundamental critique does not derive from a pedagogue or a critic of capitalism, but from the prominent American management consultant W Edwards Deming at the end of his life (1900–93). Deming worked for decades with enterprises in Japan and the USA. It is also a comment on our present situation of economic and ecological crisis, but it was rather prophetic, considering that he wrote it in the 1990s. Although Deming was the 'father' of the Japanese quality revolution and of total quality management (TQM), he was very critical about standardised ways in organising quality and leaving out the individual perspective. He found that knowledge about the variation of people was missing, and he saw a general lack of theory in leading organisations and individuals in organisations. He opposed strongly numerical goals without a theoretical foundation (such as the theoretically weak Lisbon goals (Behringer, 2010)) and considered popular management tools, such as merit pay, as the best way of inhibiting motivation and collaboration of individuals in organisations (Deming, 1994). When reading his almost 20-year-old books nowadays, it is challenging that almost all his descriptions of aberration in organisational life seem to have become frequent daily practice in many organisations. It is even more ironic that public organisations often start to use methods of management that were once popular in commercial organisations, when the methods have already become unpopular in business life (e.g. merit pay), or that scientific knowledge is ignored (e.g. the Hawthorne studies in sociology of the 1920s (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1966)).

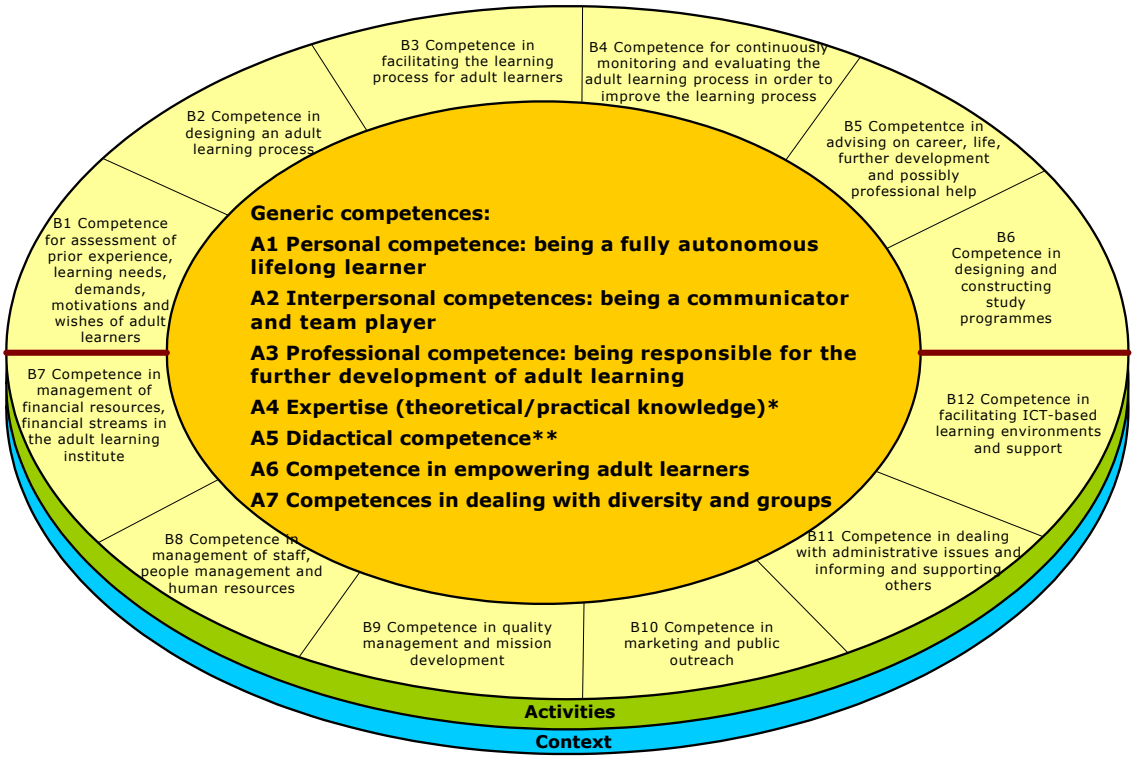
The developed set of key competencies also shows further indices that the organisational perspective is understood as the leading one:

> This set of key competences is applicable for all professionals working in the adult learning sector, by abstracting from the specific context in which professionals work. Moreover, it attempts to include all competences needed to support the activities carried out on an institutional level. This means that not only the teaching activities, but also other activities (for example management activities and programme development activities) are supported by the set of key competences. It also means that each professional is expected to acquire all the given competences, but that ideally all competences are available among the entire staff of an adult learning institute. (Research voor Beleid, 2010, p. 10)

The study assumes that the organisation is the reference point for professionalisation of adult education, not the individual professional. Furthermore, anybody who works in the adult learning sector is called 'professional'. Another example of the mixing of the logic of quality management and the logic of professionalisation within the expertise is the assumption that adult education professionalism can be broken up into single pieces of competencies:

> ...to abstract the core competences that have been indentified in other studies and in different contexts that could be applicable for everyone working in the adult learning sector. (Research voor Beleid, p. 23)

Figure 1. Set of key competencies of adult learning professionals



Source: Research voor Beleid (2010, p. 11)

The Research voor Beleid study uses the following as its initial sources in its expertise upon which Figure 1 is based: 'academic and policy-related documents on competences for working in the adult learning sector'; 'Job descriptions, vacancy texts and competency profiles on providers level'; and 'learning outcomes of education programmes designed at delivering competent professionals in the adult learning sector' (Research voor Beleid, 2010, p. 28). In this way, the study uses single tasks of adult learning professionals as a starting point from which the set of competencies are described. However, this rather technical approach creates several problems: it assumes that a profession can be defined by listing single tasks; and it assumes that a summative fulfilling of the competencies that are needed to fulfil these tasks would lead to professionalism. This approach can also be found in the Australian competencies approach: Flowers (2009) shows that in Australia this approach leads to a homogenisation of professional development and to ways of learning that focus primarily on the defined standards and competencies.

Looking back at what has been worked out in this paper as being the differences between professionalisation and quality management, the separation into different parts is a typical way of developing and improving organisational structures but not professionalism. The leitmotifs for all these competencies are missing in the area of expertise. Such leitmotifs can be the formulation of a common societal responsibility or the fostering of the learning individual according to his/her own needs. This common societal responsibility can, as a consequence, act as a reference point towards the formulation of adult learning competencies. Because of this, the sum of single

competencies does not lead to professionalism. Furthermore, single competencies can be understood as synergetic contributions to professionalism in adult education.

Overall, like other educational fields, adult education has to deal with new forms of governance. Quality management is considered as a governmental mode in order to steer quasi-markets by standardisation. Thus, the dominant perspective is actually accountability-led and not improvement-led. The resulting trend is that: learners turn into consumers; competition is the new mantra; competency tests flourish like weeds; organisations have to be certified in order to get access to public co-funding; and adult educators have to meet new standards, while simultaneously being branded as being deficient and struggling with rather scarce public resources. The precarious working conditions in adult education and the public responsibility in this precariousness are not missing here by chance, but are hidden in this new governance mode. All in all, this shows that the logic of professionalism is sacrificed for the logic of standardisation.

Acknowledging boundaries and building bridges

In conclusion, professionalisation and quality management contain different logics and have different focuses. It is a fundamental, categorical and logical mistake to assume explicitly or implicitly that the perspectives of organisations and professions are identical. The same is true of the assumption that quality management is an objective expression for 'good education'. Keeping differences and acknowledging boundaries is important in order to be able to see differing interests (e.g. quality of education might be viewed differently by a politician, a citizen, a manager or an auditor) and to mediate between emerging conflicts because of different interests.

The new modes of accountability-led governance in adult education and other educational fields are often characterised by a rather militaristic language, like 'calibre' or 'mobilisation' (e.g. 'it is essential to ensure that teachers and school leaders are of the highest calibre', Research voor Beleid, 2010, p. 18), which asks for general mobilisation towards one joint goal. On the contrary, we should remain open-minded about the multiple differences – especially in our postmodern societies – and the value and richness of these differences. The consumer model has serious limitations, and the free space of professionalism beyond organisational chains is precious.

Nonetheless, it would not be advisable to build new frontiers between professionalisation and standardisation through quality management. It is important to keep the differences in mind, but also to see the two different tasks of professionalisation and quality management in their contribution to an improvement of adult education. Both approaches have disadvantages and advantages as well as limitations and possibilities. Thus, we have to look for bridges and benefits, by combining both approaches at some points without losing the indispensable value of the perspective of each individual approach. Professionalisation as a process towards professionalism in adult education focuses on the development of people working as professionals in adult education. By contrast, quality management in adult education focuses on adult education providers and their organisational development. Both approaches have different objectives in improving adult education.

Adult learning professionals are normally working in organisations. For this reason, it is necessary to decide in which situation the logic of the organisation should be the guiding logic and in which situation the logic of the professional should be the guiding logic. To identify this, the following questions could be used:

- Which actions follow a right/wrong logic and can be standardised by quality management? Which actions follow an adequate/inadequate logic and therefore need professionalisation without standardisation?
- For which actions is it sufficient to follow routines, and can they be standardised by quality management? Which actions need a holistic interpretation of a complex situation beyond routines and have to be professionalised?
- For which actions is it necessary to have academic expertise and therefore qualified staff (professionalisation)? For which actions is this unnecessary?

Based on this differentiation, it may be valuable to evaluate which part of the *Key competences for adult learning professionals* (Research voor Beleid, 2010) expertise contributes to professionalism of people working in adult education, and which part contributes to the organisational development of adult education providers.

To reach quality in the adult learning sector, both perspectives should be acknowledged in their own respect. Therefore, it is necessary to think in which situations professional autonomy is needed and in which situations standardised processes lead to an improvement. In this way, a distinction between the two approaches can be made, thereby avoiding a dominant definition of professionalisation solely on the logic of quality management.

Notes

[1] The inaugural meeting of the 'ESREA Research Network on Adult Educators, Trainers and their Professional Development in Thessaloniki in 2009' also focused on the question of quality provision and assessment in the context of the education of adult educators. The starting point of this paper was a discussion in Workshop 10 on 'In-service training of adult trainers: The role of the enterprise and the role of the individual'.

[2] Translated by the authors. Original in German: 'Professionalität heißt, auf die Kurzformel gebracht, die Fähigkeit nutzen zu können, breit gelagerte, wissenschaftlich vertiefte und damit vielfältig abstrahierte Kenntnisse in konkreten Situationen angemessen anwenden zu können' (Tietgens, 1988, p. 38).

[3] Translated by the authors. Original in German: '…sondern den differenzierten Umgang mit Forschungsbefunden aus der Disziplin und mit interdisziplinarem Wissen zur Deutung von Handlungssituationen mit Handlungsanspruch in einem bestimmten Praxisfeld' (Gieseke, 2010, p. 386).

[4] Interestingly, the term 'management' has also taken on a universal meaning. Field characteristics here are often hidden. It is assumed that a manager could manage different organisations – an assumption which is challenged even in economics (Mintzberg, 1989), but is still mainstream thinking of MBA business schools.

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European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults, Vol.2, No.1, 2011, pp. 37-55

Contradictions in adult education structures and policies in Austria: their interrelation with the professional development of educators

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Abstract

This article analyses the structural influences on the professional development of adult educators and their relation to education policy using Austria as a fairly average example of the diversity in European adult education. The position of adult education is first analysed in the course of the development of a lifelong learning strategy, showing a set of basic contradictions that are institutionally embedded in educational practices and policies. The consequences of these constellations for professional development in adult education are then examined, and a policy analysis undertaken based on institutional theory and using literature, documents and secondary data. This analysis shows that the contradictions in the institutional structures and policies inhibit both the development of a lifelong learning strategy as well as the professional development of adult educators. The competence development and quality assurance approaches adopted in Europe contribute only very modestly to the development of adult education in Austria.

Keywords: lifelong learning; Austria; adult education; teachers and trainers; professionals

Introduction

This article relates to the questions of the structural influences on the professional development of adult educators and how these are related to educational policies. The purpose of this article is to offer an understanding of the situation and policies regarding teachers and trainers in Austria within the wider framework of adult education and related policies. Three topics are linked to each other here: 1) professionalism in adult education; 2) policy making (in particular the development of a lifelong learning (LLL) strategy); 3) the existing adult education institutional framework as determined by the

ISSN 2000-7426

DOI 10.3384/rela.2000-7426.rela0028
www.rela.ep.liu.se

various actors involved and their coordinating mechanisms. We use both a pragmatic and a meso-level theoretical approach in our analysis to combine institutional theory (cf. Hall & Taylor, 2006), in particular actor-centred institutionalism based on Scharpf (1997) and historical institutionalism based on Thelen (1999), with meso-level approaches to co-ordination and governance (cf. Thompson, Frances, Levacic & Mitchell, 1991) and elements of 'old' and 'new' professionalism theory (cf. Evans, 2008; Ozga, 1995). These approaches allow for a more open analysis of complex interrelationships between 'rational' market behaviour and culturalist notions of 'meaning', whereas the generalised 'governmentality' approaches (cf. Burchell, Gordon & Miller, 1999) would push the analysis prematurely towards a more abstract interpretation in the 'neoliberalism' debate. The chosen theoretical framework contextualises professionalism in a twofold manner: first, the development of professionalism in adult education is conceptualised as a part of policy making; and second, adult education policy is in turn seen as being institutionally embedded in the structures behind the provision of adult education by a complex set of actors. Our analysis ultimately leads us to two main conclusions: first, whereas professionalism theories are based primarily on the analysis of established professional structures, the establishment of new professional structures is far more dependent on the policy context; second, the policy process is to a large extent determined by the complexities and contradictions in the field it seeks to govern. As a result, the development of a comprehensive and coherent policy strategy in the LLL paradigm lags well behind what could not only be devised rationally, but would also be expected based on the hypothesis of a sound neoliberal strategy.

Austria can be considered to be a good 'case' of the wider European and international attempts to develop 'lifelong learning', and within it also adult learning.[1] In quantitative terms, the participation levels of Austrians in adult learning lie at the EU average, and many of its qualitative characteristics are also fairly similar to the common picture: a wide range of providers (including the competing vocational and non-vocational 'liberal' adult education sectors), a low degree of organisation and institutionalisation, a low level of public involvement and support, and a diverse range of practitioners working in the field, albeit with little known about or attention paid to their terms of work. Therefore, many of the findings of our analysis might in some respect also apply to other 'cases'.

The basic rationale behind our analysis builds on an earlier study on professionalisation in vocational education and training, which pointed to the strong influences of certain institutional structures on professional development. This means that 'professionalisation' cannot be developed easily as a strategy for change, because it is strongly embedded in given structures and policies (cf. Lassnigg, 2002). Since many researchers have argued that 'professionalisation' is a complex concept if its use is more than merely descriptive (cf. Milana & Skrypnyk, 2009), we use the concept in the professional development sense in a looser, more open way to denote the building of an organised community of practitioners, who are somehow both visible in and able to shape their field. The following statement from the *Adult Learning Professions in Europe* (ALPINE, 2008) study with regard to non-vocational adult learning (NVAL) can also be applied to the wider field of adult learning:

> The country studies clearly show that data on NVAL staff is often poorly recorded, stored, organised and accessible. (…) …there are hardly any organisations representing NVAL staff (especially in the non formal part of the sector) that could negotiate for better employment situation. In the cases they are, these organisations are often not very powerful. Overall, there is a strong need for new organisations that come up for the rights

> and employment situation of NVAL staff. We recommend to develop professional associations in the field, or to take initiatives for this at the European level. (ALPINE, 2008, pp.13-14).

In a professional development sense, this would mean that the 'professionals' should ideally be able to influence and shape the development of adult learning. European policy documents, however, tend to see professional development more as a quality development and quality assurance issue (e.g. qualifications as access criteria, obligation to professional development) and, as such, subordinate to other actors like providers or policy makers. In this article, we trace the relationship between education and training structures, adult education policies and professional development and show how these elements influence each other in certain configurations, basically restraining rather than supporting the latter in a broader professionalism sense.

In Austria, an LLL strategy paper has recently undergone broad consultation at policy level, and a summary has been presented as a commissioned expert proposal. An administrative task force is currently developing an operative strategy paper to be implemented in 2010 or 2011.[2] Noteworthy here is how issues relating to the professionalisation of teaching and training staff are addressed in this strategy. A deep gap is apparent, and prominent adult education researchers have been rightly pointing to a lack of professionalisation in this field for many years (Gruber, 2004; Lenz, 2005/ 2006). Despite this, the documents published during the consultation process do not highlight this issue as a major point for potential action, and there is no explicit line of action with regard to professional development. Some such action proposals are included in other lines of action in the form of indicators and benchmarks:

- professionalisation is strongly highlighted in a *guidance line of action* proposing training for the persons responsible;
- a total of 1,000 people should complete a specific programme (*Weiterbildungsakademie*-WBA: www.wba.or.at) to train and recognise the competences of adult education and training (ET) professionals over a period of three years (i.e. just over 300 of an estimated 90,000 such professionals per year);
- qualification of personnel should be used as an item in *quality assurance and quality development* models.

To explain this lack of 'strategy' for professionalisation, we will endeavour to find an institutional explanation in the Austrian adult ET structures and the related employment traditions and practices both in this sector and in the policy process. In section (2), we analyse adult education in the course of the development of an LLL strategy and show some of the basic contradictions institutionally embedded in practices and policies. In section (3), we determine the consequences of these constellations for professional development in adult education. Our methodology centres on an institutional policy analysis based on literature, documents and secondary data.

Basic traits and contradictions of adult education in Austria

Driven more by European recommendations and demands than by national impetus, adult education in Austria has been reluctantly placed on the policy agenda as a part of the development of an LLL strategy. Despite the gradual steps taken since the launch of

the European Employment Strategy (EES) in 1997,[3] no actual operative LLL strategy has resulted to date, and the knowledge base relating to ET structures in general and adult ET in particular is still fairly weak (as is also the case in many other countries; see ALPINE, 2008). In this section, we present a set of phenomena and contradictions that make the development of a coherent and comprehensive strategy difficult to achieve.

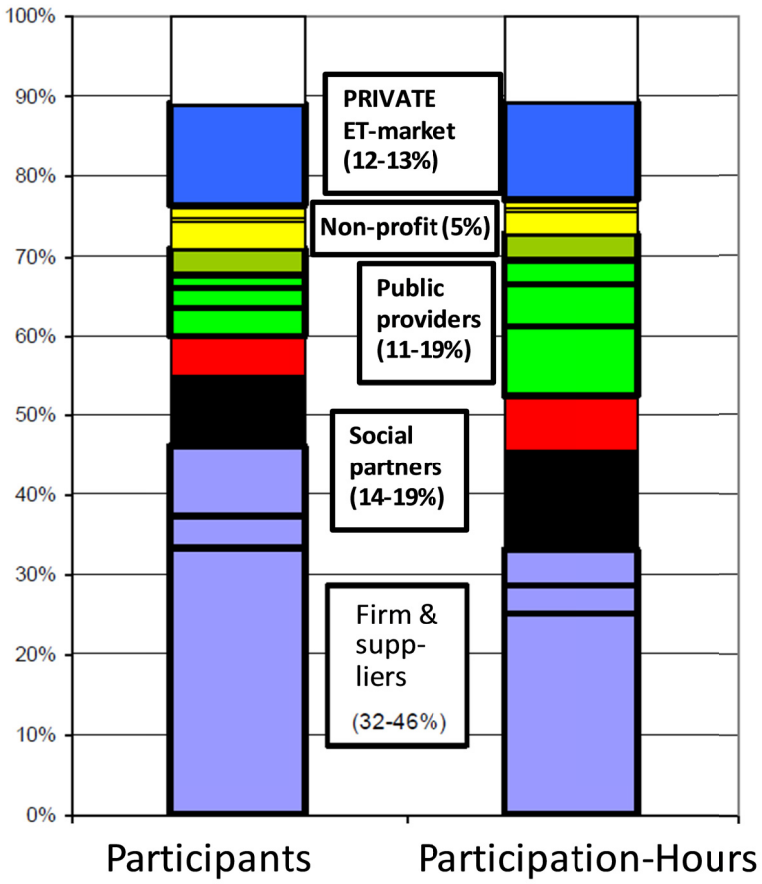
Collective providers and market rhetoric

The Austrian adult education system is driven mainly by 'collective provision' through institutions run by various interest groups (employer and labour associations, churches, political parties, etc.), with some traditional providers reaping a large part of the market share. These are generally 'non-profit' organisations with mixed financing structures that vary from institution to institution, including support from 'owner' institutions, public support, commissions from public institutions (primarily the Public Employment Service; see 2.2 below) and contributions from learners. More recently, a large number of new private sector financed providers have also emerged. These are generally very small establishments (often one person enterprises).

In the policy and practice discourse, however, this system of collective provision is termed 'market-driven'. This indicates that it is not always easy to classify in empirical terms the kind of coordination mechanism(s) on which a system is based. At first glance, a large proportion of the students would seem to be individual 'customers' who access adult ET through market channels (like course catalogues, etc.) and pay for their courses. On more close inspection, however, there are some complex support mechanisms that complicate this assessment, as illustrated by empirical accounts from various different sources.

Firstly, the information about participation can be broken down into the different types of providers (Figure 1). This shows that 'normal' market-driven providers (private for-profit institutions) only reap a small share of the market (12-13% of total participants or course hours).

Figure 1. Providers of adult ET in Austria by distribution of participants and course hours



Source: Statistics Austria, Microcensus 2003, estimation Lassnigg, Vogtenhuber & Steiner, 2007

Secondly, surveys about participation in adult ET show that only a minority of students has to bear their own costs. ET courses are paid for mainly by companies with, as in many other countries, various kinds of public (financial) support. This is frequently not directly related to specific training interests; many companies support employees in attending ET courses they have themselves chosen based on their own interests. Overall, about 70% of adult ET students in the 2003 survey did not make any personal contribution to the costs. The 2007 Austrian Adult Education Survey (AES) confirms this figure, showing that more than 80% of students in paid employment did not bear any personal costs for their participation in non-formal adult ET. These observations are in line with much of the relevant economics-based research, which consistently shows that – contrary to human capital theory – firms also pay for general training (and not just for specific training which is directly of use for work and immediate productivity; O'Connell, 2007; Bassanini, Booth, Brunello, De Paola & Leuven, 2005).

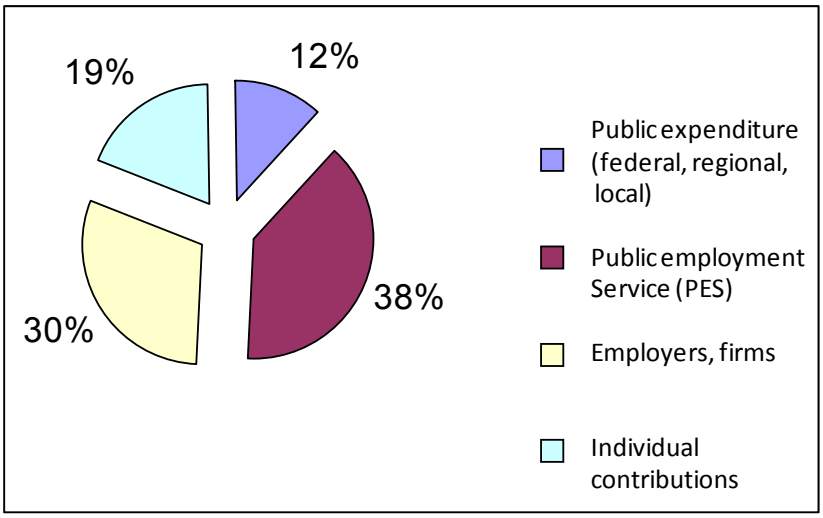
All in all, we can already see a contradiction here between 'market rhetoric' and the actual, publicly supported, collective provision of adult ET. We can also see on a more general level that it might sometimes be difficult to ascertain the coordination mechanisms on which a system rests. It is questionable whether a system that at first glance includes market-like transactions, yet whose main sources of funding are indirectly reaped in the background by transacting agents, can be termed 'market-driven'.

This issue relates directly to policy proposals and mechanisms of support. Many policy proposals intended to support individual demand are based on market mechanism ideas and the concept of providing incentives to the agents involved in the transactions. If participation and transactions are guided primarily by 'third party' actors (public support, firms and labour market policy institutions), the feasibility of such policy instruments must be questioned.

The public employment service (PES) as a quasi-monopolist player

If we look at the sources of funding in the Austrian system, we can take the argument one step further. Here, one single player – the PES (see Figure 2) – covers about one quarter to one third of the funding. This means that the PES also has an indirect influence on a major part of the system of provision via different channels.

Figure 2. Estimated distribution of expenditure for adult ET in Austria



Source: Statistics Austria, Microcensus 2003, estimation Lassnigg, Vogtenhuber & Steiner 2007

This single organisation puts about three times as much money into the system as the public federal, regional and local budgets and thus assumes a fairly monopolistic position, both as a buyer of services from the providers and as a provider of services to its clients (mainly the unemployed). To some extent, the PES is also trying to influence employer practices through the training support schemes it offers to employed persons under certain conditions. The main mechanism the PES uses vis-à-vis the providers is market-like contracts setting specific selection conditions for the provision of training to the unemployed. These conditions are highly formalised, set requirements for facilities and trainers, and are based on fairly strict price competition. The quality criteria also include the short-term placement of clients in the labour market, which sets strong constraints on providers.

This creates a second contradiction, as it is a non-educational mission which explicitly drives the main player in the adult ET system. The PES' mission is rightly determined by the goals and objectives of labour market policy, with its main objective being to support access to employment and to provide related training assistance. The available funds are driven by the development of the labour market and labour market policy (LMP) goals. This leads to a cyclical development of resources. From PES and LMP logic, this is not considered a problem, however, it is a problem when one part

assumes such a large proportion of overall adult ET, as it exerts an emergent influence on overall practices in the system. The following indications serve to illustrate this point.

Firstly, account has to be taken of the well-known 'Matthew effect' of unequal distribution of access to adult ET, and the unequal distribution of the educational attainment of the unemployed. From this, it follows that labour market training provides access to students who are unfamiliar with (adult) ET, many of whom would otherwise not have had access to training. However, their experience is driven mainly by instrumental practices, and the quality of provision is driven by price competition and achieving the lowest costs possible. Secondly, this constellation has consequences for the supply side, as adult ET providers have to accept PES conditions, and a high proportion of teachers and trainers have to work under these constraints (see Zilian, Lassnigg & Wroblewski, 1999; Mosberger, Kreiml & Steiner, 2007; MAGAZIN erwachsenenbildung.at, 2008). Thus, the PES shapes practice in adult ET to a considerable extent, without having educational objectives of its own, yet is heavily constrained by its own efficiency goals and objectives (which differ to those applicable for ET). Thirdly, the players in adult ET are weak and fragmented. To some extent, they are also competitors who are driven by market rhetoric.

Lack of clear public responsibility: many players in competition without coordination

The distribution of political responsibility for governing the system in Austria is complex, leading to a lack of coordination and shared purpose in the public sector. Responsibility is distributed among the individual states or *Länder* (Austria has nine *Länder* each with considerable government responsibilities) and the federal ministries of education (for general ET), science (for higher education), economic affairs (for apprenticeships and employer based training) and labour (for labour market training), as well as some others (e.g. the ministry for agriculture runs a nationwide project to develop 'learning regions'). Issues relating to support for enterprises and innovation, which are also linked to ET, are handled by other ministries (economic affairs, infrastructure, science and research), while regional development and innovation lies in the administrative and policy domains of both the *Länder* and the federal government (see Lassnigg, 2006).

Strengthening the adult ET agenda would therefore require a great deal of policy coordination between different areas and layers of government, creating a classical governance problem *outside* the official structures of politics. However, this is very difficult to achieve in the complex structures of the Austrian political system.

There are also strong divisions within the ET community and among the various providers. An important division is drawn between general, vocational and professional providers who are approached differently by policy and compete for resources. Providers of general ET, for instance, are represented more strongly in the Conference of Austrian Adult Education (KEBÖ)[4], while some of the main vocational and professional providers have recently set up their own network (*Plattform für berufsbezogene Erwachsenenbildung*, www.pbeb.at/), thus further aggravating the lines of division within adult ET. This division is also related to the policy structure: vocational ET is largely organised by the employer and labour organisations, while general adult ET is traditionally provided by local adult education centres (*VHS-Volkshochschule*), partly with the strong involvement of employee organisations. The employer and labour organisations themselves run separate ET institutions, the former constituting the largest provider of continuing enterprise-related ET, while the latter is heavily involved in labour market training. Due to the complex distribution of political

responsibilities, the provider organisations, the employee and labour organisations and the VHS are also primarily organised at a regional level. Their activity core is focused on regional sub-organisations, with only weak federal structures. At federal level, general and vocational ET are linked to different federal ministries: general adult ET is the domain of the ministry of education, while vocational ET (via the PES) is the domain of the ministries of labour and (to some extent) economic affairs. As higher education institutions also increasingly provide professional continuing ET, the ministry of science and research is now also involved to some degree.

The support structures are partly influenced by a network structure that creates 'insiders and outsiders'; some of the main traditional providers are represented in KEBÖ and have privileged access to public resources, while others are not. A feasibility study funded by the City of Vienna regarding the potential for development of a more coherent and cooperative structure inspired by the notion of the 'learning city' has shown that competition outweighs a drive towards cooperation from the provider perspective (Steiner, Steiner, Lassnigg & Prenner, 2002). More recently, an umbrella network of regional adult ET networks (*Ländernetzwerk Weiter.Bildung*[5]) was set up, but has still to overcome existing divides and establish its voice as one to be heard.

These structures create an overall situation in which the combination of fragmented policy responsibilities and market rhetoric weaken the overall position of adult ET by creating many divisions based on the differing and conflicting interests and traditions of the various actors. Indeed, these divisions constitute a third contradiction between public responsibilities and the more short-term market interests of providers. Thus the semi-public, non-profit providers are inclined to maximise their position on the market, and thus only follow their public objectives indirectly via short-term imperatives. At the same time, a structure that could lead to the formulation of clear public goals and objectives is lacking.

Market logic vs. institutional coordination

Another somewhat paradoxical contradiction comes to the fore at the policy level in the discourse on the development of an LLL strategy. On the one hand, the various players state that a successful, working and growing adult ET market is effectively in place (thus presenting and 'selling' their capabilities in the best light). On the other hand, these same players call for a framework of increased political and institutional co-ordination that primarily provides public funding and support. This is essentially a fourth contradiction, as – at least in market rhetoric – a functioning market does not need political co-ordination. It might be interpreted as a reflection of the prevailing structures that intermingle public and private objectives and a broad range of different players in a complex manner without providing sufficient mechanisms for the development of clear goals and objectives based on demands for adult ET.

Coordination initiatives reflect rather than resolve these contradictions

In recent years, there have been developments towards a more comprehensive adult ET agenda. These are more or less strongly linked to the strengthening of LLL and the development of an LLL strategy. Since we have too little room here to elaborate in any detail (see Lassnigg, 2009a, pp. 480-484), the following offers a summary of these initiatives with respect to professionalism and the contradictions mentioned above:

- *The inclusion of an LLL action line in the European Social Funds* programme for 2000-2006 has primarily supported school level education; as far as adult

education is concerned, the ESF has promoted a project-oriented approach (a general tendency worked out in the ALPINE study) and a shift towards employability (that was criticised by the adult education sector). In the following period (2007-2013), adult ET was strengthened, and the project-oriented support procedures were mainstreamed within the education ministry through a move to performance contracts for adult ET.

- In a *programme for a comprehensive LLL strategy by employer and labour organisations* (Chance Bildung, 2007), most of the proposals also concern school level ET. The benchmarks only include an overall increase in participation in continuing ET to 20% (measured by the European Indicator); the action lines primarily set framework conditions and general policies that only include adult ET indirectly as part of LLL; the only action line directly addressing adult ET is the proposal for a streamlined national learning account (LA; there are currently various such models in place at a regional level, see Wagner & Lassnigg, 2006; Bauer, 2009).
- Some additional *provider and regional adult education networks* have been established to represent the different and partly competing political interests and provider groups. These are having a particular effect in reinforcing existing contradictions and have also adopted different proposals with regard to professionalism. One such regional network (*Ländernetzwerk*) is in fact a platform of nine regional networks that combine providers (often those organised in KEBÖ) and other regional administrative, political and corporatist bodies. Because the main organisation for non-profit adult ET providers (KEBÖ) does not extend to commercial and private providers, a separate platform has been built by organisations in the vocational and professional fields around the employers' association and an existing higher education continuing ET unit (*Plattform für berufsbezogene Erwachsenenbildung*). Another initiative has seen some 25 providers and KEBÖ members, including the labour organisation and the VHS, form a consortium of employers in adult ET to conclude a collective agreement with the trade union for adult ET sector employees.
- *Coordinating initiatives at federal level*. Support for adult ET at federal level has been strengthened considerably in the ESF programme planning for 2007-2013,[6] and a new strategy for financing adult ET has been launched through the replacement of state subsidies for providers by performance contracts. The regions, however, seem to have been almost left to one side in this procedure, and another federal level initiative has set up a task force to streamline regional policies in specific adult ET fields in an attempt to match federal and regional funding based on detailed quality criteria.

Teaching and training as a profession within the Austrian ET policy framework

When we compare the Austrian situation with common structures at international or EU level, we can see some basic similarities (Nuissl & Lattke, 2008; ALPINE, 2008), but also some specific differences. Market rhetoric, a diverse system with little coherence and scattered responsibilities, and a lack of information on adult ET are common characteristics. However, the high proportion of labour market training, the strong divisions between general and vocational adult ET related to the different governance systems, and the complex public responsibilities seem to be more marked in Austria

than elsewhere. There is not even a single core interest group working in the common public interest of the overall sector. Instead, there are many sets of different interest groups with conflicting interests each trying to maximise their own interests (e.g. general ET vs. VET; regional vs. federal; employers vs. employees; employment vs. leisure; employed vs. unemployed; etc.). The various experts are also more or less attached to some of these individual groups, providers and policy camps. The need to establish viable structures for a common discourse was proposed some years ago, but would seem to be a demanding enterprise given the many players involved. Some steps in this direction have been taken over the last 10 years with some success, such as the development of an adult education research network (*Forschungsnetzwerk Erwachsenenbildung*[7]) or the launch of an online journal (*Magazin Erwachsenenbildung*[8]). However, common operating structures would also be needed to provide a base for longer term strategic policy development. Some first steps were taken through the initial moves towards the development of an LLL strategy, however these would since seem to be driven too strongly by – seemingly 'pragmatic' – short-term political interests.

Basic structures of employment for Austrian teachers and trainers

So far, we have looked at the shape of adult ET in Austria. To understand the position of teachers and trainers in this sector, we must also take into account the structures of the overall ET system. Two aspects must be mentioned here: the bureaucratic and politicised structure of the school system (cf. Lassnigg, Felderer, Paterson, Kuschej & Graf, 2007) and the strong role of VET in secondary school level ET (Graf, Lassnigg & Powell, forthc.).

Bureaucracy and politicisation have two main structural consequences for the professionalisation of teachers. Firstly, teachers operate within tight structures, yet enjoy great freedom and little external influence and control with regard to their classroom teaching. Secondly, their work is aggressively protected by a trade union that follows a policy of narrow interest, not professionalism. The recruitment of teachers is still controlled politically at the regional level, and the trade unions with their tight links to the political parties are exerting a very strong influence on all issues at all levels of the system. There is no genuine professional organisation in place. Teacher education is split across different institutions at different levels – again with different interests and strong competition for status.

The strong role of VET in school level ET is divided between enterprise based apprenticeships and full-time schools, thus resulting in a variety of teachers and trainers in this sector (Lassnigg, 2002). Enterprise training is mainly provided by employees alongside their normal work duties, and teachers for occupational subjects are recruited from practice and frequently work elsewhere outside their teaching role. While the number of apprenticeship training personnel is roughly similar to that of compulsory school teachers, they are in fact not visible as a group. Likewise, because preparation for this role forms part of the examinations required to run a business, the primary interest in this sector comes from the employers organisations (chambers of trade and commerce). Consequently, there has been a mix of interests in this important area of VET that has for years led to a low and even decreasing emphasis on training issues. Pedagogy is a somewhat secondary issue in this system, and VET teacher/trainer ET is traditionally weak (with the exception of business administration subjects for which separate university programmes: *Wirtschaftspädagogik*) have been established). The strong school level VET system is also linked to the comparatively average level of participation in adult ET; those enterprises with apprenticeship schemes seem in

particular to offer below average incentives for continuing ET (Lassnigg, Vogtenhuber & Steiner, 2007). In the policy discourse, the high levels of participation in adult ET in some countries are frequently presented as a compensation for weak school level VET.

Seen as a whole, the labour market for teachers and trainers in Austria would appear to be segmented: teachers in schools work in a highly sheltered internal market and enjoy high job security, markedly seniority-linked pay scales and great discretion in their working hours (cf. Lassnigg et al., 2007; Delannoy, McKenzie, Wolter & van der Ree1, 2004); adult ET teachers and trainers work in a classic secondary labour market, with low wages, high insecurity and several different market segments each with very different conditions (from corporate or business related trainers on the one extreme to social services trainers working with disadvantaged groups in precarious conditions on the other); hourly pay rates range from a minimum of EUR 10 to a maximum of between EUR 80 to 100; the median hourly rate is EUR 24 (cf. Mosberger et al., 2007).

Even if we are aware of the basic structures, we don't know much about the specific empirical distributions and conditions within these structures. There are some vague estimates of the overall numbers of people working in adult ET, their job profiles and working situation. A study some years ago (Zilian et al., 1999) showed that many trainers in the labour market training sector often did not know whether they would be training the unemployed for the next month (sometimes even the next week) or whether they would be unemployed themselves.

If we look at the position of teachers and trainers in adult education, we can see that they do not exist as a separate interest group and do not even exist in terms of visibility. There are no valid and comprehensive figures available about how many teachers and trainers work in Austrian adult education (cf. MAGAZIN erwachsenenbildung.at, 2008). If we try to collate the sparse and scattered data, we obtain – besides many open questions – a picture of two main groups: those who receive some additional income from secondary employment in this field, but primarily work in other areas (e.g. schools, enterprises), and a second group who earn their living in this sector and work under more or less severe precarious conditions. Both these forms of employment pose a weak position for professionalisation: the first group has little spare time and thus little interest in professionalisation, while the second group does not have the incentives, time and resources to invest in it. Since the contradictory environment does not provide room for the development of a policy towards professionalisation, this main contributing factor to a good adult education sector does not really receive any support from the system. Overall, if we take the classical stage-model of professionalization (Wilensky, 1964; Hwang & Powell, 2009) that has conceptualised full-time employment as the first stage, we have to say that even the first stage has not been achieved in Austrian adult education.

Moreover, the co-ordinating organisations mentioned above take fundamentally conflicting positions towards professionalization. The key charges of the *Ländernetzwerk* have been (1) to support professionalisation in the sector and (2) to top up federal investment in adult ET. Professionalisation here means an increase in funding for full-time employees and improvement in their training.[9] The *Plattform für berufbezogene Erwachsenenbildung* takes a contrary position to professionalism by protecting the self-employed secondary occupation status of teachers and trainers in adult ET to ensure they remain primarily 'experts' in their regular occupation. The collective agreement for employees working in adult education became compulsory for about 9,000 employees in some 500 provider organisations in October 2010.[10] As collective agreements are only applicable to 'regularly employed' workers, this move has also created some tensions.[11] Parallel to this agreement, the Austrian social security

agency and PES have set requirements for the transformation of atypical employment into regular employment for teachers and trainers in PES-financed ET. Thus some steps to strengthen the employment position of regular workers in adult education have been taken.

The above mentioned new initiative by the WBA was established in recent years by a group of providers at a federal adult education competence centre and is widely seen as a European 'flagship' project. This academy provides qualifications for teachers and trainers in adult education, based on a mixture of accreditation for prior learning and the provision of missing competences. However, the approach seems rather individualised, as the employees in adult ET have to apply and pay for this recognition and these qualification themselves (with the possible support of their employers).

If we take into account the specific structure of employment matched to the WBA, some major impediments must be noted. Firstly, only a minority of staff in adult ET work here on a primary employment basis; most of them (in particular the teachers and trainers) perform their duties as a secondary occupation alongside their 'regular' work. According to available (incomplete) statistics from one provider pertaining to a main adult ET sector (KEBÖ),[12] only about 5,000 of a total of around 90,000 staff are employed in this sector on a primary basis, the remainder hold these jobs either as a secondary occupation (about 60,000) or on a voluntary, unsalaried basis (about 25,000); The majority of the 55,000 teachers and trainers working in this field do so on a secondary occupation basis. However, according to these statistics, working on a secondary occupation basis might frequently and increasingly mean that the 'primary occupation' is in fact with another provider (this indicates that there are many people working in different forms of flexible – and sometimes precarious – employment for different providers; unfortunately, there are no exact figures available).[13]

The people whose primary occupation is in adult ET are mainly managers, programme developers, etc. The WBA provides qualifications in four areas: teaching/training; management; counselling and librarianship. Given the structure of employment, it seems plausible that the providers will prefer to support their primary employees rather than the teachers or trainers they employ on a secondary basis, and who are expected to demonstrate their qualifications in the often fierce competition for training posts. The cost of a full WBA diploma is about EUR 1,100-1,350 for the certification process alone, and this does not include the costs of any necessary additional courses (accordingly, the 1,000 certifications proposed in the LLL strategy bring in some EUR 1.2 million for the WBA).

If we reasonably expect that it will primarily be those people who can already demonstrate their competencies who sign up for the programme, its impact for competence development will not be very strong. Conversely, if the providers set the WBA qualification as a standard recruitment requirement, they can force applicants in more flexible and/or precarious situations to take these qualifications at their own costs. However, we should also point out here that the WBA is seen as *the* European pioneering model for the professionalisation of adult ET.

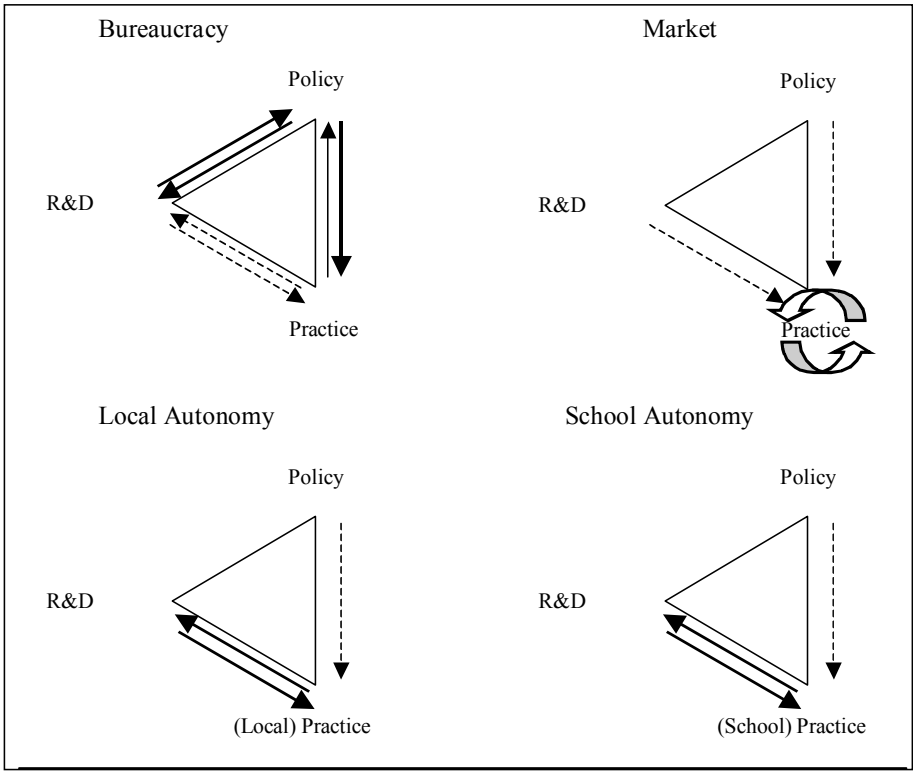
Despite the related problems, the WBA clearly seems to be a step forward in the provision of at least some professionalisation standards in adult ET. But there have also been objections from other players against awarding this institution a quasi-monopoly position. Likewise, the question still remains: will professionalisation be possible without an improvement in actual working conditions or the development of a more sustainable infrastructure that might serve as a basis for working in adult education?

What are the basic traits and contradictions regarding professionalisation in Austrian ET?

The main aspects of professionalisation are (1) how the criteria and standards for content and assessment are established, and (2) how the status and organisation of the occupation is constructed (cf. Glazer, 2008). There has been a long and contradictory debate about professions and professionalisation in the social sciences which we do not intend to discuss or reproduce here. Instead, we will only raise two main points related to the aspects mentioned above. The first of these concerns the issues of ethics and self-organisation, the second addresses status and pay.

The recent discussions on evidence-based policy and practice (EBPP) can be seen implicitly as a new way of bringing professionalisation to the fore. EBPP relates research and development (R&D), policy and practice in a systematic way, as stylised in Figure 3. The triangle shows three relationships: R&D and policy, R&D and practice, and policy and practice. This clearly shows that evidence-based policy is not the same as evidence-based practice. Policy provides a framework for and tries to influence practice, and thus poses different questions and problems than ET practice at the direct provision of services and teaching-learning processes levels. The third relationship (between policy and practice) is perhaps the key relationship, as its shape influences the other two. This shape is given by the governance system in its different forms (Glatter, 2002), with bureaucracy and the market serving as the main alternative forms, along with institutional and local forms of autonomy.

Figure 3. Stylised relationship between evidence-based policy and forms of governance



Source: Own picture, see also Lassnigg 2009b

If we relate the governance forms to the structure of EBPP, we can expect certain patterns:

- in bureaucracy, policy controls the flow of evidence, and evidence-based practice is materialised in the rules and structures of the system;
- in the market, the providers are free to act within the framework, and incremental adaptation to market signals will rule practice (not the evidence bought by the actors);
- in the two types of autonomous systems, policy has delegated discretion to practice, leaving room for evidence-based practice.

The latter thus gives room to the content aspect of professionalisation (a necessary, but in itself not sufficient condition).

The second aspect to professionalisation, its positive relationship to status and pay, raises questions of affordability. These are reflected in adult ET by the differences in pay between the more professionalised and precarious sectors (see above), with people trying to move from the latter to the former. From a customer perspective, the fact that the classic professions still enjoy a rather privileged position in Austria does not support the creation of a new profession. Here, the objections may come from some of the employer related providers and interest groups.

If we now return to the basic traits of the Austrian system, we can see a weak basis for professionalisation in the bureaucratic school level ET system that basically sets the scene. Since its governance system is a mixture of market and uncoordinated institutional autonomy, the adult ET system is more difficult to assess. The scope for professionalisation is structurally present, but the contradictions discussed in this article now come into play:

1. the market rhetoric diverts the institutions from professionalisation,
2. the non-educational mission of the PES rejects professionalisation,
3. the lack of coordination does not provide a framework for professionalisation, and
4. the policy emphasis on the market also does not provide such a framework.

Overall, the structural conditions do not support professional development in Austrian school level or adult ET. Incremental steps have been taken with the establishment of the WBA, but it is questionable whether this approach alone can provide a strong impetus for professional development. The key issues and questions behind such a development are:

- If the criteria and conditions posed by the PES structure the market to a high degree – are they actually reasonable? So far, they have been strongly based on formal ET, with experience rated low. A link to the WBA standards could improve this situation.
- How can wages and working conditions be improved to make them affordable to the players in the system? Two issues seem most relevant here: the first is the relation between the tradition of working in adult ET as a secondary occupation (which leads to lower pay and a lack of institutional base); the second is how to organise the increasing proportion of people working in adult ET on a full-time basis with a view to professionalisation. If this growth takes place mainly in LMP, where people largely work with disadvantaged students, this will work against professionalisation. The recent moves towards establishing minimum wages and providing social security through collective agreements are basic

steps towards improvement. However, a strategy based purely on a market solution does not benefit professionalisation.

- How can the building of a stronger infrastructure be reasonably financed? An important question here concerns the assessment of the potential and efficiency of existing providers in relation to a demand-oriented policy. If (a fact we do not know for sure) the majority of existing providers are weak and under-sourced, a move towards demand-based financing cannot be reasonably expected to bring about improvement. Instead, it would tend to support the large (collective) providers. The existing figures and statistics are inconclusive on these issues, and there would seem to be large gaps between the recent EU surveys and other statistical sources (e.g. PES).[14]
- How can the dangers of inertia and inflexibility be avoided in a more strongly institutionalised system? A major issue working against the institutionalisation of adult ET on the policy side is the expensive, bureaucratic and reform-resistant structure of secondary schooling, whose well-established teachers union serves as a main obstacle to change. Accordingly, there are fears that stronger institutionalisation of adult ET would lead to similar structures and attitudes.

Summary and conclusion

The paper has related issues of professionalisation in Austrian adult ET to some of the overall characteristics of the ET system and adult ET policy. The more general question raised concerns whether professionalisation reflects the overall structures and practices instead of being an instrument for reform. In line with Lassnigg (2002), the answer tends to the first alternative.

We have shown that in the dominant, heavily bureaucratic and politicised school level ET system, professionalisation is either weak or non-existent, while trade unionist interests are very strong. People traditionally tend to work in adult ET primarily as a form of secondary employment, although there has been a recent increase in the number of primary workers in some sectors, e.g. labour market training. Market rhetoric dominates at the policy level and cannot be expected to contribute to increased professionalisation.

The two main EU policies concerning the professionalisation, development and implementation of a competence model (which is also to be used as an element in quality assurance) are in place in Austrian policies. However, given the overall institutional constellation, these initiatives cannot really be considered as steps towards professionalisation since they would probably not result in the practitioners increasing their influence on the development of adult education in Austria. Much is needed to resolve the structures and contradictions described in this article and to establish a more coherent vision and strategy for adult education in LLL. Whether and how the professional development of adult educators might contribute to this remains an open question. Yet if we were to turn once more to the given structures and contradictions, it would be fair to say that there are clear demands for a more reflexive practice and a stronger voice for adult educators.

Notes

[1] See other 'cases' in the 2 June 2009 issue of the European Journal of Education, Vol.44.
[2] See BMUKK (2010).
[3] Austria has included a sub-programme for LLL in the policy supported by the European Social Fund (ESF), has participated in the OECD study on adult education, and also organised a broad consultation process in 2000 on the LLL memorandum; see OECD (2004) and BMBWK (2001).
[4] See BMUKK (2011a).
[5] See LNW (2007).
[6] The proportion of support for adult ET in the LLL line of action has been increased from a quarter (EUR 28.1 million) to about a half (EUR 49.9 million); however, the publicly funded secondary school level ET still receives half this support, despite many evaluations showing that it is already comparatively 'rich', despite demonstrating only average achievements in large-scale assessments (PISA, TIMSS, PIRLS).
[7] See KBE (2011).
[8] See BMUKK (2011b).
[9] See LNW (2006).
[10] See Friesenbichler & Hackl (2010).
[11] At first sight, the hourly wage is lower compared to the other forms of atypical employment because of several social security items included in the collective agreement that have to be financed individually from gross income in atypical employment. Schmidt (2008) has shown that a similar net annual income that is comparable in social security and work benefits terms has to start with very different gross hourly wages: based on the Austrian social security system, an annual net income of EUR 18,200 is achieved from a gross hourly wage of EUR 13 in regular employment based on the collective agreement in comparison with EUR 33 in an atypical contract (*Freier Dienstvertrag*), or EUR 57 in a performance contract (*Werkvertrag*).
[12] See KEBÖ (2008).
[13] "For example, a German study shows that about a quarter (23 percent) of the freelancers interviewed are referred to as full-time freelancers, i.e. do not have any other employment in addition to their adult education job. The remaining 87 percent, however, do have another job or, indeed, several other jobs." (ALPINE, 2008, p.105).
[14] The AES has found about 70,000 unemployed persons in non-formal adult ET with 120 hours in the programme, however, PES reports between 120,000 and more than 200,000 persons in training. The average duration of commissioned courses is 75 days (if we adjust this to 60 and assume 5 hours per day, the average duration would be 300 hours).

Acknowledgements

A first version of this article was presented at the inaugural meeting of the Research Network on Adult Educators, Trainers and their Professional Development of the ESREA 'Educating the Adult Educator: Quality Provision and Assessment in Europe' at the University of Macedonia, Thessaloniki, 6-8 November 2009. The author would like to thank the referees and editors for their helpful comments that have driven the argument towards greater clarity, and Angela Dickinson for her professional help with putting the text into a readable English language.

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European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults, Vol.2, No.1, 2011, pp. 57-73

The eye of the storm: discursive power and resistance in the development of a professional qualification for adult literacies practitioners in Scotland

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Abstract

The claim to be a profession traditionally assumes the need for a University level qualification. In a previously unregulated area of practice, the development of a professional qualification is thus central to the professionalisation process. In Scotland, the development of a Teaching Qualification for Adult Literacies practitioners became the focal point for the tensions in the broader professionalisation project and a site of discursive contestation in an emergent field of practice. This paper explores the play of power and resistance, drawing primarily on two separate but related research studies – a policy analysis and an exploration of practitioners' conceptualisations of practice. Whilst the first study explicitly used the methodological framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 2003) and the second, Personal Construct Theory (Kelly, 1955), they are connected by their postmodern focus on language use and an interest in how practitioners are managed by and, in turn, manage and mediate managerial and professional forms of power; both aimed to examine 'how discourse figures in the processes of change' (Fairclough, 2003, p. 205). Brought into relationship with one another in the context of the nexus of power relations formed by the development of the new qualification, they illuminate the multiple 'projects' competing discursively in the space.

Keywords: professionalisation; professional development; adult literacies; discourse

Introduction

There are several overlapping terms related to the concept of professional which evoke different connotations; the noun 'a professional' carries a different set of meanings than the verb, 'to be professional'; 'professionalism' suggests Goodson (2003, p.125 -126) is distinct from 'professionalisation'. He defines the professionalisation project as 'the pursuit of status and resources for an occupational group'. Professionalism, involves

ISSN 2000-7426

DOI 10.3384/rela.2000-7426.rela0018
www.rela.ep.liu.se

'teachers' definitions of their peer group practices, their best ways of pursuing the art and craft of teaching.'

In discursive use the various terms are often used without such clear distinctions and the projects to 'define and articulate the quality and character of people's actions within a group' and to 'enhance the interests' of that group (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996, p. 4) are confused and intertwined in complex ways. It is worth noting that this earlier distinction uses the broad term 'interests', whilst the later distinction is clear about the more material aspect of those interests.

Within education, there is a body of literature which traces changes in understandings of professionalism historically (Clow, 2001; Hargreaves, 2000; Shain & Gleeson, 1999); illuminates competing conceptions (Downie, 1990; Sachs, 2003; Frowe, 2005) and proposes new models relevant to a contemporary context. Goodson and Hargreaves (1996) outline a postmodern model of professionalism, which has many similarities with Sachs' (2003) model of the 'Activist' profession. Central to these contemporary models is what Goodson and Hargreaves call 'occupational heteronomy': working authoritatively yet openly and collaboratively with other partners. This idea is consistent with a political rhetoric of 'joined up' working but inconsistent with the advancement of discrete disciplines most often associated with the pursuit of professionalisation.

Much of this literature draws attention to tensions between projects of professionalisation, which are often pursued by the state and linked to reform or quality assurance agendas, and the commitment of practitioners to the pursuit of their peer values. Some authors go so far as to suggest that state driven processes of professionalisation can in fact diminish professionalism (Hjort, 2009). Whilst the distinction is still made between professionalism and professionalisation, professionalisation here is not so clearly linked to the pursuit of 'status and resources'. Delineating professional boundaries may be more to do with bringing marginal groups under managerial control.

The idea of standards is part of the circulating discourses of both professionalism and professionalisation; the discourses of professional self interest and of control and ownership compete over *whose* standards will prevail. The pursuit of the material rewards of professional status may persuade practitioners to subject themselves to standards imposed by others (Hjort, 2009). Professional standards are often imposed by means of necessary qualifications. The mechanisms by which the providers of professional qualifications are held to account are often the means by which standards are imposed across the profession.

I have mainly drawn on the literature related to professionalism in teaching. Given that the language of teaching has been used in the specific context on which I wish to comment in this paper, I consider this literature relevant. The issues noted above are, however, further complicated by the fact that the practitioners under discussion are drawn from a variety of educational sectors in which discourses of professionalism, levels of professional status, expectations of preparation for practice and peer values are diverse. In different practice contexts called *teachers*, *tutors*, *lecturers*, *adult* or *community education workers,* their concept of 'professional' is mediated by the prevailing social norms of the contexts in which they work. For practitioners working within an explicitly adult education tradition, the informal nature of their practice can be at variance with their concept of a 'professional'. The tension between the informal and sometimes subversive nature of adult education practice and the formalities of a profession are a dimension not adequately explored within the literature on teacher professionalism. For instance, the tendency for adult educators to identify more closely

with marginalised learners, can make for an ambivalent relationship with the overt status of the professional. A review of Adult Education across the European Union highlights the 'deep philosophical differences about values and priorities' (European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA), 2006, p.1) which characterise the diverse sector; these 'philosophical divides' must be understood if policymakers are to succeed in their aims in relation to lifelong learning (EAEA, 2006). This paper contributes to this understanding and to the literature on adult education and professionalisation with an examination of the tensions and contradictions in one contemporary setting.

A case study

A decade of reform in the Adult Literacy and Numeracy (ALN) sector in Scotland provides a case study of an attempt to professionalise a previously unregulated area of adult learning practice. In 2001, the Scottish Executive responded to the 'shock statistics' (Maclaclan, 2004, p. 200) of the International Adult Literacy Survey *('23% of adults in Scotland may have low skills and another 30% may find their skills inadequate to meet the demands of the 'knowledge society''* (*S*cottish Executive (SE), 2001, p. 8)) with policy statements, an investment of unprecedented levels of funding and a commitment to 'drive up the quality of teaching and learning' (SE, 2005, p. i) by the professionalisation of the workforce. Central to this initiative was the development of a professional qualification for Adult Literacies practitioners.

In 2005, a Consortium of Higher Education (HE)/ Further Education (FE) and Practice-based partners were contracted to develop the new qualification. Their experience, over the next 5 years, as they worked together and with the field to plan and pilot the qualification with 2 national cohorts, affords some insight into the politics of a process of professionalisation. The TQAL Project became the focal point for wider tensions and contradictions and a place of struggle and resistance.

The Scottish developments are broadly in step with European policy on adult learning (Commission of the European Communities, 2001/2006/2007) in the same period. This policy acknowledges the social as well as economic consequences of literacy issues and the importance of access to quality teaching and learning for adults with the lowest skills. The commitments in the Scottish strategy document (Adult Literacy & Numeracy in Scotland (ALNIS) SE, 2001) – to free and varied opportunities for learners and to workforce development for the sector - echo directives at European level. Brine (2006, p. 650) describes the 'complex entanglement of policy making' in European multilevel governance. And indeed there are knots in the 'conceptual string' (ibid) between European policy and the Scottish strategy. Whilst European policy is overt in its individualisation of the need to develop 'employability' for the 'knowledge economy', in Scotland, contradictions arose from policy rhetoric which espoused a distinctive approach to literacies education based on a 'social practice' perspective of literacies (for a summary see Papen, 2005). This perspective sees literacy as socially constructed; not merely personal but political. The radical tone of this policy rhetoric drew attention away from the economic interest of government *('The long-term goal of the strategy will be to exceed the literacy and numeracy levels of Scotland's main competitors within the global economy'* (SE, 2001, p. 18)) and concealed more pernicious managerial discourses of reform and professionalisation aimed at greater control and accountability (Maclaclan, 2006; Ackland, 2006).

The new funding for literacies work was channelled through partnerships, on the basis that reaching the most marginal learners required 'collaboration and synergy of effort across all sectors' (Leavey, 2005, p. 23). The broader conception of 'literacies' supported by the lifelong learning rhetoric of policy allowed for the redefinition of a range of educational provision as adult literacies work and therefore eligible for the resources. Organisations - such as Local Authority Adult Basic Education services, Community Learning and Development services, Adult Education voluntary organisations, Further Education Colleges, the Prison Education Service – which had previously operated in isolation and according to their own institutional objectives were induced into new social relations and identification with a newly conceptualised area of practice: Adult Literacies. The development of a professional qualification became the inevitable subject for struggles about how to define that practice as the different partners sought to appropriate the enterprise and to inscribe it with it their own rationality and worldview.

Researching how discourse figures within processes of change

Analysing the history of adult education in Britain, Williams (1990) brings cultural theory to an exploration of the contradictions and tensions in the relationship between adult education and social change. His analysis highlights the competing ideologies inherent in different curricula and pedagogies and the asymmetrical power relations in the field. Popkewitz (1997), in his attempt to understand the reform of schooling in the USA, undertakes what he calls a 'social epistemology' of curriculum change; although, like Williams, he is interested in historical and sociological questions, he acknowledges the 'linguistic turn' of critical social theory and draws on the work of Foucault to foreground the relationship between knowledge and power in discourse.

> The discourses constructed about education in policy-making, reform reports and documents from other institutionally legitimate positions of authority are not 'merely' languages about education; they are part of the productive processes of society by which problems are classified and practices mobilized. (Popkewitz, 1997, p. 157)

Giroux's argument for a critical pedagogy of teacher education (see for example, Giroux & McLaren, 1987) also exploits postmodern theories of discourse:

> Understanding curriculum as part of a broader struggle between dominant and subordinate discourses has critical implications for the ways in which educators produce and 'read' curriculum, engage the notion of student experience, and redefine critically their own role as engaged public intellectuals (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991, p. 93)

All this work shares a view of curriculum as a form of cultural politics: 'Curriculum is a social and historical construction that links knowledge and power in very specific ways' (ibid, p. 96).

It is this tradition of critical social theory and specifically the linguistic turn of postmodernism which provides a theoretical framework for my study of the Scottish reforms. As the policy and practice of pedagogy and curriculum in ALN changes, I have sought to understand how that change is related to issues of power and ideology.

Alongside my role as Curriculum Leader for the Scottish TQAL Consortium, I have undertaken two separate studies. The first (2005 - 2006) was a Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 2003) of Scottish policy at the time of the introduction of national

standards and qualifications. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) assumes that language is inherent to social life; language as a cultural tool, can establish, sustain or change power relations in social networks. As a methodology, CDA offers a checklist of aspects of 'text' that can be investigated and provides tools for linguistic analysis.

The research involved an examination of key policy documents, tracing the transmutation of one significant document – *Literacies in the community* (SE, 2000) – as it was used in practice, and dialogues with stakeholders at different positions in the field. I concluded that the powerful discourse of performativity was dominating and recontextualising the more radical discourses of social practices and lifelong learning circulating in the ALN sector. Recontextualisation involves 'the appropriation of elements of one social practice within another, placing the former within the context of the latter, and transforming it in particular ways in the process' (Fairclough, 2003, p. 32). The 'elusive power of performativity' (Ball, 2005, p. 9) was such that practitioners were being recruited to the regulation of themselves against standards imposed from above and in conflict with peer values and the differing principles of practice of distinct practice contexts.

To further explore this recontextualisation of the discourse of social practices, the second study (2008 - 2010) used the methodology of Personal Construct Theory (Kelly, 1955) to explore practitioners' understandings of 'the social practice model', which in the years since the articulation of policy in the ALNIS report (SE, 2001) had become the explicit doxa of practice. As critiques of policy (Maclachlan, 2006; Parkinson, 2006) and concerns about whether and how practice in Scotland was changing (Maclaclan & Tett, 2006) began to proliferate, I was interested to explore the relationship between espoused theory and implicit theory in practice. An investigation of pedagogical conceptualisations might reveal how far practitioner thinking had been influenced by other discourses.

There is a methodological challenge in exploring implicit understandings in professional practice (Usher & Bryant, 1989). What people say they do does not always accurately represent their thought processes and behaviours. In Scotland, most Adult Literacies practitioners claimed they were 'doing social practices'. Interpretations of what this means and the ways in which it determines pedagogy remain, on the whole, tacit. Tacit understandings are not easy to expose using standard approaches to research.

Personal Construct Theory (PCT) (Kelly, 1955) provided a qualitative methodology and techniques to investigate and understand the ways in which individuals are constructing models of the world which influence their future behaviours. Although Kelly was theorising in a different age and the terminology of his theory appears to privilege the individual, the theory's assumption about persons is that 'people are both fashioned *within* and fashioned *of* the complex interpersonal worlds they inhabit' (Kalekin-Fishman & Walker, 1996, p. 13). Kelly's recognition of the socially situated nature of individual construing combined with his central tenet of 'constructive alternativism' (1955, p. 72) – i.e. that there are always possible alternative interpretations and meaning making is an open-ended exploratory process in which there is no one truth – are congruent with a postmodern view. In this study, I sought to bring the use of Kelly's 1950s Repertory Grid Technique – a means of eliciting the implicit – into relationship with my previous study of discourse and Foucauldian conceptions of governmentality, in line with Carl's assertion that 'postmodernism brings to Kelly an understanding that the construal process of people is highly discursive and power-laden' (Carl, 1999, p. 19).

Both studies involved a close examination of language and are informed by Foucault's conceptualisations of power relations (1979; 1998): power is productive;

control is exerted not by repression but by the normalisation of certain attitudes, behaviours and beliefs through discursive practices. This pastoral form of governance 'enables individuals to actively participate in disciplinary regimes through investing their own identity, subjectivities and desires with those ascribed to them by certain knowledgeable discourses' (Usher & Edwards, 1998, p. 215).

Although this paper draws primarily on these two studies, it is also informed by the plethora of documentation associated with the TQAL project, including an external evaluation of the first pilot programme and research which explored the wider impact of the second pilot programme.

All discourse analysis is partial and has a pretext (Widdowson, 2004). As a participant in the discourse, I must declare my own power, position and interests. These are not without their own contradictions and ambivalences. Prior to joining a University as a teacher educator, I was a manager within an Adult Education Voluntary Organisation with a long tradition of critical pedagogy consistent with my personal commitment to the social justice objectives of education. At the outset of the ALN Initiative, I was involved in the formation of local partnerships and in attempts to position the work of my organisation prominently within the emergent sector. My own claim to credibility in the new field could not be based on formal credentials but on experience which could be reframed within new discourses. My interests at this time were not served by a requirement for formal specialist credentials. The move to a University setting was a repositioning within the field. An academic role has more overt 'professional' status and power can accrue from the role of the institution in professional accreditation. In a field, such as adult education, which has 'a pragmatic anti-theoretical tradition' (Shaw & Crowther, 1995, p. 206), academics are, however, regarded with suspicion. From the perspective of some practitioners my move from the voluntary sector to the University was paradoxically a move from the centre to the margins. Nevertheless, a key role in the development of the professional qualification, at the heart of the process of professionalisation, brought with it significant influence on the values and principles of practice to be enshrined in definitions of Adult Literacies professionalism.

Discourse is a dynamic of which we are all a part and I have consciously played my part in different ways, at different times, to promote *my* educational projects and resist others. In bringing together material from this range of texts associated with the experience of the development of the professional qualification to explore how the professional identities and positions projected in the rhetoric of Scottish ALN policy are being adopted, adapted or resisted, I offer one possible interpretation of the data, which is inevitably partisan.

Hybrid discourses

> Different discourses are different perspectives on the world, …[they] do not only represent the world as it is, they are also projective…and tied into projects to change the world in particular directions (Fairclough, 2003, p. 124).

Undertaken in the initial stages of the development of standards and qualifications in ALN in Scotland, my first study led me to argue that the hybridity of discourse in the articulation of Scottish policy acted as a Trojan horse, concealing the dangerous within the benign. The text of the ALNIS report juxtaposed the jargon of different social projects. For example, '*... a lifelong learning approach which focuses more attention on*

the interplay between demands and opportunities that trigger and maintain voluntary participation' (SE, p. 14) is contested by a vociferous discourse of 'managerialism' (Ball, 2005, p. 6) with its emphasis on holding to account those in receipt of public funds by means of targets, measurement and outputs: *'A rigorous system of quality assurance should be promoted by making available a set of performance indicators applicable to all sectors'* (SE, 2001, p. 34).

Despite the radical shift in theoretical perspective alluded to in ALNIS, the Section entitled 'Raising expertise through improved training and development' (SE, 2001, p. 36), again concentrates on processes of standardisation rather than change:

> a national training strategy should provide national training standards for all staff and volunteers whose roles relate to literacy and numeracy tuition and a new qualification for specialist literacy and numeracy practitioners….staff and volunteers…should meet the national standards by 2005. …Development of a professional qualification in teaching adult literacy and numeracy…is required to create a high quality professional level of service delivery across all sectors.

The introduction to the *Benchmark Statements* (SE, 2005) subsequently devised for the proposed professional qualification also exhibited a fusion of conflicted discourses. A deficit discourse – *'This is an important step forward in **driving up** quality in the adult literacies field' (p. i)* – undermined more developmental aspirations, *'to encourage the development of a confident and professional workforce'* (p. i) and the professionalisation agenda was made explicit: *'In order for adult literacies teaching and learning to be recognised as a legitimate, specialist area and therefore have the prerequisites to be recognised as an area of professionalism – the need for a Teaching Qualification: Adult Literacies… is pressing'* (SE, 2005, p. 5).

Contained within the commitment to develop a professional qualification were conflicting projects in which the different concerns of professionalism and professionalisation were often confused.

Practitioners' responses to the promise of the qualification were ambivalent. Dialogues with practitioners provided examples of perceived 'contradictions': training and qualifications as quality assurance evidence rather than for the development of expertise; the obligation to acquire specialist qualifications in a partnership culture that promotes shared approaches rather than discrete roles. One practitioner summed up the frustration, 'they're telling students that it's about distance travelled, it's not about getting bits of paper and then they turn around and say to tutors 'but you have to have this bit of paper'...there's HUGE contradictions ...it's like 'do as a I say but not as I do'.'

However, in my analysis of the dialogues the necessity of qualifications emerged as a major theme. The recurring verb phrase 'have to' expressed not just necessity, but obligation. It suggested an internalisation of the imperative. When the imperative was questioned, arguments tended to draw on the concept of 'professional' with the underlying assumption that the term brings with it an obligation of formal accreditation, and that to deny such a requirement would be *un*professional – the antonym was usually unspoken but its power implied in the taken-for-granted desire to be 'professional'. Practitioners had mixed feelings about the introduction of the qualification – they resented the implication that they were not already expert in their specialism, rejected an approach to professional development which seemed to them to be inconsistent with the lifelong learning values apparently espoused in policy, but at the same time were assimilating the seductive discourse of professionalisation with its invocation of professional standards and the implied promise of increased status more equal with other educational professionals.

Much of this ambivalence crystallised around the proposed title of ***Teaching Qualification*** *Adult Literacies*. The title signalled a connection with schooling which was an anathema to community-based practitioners whose values were invested in the term 'tutor' and who sought thus to distinguish themselves from what they perceived to be the authoritarian methods of the compulsory sector. The connection went beyond the title; the Benchmark Statements were derivative - adapted from the Initial Teacher Education standards applicable to the Scottish school sector. The expectations of the qualified teacher stipulated in this document are more consistent with a traditional model of teaching than one derived from a social practices perspective. The intertextuality of the Benchmark Statements suggests that in the pursuit of a model professional, equivalence with other established educational professionals was an important characteristic.

The title also led to a challenge to this equivalence from the powerful institutional body representing the profession of teaching – the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS); they pointed out that the denotation of the qualification as a *teaching qualification* contravened legislation which limited the use of this terminology to specific situations. This challenge in turn incensed participants in the first pilot – who saw it as part of the mechanics of gatekeeping professional 'teacher' status; despite having rejected the connection to 'teaching' initially, they responded with anger to a perceived inequality when one of the validating institutions included the word 'teaching' in the award title and others did not (Hillier, 2008).

This paradoxical assimilation of imposed standardisation was further evidenced in my research as I traced the progress of a key document through a genre-chain of texts connecting policy with practice. The *Literacies in the Community* (SE, 2000) pack was published at policy level as a 'resource for practitioners and managers'; over time it mutated through different genres of texts becoming a 'cross sectoral set of *standards*' (SE, 2001, p. 33), and then a 'tool for *quality assurance*' (HMIe, 2005, p.vi). In the artefacts of partnership working it could be seen embedded in self-imposed management processes, used to legitimate the work of partners. Practitioners contributed to the document's translation from resource to quality assurance tool as they subjected themselves to regulation in an attempt to validate their practice using the only measures available.

It was in this contested territory, in which language was of critical importance that the Consortium embarked upon the development of the new qualification recognising that it was an important stage in the dynamic of policy implementation and represented a significant opportunity to influence the discourse in the emergent professional field.

Playing politics with discursive pedagogy

Discourse both represents and constructs reality. Within discourse, ideologies are projected, contested and resisted. I have asserted above that within the text of Scottish policy, conflicting discourses were in competition. These discourses are reinforced, resisted or reframed (Fairclough, 2003) in a series of discursive moves and countermoves.

The TQAL Consortium was powerfully positioned within this discourse and acknowledging the inherently ideological nature of education, chose to align itself with the pursuit of professionalism as opposed to the professionalisation project and to found the design of the new programme on the rhetoric of a social practices perspective. By choosing to amplify one discourse over the variety of others in circulation, the

Consortium sought to resist the recontextualisation of the social practices discourse by a discourse of performativity and reject interpretations of professionalism as compliance and accountability (Goodson, 2003). Instead, it intended to offer an opportunity to negotiate a new form of professionalism. The programme sought to engage explicitly with the question of what it means to *be* a literacies professional in the new theoretical paradigm.

The idea of the 'social practices model' of literacies teaching has considerable rhetorical power in Scotland. Social practices theory is primarily a theory of literacies in society. It is not an educational theory. Articulations of the implications of this perspective for teaching and learning were beginning to proliferate (e.g. Papen, 2005) but in Scotland, the discourse was so powerful that these implications were assumed to be self-evident. It was the intention in TQAL to re-examine this concept and its meanings, including its meanings in practice.

Central to this intention was a design which took as its theoretical base 'a socio-constructivist perspective on learning' (De Corte et al., 2003, p. 25), which includes an emphasis on the situatedness of learning within a 'community of practice' (Wenger, 1998). Learning is seen to occur in a 'network of relations' (Felsted et al., 2005, p. 364) and 'has personal, professional and political dimensions' (Sachs, 2003, p. 31). It is not an accumulation of skills and information, but a process of becoming – to become a certain person, or, conversely (and significantly in this context) 'to avoid becoming a certain person' (Wenger, 1998, p. 215).

The position was epistemological as well as ontological. Bereiter and Scardamalia (2003, p. 55) suggest that most current education presents knowledge in belief mode with students being expected to accept and work with knowledge established by others. Instead the project adopted their concept of knowledge as 'design mode' (ibid) i.e. knowledge is contingent and co-constructed. All participants would be encouraged to interact in a 'knowledge building community' (Swan & Shea, 2005,p. 6) in which they could discuss, collaborate and negotiate new meanings of professionalism.

Sach's (2003) 'Activist' professionalism was explicitly adopted as a model for adaptation to Adult Literacies. This model includes the responsibility to act collectively to challenge dominant ideas.

This epistemological and ontological position stands in sharp contrast to a competence model in which there is a narrow definition of tasks, tightly defined performance criteria and little consideration of personal qualities. In designing a professional development curriculum from these standpoints the programme development team were challenged to move beyond existing practices of professional development and in doing so to contest the worldview of some stakeholders.

Powerful relations

One presentation of my initial research posed the question 'whose project is it?' Drawing from Gee (2003) the dual meaning of 'project' as both representation (as in 'projection') and a venture to advance particular interests, I wanted to draw attention to the power-laden social relations from within which different stakeholders competed. In this section, I will explore how the TQAL Project was a nexus of social relations in which the projects of professionalisation and professionalism were struggled over.

A discourse of collaboration was evident in ALN policy statements and managed by the mechanisms for distributing funding. As previously noted, the new paradigm of

'literacies' significantly increased the number and diversity of potential partners who had a stake in the development of a professional qualification.

Collaboration is increasingly perceived to be necessary to professional development processes. Sachs and Goodson (2003) both make an explicit link between collaboration and contemporary constructions of professionalism and assert that new forms of teacher education must be evolved collaboratively if they are to be effective in contributing to teacher professionalism for a 21st century context. With respect to workplace learning, University/employer partnerships are encouraged to ensure that 'projects reflect the needs of the workplace' (Boud et al., 2001, pp. 3-17). In partnership, the University comes to understand the needs of the employing organisation and hence meet the 'needs' of employees. Persuasive as the calls for collaboration are, they perhaps play down the sometimes conflicting 'needs' of different stakeholders.

In the trail of project documentation from the original specification through the notes of meetings of various combinations of partners to the evaluation and research reports can be seen some of the competing interests operating in the apparently collaborative space.

At the outset, the contracting body, Learning Connections (LC), indicated their intention that the development should involve partnership and should engage with multiple stakeholders. To respond to the tender, a Consortium was formed which included 3 Universities, 2 Colleges, the Scottish Further Education Unit and 2 Practice Managers. In addition, LC insisted on a management structure which established a steering group made up of representatives of powerful professional bodies such as the GTCS and a separate practitioner reference group.

There were, then, several interconnecting partnership arrangements: between the Consortium and the governing body and its various reference groups; between the Consortium and local employers; and between the various institutions and individuals represented in the Consortium. The complex interrelationships created by these levels of partnership were characterised by dynamics of power.

The relationship with the funder was established by formal contracts which were negotiated in a competitive bidding context. Communication with local employers was for the most part filtered by the Consortium's more overt relationship with the governing body. The establishment of a complex management structure with a steering group and a practitioner reference group meant that the Consortium related to other powerful stakeholders within mechanisms controlled by the governing body. Those communications sometimes seemed to have more to do with the ambivalent relationship between local practice and national policy than with the specific work of the Consortium.

Although the contract for TQAL stated that the qualification should be 'substantially practice-based', there was, however, an assumption that the programme would involve higher education institutions. The validation of academic institutions is deemed to be a necessary aspect of a 'professional' qualification, whilst these same academic institutions are seen as distant from practice and focused on theoretical concerns. The legitimacy of the programme development team was called into question (note of meeting 08/04/08), their perceived status as academics obscuring their recent experience as literacies practitioners. The power dynamic between the field and the Consortium was a complex one in which the institutional partners were held to account by various groups whose interests were not aligned.

Different conceptions of professional and professional development

The stakeholder groups represented in the management structure came with competing conceptions of what form the qualification should take. As a result inconsistencies proliferated in the specification. At the outset, the specification contained elements of differing models of professional development without an explicit rationale for their fusion. For example, the contract stated that the qualification should be 'substantially practice-based'. This contained assumptions about processes of professional development, which were at that time more in line with a Community Education model rather than teacher training, from where the Benchmark Statements had been derived. It implied a separation of theory and practice which was further reinforced by the requirement to involve a cadre of experienced practitioners as '*Practice* Tutors' – a model in evidence in Social Work in Scotland but seldom in Education. In the construction of the Benchmark Statements and the subsequent tender document, Learning Connections had relied heavily on existing models of 'the professional', combining elements from distinctively different models without a cogent argument for their appropriateness to the specific context.

The size, level and shape of the programme may be seen to have been determined not by educational rationale but by competing agendas. The status dimension of the professionalisation project drove an insistence that the qualification be equivalent in size to a schoolteacher's postgraduate training. This quest for equivalence was in tension with the commitment to allow access for practitioners with a non-traditional educational background unable to meet the strict academic entry requirements of teacher training. The tension between rigorous standards (professionalisation) and a value set (professionalism) of wider access (in tune with the discourse of Lifelong Learning and CLD principles) led to a requirement that the qualification be available at two academic levels (initially Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) 8 and 9), despite Benchmark Statements linked to the SCQF framework by language reflecting a single and higher level of study (SCQF 10 – the level at which school teachers' initial training is set). Calls from Practice Managers for a flexible modularised programme contrasted with the governing body's rejection of an initial design which included elective courses on the grounds that all students must cover all aspects of the prescribed standards. Representatives of discrete disciplines called for the programme to be linked to, or even incorporated into, the initial qualifications relevant to their sector – for example, CLD or Further Education teaching. An expectation that the programme would be scrutinised for approval and thus legitimated by both the CLD Standards Council and GTCS against substantially different criteria contributed further tensions.

As in the hybrid discourses of policy, different interests competed. Hjort (2009) defines three distinct strategic interests in competence development: political, administrative and professional. In the Scottish situation, the political interest was fundamentally economic (Maclaclan, 2006) and a professional qualification must show a return on the investment in terms of measurable impact on quality of service. Administratively, the standardisation provided by a qualification would help '*to provide assurance that the national initiative is having the effect that Ministers intended'* (HMIe, 2005, iii). Professionalisation can be linked to both these agendas and the interests of professionals may be both progressed or undermined, as Hjort (2009) argues, in the process. If practitioners are co-opted into a project of legitimation and self regulation in their 'pursuit of status and resources' (Goodson, 2003, pp. 125-126), they may give up the autonomy of their 'professionalism'.

Competing ideas of professional development are associated with these different interests; Hjort (2009) contrasts an idealistic view, in which competence development is understood as knowledge creation, increased self management and ethical commitment, with a functional view which advocates a technical-instrumental approach to ensuring that practitioners provide more effective service. Hjort claims that this second view is linked to the new public management agenda and contributes more to a deprofessionalising process than to professionalism.

Arguments about the nature of the programme continued throughout the life of the project. I contend that these arguments are not to do with the programme itself but reflect the different projections of practice, professionalism and professional development in competition in the field. The struggle over the academic level of the programme represents a more fundamental struggle over the nature of professional competence. In the most recent research report, the programme is described by some sceptical managers as 'too academic'; they 'contend that tutors were looking for more practical skills rather than exposure to increased theoretical understanding'. This is resonant with what Hjort (2009, p. 112) calls the technical-instrumental model of competence development and consistent with the tradition of 'competences' in the Scottish CLD sector. It is significant that the claim that the programme is too 'theoretical' and that tutors instead need instrumental skills came from managers and not the tutors themselves. The research reports a different view from tutors and managers who had participated in the programme: 'Prominent across the case studies was a recognition of the ways in which the TQAL course provided participants with a new confidence in their practice'. This perhaps reflects their more 'idealistic view' of competence development which acknowledges the importance of 'knowledge creation, increased self management and ethical commitment' (Hjort, 2009, p. 112). Despite the value placed on these outcomes of a process-based model of developing understandings in practice, evidence of the 'content covered' and the 'course materials' were requested for scrutiny by the funders and their reference groups at regular intervals. Despite the Consortium's insistence on a socio-constructive model of professional development, the assumption of expert transmission and commodification of knowledge is implicit in the contracting body's requests for 'the programme materials' on the basis that they were 'owned' by the funders (management meeting minute).

These were then struggles to 'define and articulate the quality and character of people's actions' whilst also to 'enhance the interests' (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996, p. 4) of specific groups. Non - participation was as powerful as participation as some managers acted as gatekeepers for sessional staff. The interests were not always about the advancement of Adult Literacies practitioners as some institutions sought to protect the hierarchical position of other professionals which might be unsettled by the claims to professional status of ALN practitioners. For example, in one college the possession by the Adult Literacies 'tutor' of a professional qualification equivalent to the teaching qualification of FE lecturers was seen as potentially leading to a challenge to their marginal status as support staff and thus had wide reaching implications for college staffing structures and finances (personal communication, College Principal, 09/10).

These power-laden social relations provided the context for the study of practitioners' conceptualisations of practice.

Arguing the professional self

As competing definitions of practice circulated, the term most often used to legitimate and defend particular positions was the one of 'social practices'. Anecdotally, some of the ways in which it was invoked as part of the struggle over forms of practice are as follows: 'social practices' was used as a defence against the need for a 'teaching' qualification (school literacy teaching does not explicitly draw on social practices theory) and for the legitimacy of Community Educators to do Adult Literacies work (without further training) on the basis that the tradition of empowering group work was just the same as 'social practices'. The pressure to introduce formal accreditation was resisted on the basis that assessment was inconsistent with a 'social practices' approach. As were games-based approaches to numeracy teaching and greater use of IT. In the period prior to the second TQAL cohort it seemed to crop up in many different contexts as either a defence or criticism of practice. The variety of practices to which the term was applied, combined with evaluative research which questioned the extent to which practice exhibited the criticality implied by a social practices perspective of literacies (Maclaclan & Tett, 2006) led me to wonder about the discursive use of this term.

The study therefore set out to explore practitioners' understandings of the 'social practice model' utilising Kelly's Repertory Grid Technique – a method of structured dialogue which aims to elicit the implicit theory behind a person's judgments about practice. At the core of this process is the requirement for respondents to articulate their distinctions between instances – or 'elements' – of practice. Presented with triads, they must explain how they perceive two elements to be similar and the third different. The characteristic shared by two elements becomes one pole of a construct, how the third differs forms the contrasting pole. By eliciting bipolar constructs, this technique goes beyond what a person *affirms* about practice and explores the delineating alternatives that they tacitly hold. In the patterning of elements and constructs, the grid technique attempts to map the personalised meaning each individual is making of concepts of practice.

Initially I was interested in the extent to which the meanings that practitioners were making were, or were not, consistent with a social practices theory of literacies in society. My own understanding of those implications focused on the shift from an 'autonomous' to an 'ideological model' (Street, 1985) of literacy, and the subsequent requirement for criticality. My reassurances that in the dialogues with practitioners I was not judging as right and wrong versions of 'a social practices model' were to some extent disingenuous. Certainly the expectation was that I *would* make such judgements: '*How ultimately are you going to analyse whether a particular person's view of social practices approach is the right one?'* My powerful position, as the apparent arbiter of meanings, could not be wished away. Instead, I began to attend to the power dynamics; to the way in which, in the construing of this thing 'the social practice model', 'identity claims' (Maclure, 2003, p. 10) were asserted through the division of self and other, and legitimated by reference to authoritative texts. The question became not 'what is a social practice model' but how is it talked about and what discursive work is it doing.

In the practitioners' discourse of a 'social practice model' the recurring themes were learner-centredness and relevance:

> My understanding of the Social Practice of literacies is that it's directed by the needs of the learner…
>
> Learner-centred….making the learning process relevant…

> Creates a relevant link to the learner's life. It individualises learning…
>
> It's taking the learner's perspective into account and, if appropriate, adapting my practice to their social norms.

Within this discourse, the learner (singular) tends to be isolated in the learning environment but linked to their individual everyday life, which is seen as unquestionable. The relationship between teacher and learner may be interpreted as one of service. When I examined the bipolar constructs (from the repertory grids) associated with these concepts, however, discriminations emerged that might imply distinct teaching practices. For example, in relation to curriculum, *'relevant'* is contrasted variously with: *'directive'*, '*treating everybody the same'*, '*ignoring the learner's interests*, '*decontextualised*'.

To summarise, a number of contradictions emerged in my analyses of the data. As well as the variety of different interpretations of key concepts, constructions of practice were often defined in opposition to the practices of other professionals – in particular school teachers or English ALN practitioners: a social practice model is *'flexible', 'not prescriptive…like Skills for Life'*. The data, however, pointed to principles and values of teaching and learning practice which are similar to those identified in research with teachers in these sectors (e.g. Hattie, 2003); the claim to distinction through 'othering' (MacLure, 2003, p. 3) is discordant with the pervasive sense of feeling obligated to conform to the distinctive Scottish model: *'... in this day and age you'd get stoned to death if you're not doing the social practice model.'*(Paradoxically the notion of 'doing the social practice model' suggests inflexibility whilst the metaphor invokes the spectre of ideological fanaticism.)

The dissonances led me to conclude that the term 'social practice model' may be considered a '*floating signifier*' (Foucault, 1977, cited in Hjort, 2009, p. 114) detached from what it appears to *signify:* 'a phrase the most important meaning of which is that it does not mean anything' (ibid). Sufficiently slippery, it can be co-opted in support of diverse practice; the term is used as a way of 'arguing' the professional self (MacLure, 1993) in a complex discursive space. Maclure concludes from her study (in which teachers also defined themselves by defining what they were not) that to lay claim to an identity in this way is 'to engage in a form of argument...to defend their attitudes and conduct' (ibid, p. 320). The delineations in the constructions of a 'social practice model' made by the practitioners in my study suggest that the 'definitions of their peer group practices' are still diverse but that they have colonised the discourse of social practices first introduced in policy to argue their own interests. These interests may not be as narrow as status and resources; conversely they may be about the desire to retain the autonomy of their previous marginal status. The claims to the exclusivity of practice are not so much about advancing material interests as a form of ideological resistance, consistent with Sach's idea of 'disruptive work' and Ollin's (2005) 'constructive subversions'.

Conclusion

The clear distinction made by Goodson (2003) between professionalisation and professionalism fails to take account of the contestation between the project of managerial control on the one hand and the pursuit of professional status on the other, as well as the competition for the definitions of professionalism in a sector in which

demarcation itself is a matter of struggle. 'Interests' are contingent and are not restricted to the more obvious markers of status and financial reward.

Contemporary conceptualisations of professionalism which emphasise 'heteronomy' run the risk of merely promoting managerial projects of efficiency unless they adequately theorise power in the relationships they advocate. Consistent with the findings of Ollin (2005), this research suggests that professional power is exercised by discursive tactics at the margins and the micro-level as well as in collective action.

A project which was part of a process of professionalisation and the imposition of standards but deliberately promoted a model of professionalism which incorporated the explicit use of power was fertile ground for discursive resistance. The rhetoric of social practices was appropriated by Scottish policy for legitimation of change (Ackland, 2006). Subsequently recontextualised by a discourse of performativity, it recruited practitioners to a process of professionalisation in which standards were imposed and assimilated in the pursuit of professional legitimation. It was invoked in the design of the professional development programme as a means of resisting the power of performativity, narrow definitions of practice and to create a space in which peer definitions of practice could be negotiated. The amplification of one key discourse may have encouraged the adoption of the language of social practices within the practitioner group as a hegemonic strategy to appropriate legitimating rhetoric in support of their own established practices and socio-political interests.

The case study of the process of professionalisation of Scottish ALN tutors provides a clear illustration of the management and mediation of professional forms of power through discourse.

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European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults, Vol.2, No.1, 2011, pp. 75-88

The development of the professionalism of adult educators: a biographical and learning perspective

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Abstract

To investigate the development of the professionalism of adult educators, we compare individuals' narratives of their professional work at different times in their biographies. Using data from a qualitative longitudinal study, the paper includes two case studies through which we show phases of learning in the development of professionalism. We reconstruct forms and meanings of learning in this process. The study allows insights into differences in professional learning during the life course and the influence of institutional and social context in the development of professionalism.

Keywords: lifelong learning; professional learning; professionalism in adult education; development of professionalism; qualitative research

Introduction

This essay deals with the question of the development of the professionalism of adult educators. We are interested in the ways in which they develop their professionalism through a process of learning. Traditionally, the discourse about the professionalism of the adult educator refers to the existence of academic knowledge and the competence to apply this knowledge in concrete pedagogical situations. To support professionalism, experts try to describe all the competences (knowledge, skills, ability) required by the adult educator, e.g. they should acquire knowledge about adult learning, didactical skills and the ability to deal with diversity. Nittel depicts this perspective as a 'competence theoretical approach' to understanding professionalism (cf. Nittel, 2000, p. 74ff.). With regard to this theoretical approach, many studies intend the description of requirements related to the different areas of responsibility (for more information, see Kraft, 2006 for

ISSN 2000-7426

DOI 10.3384/rela.2000-7426.rela0024
www.rela.ep.liu.se

example; cf. Bechtel, 2008 for a comparison of competence profiles in the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Switzerland).[1] Other research studies focus on the (desired or present/absent) competence-level of further education staff (cf. in particular Peters, 2004 and Hartig, 2008) or on the influence of specific (further) qualification programs and their impact on an increasing professionalism (cf. Harmeier, 2009).

To find out more concerning the question of *how* adult educators learn to become professionals during their life course, we need another theoretical perspective. Nittel calls it a 'difference theoretical approach' (Nittel, 2000, p. 80ff.). It refers to the difference between the professional knowledge base (which contains systematic knowledge about learning and teaching) and the requirement of the individual pedagogical situation. As a consequence, he suggests case-related reflection as a necessary competence for the professional adult educator.

Due to the fact that the development of this professional competence is closely connected with personal development (cf. Salling Olesen, 2000), we decided to conceptualize professionalism as a result of a learning process. Referring to a learning approach also means referring to 'learning processes over the course of one's life' (Hof, 2009, p. 31).

To analyze the professional learning processes of adult educators, we follow a qualitative empirical approach. Narrative interviews with people who work in the field of public adult education can tell us how they organize their professional learning and continuously or discontinuously develop their professionalism within and outside pedagogical settings (cf. Maier-Gutheil, Kade & Fischer, 2011).

As we were able to use interviews from a qualitative follow up study[2], we had the chance to analyze the data from those who were interviewed at two points in their lives: in the midst of the eighties[3] and again 25 years later. We describe *professionalism as a result of learning processes ['Bildungsprozesse']*[4] seen from different points in one's life.

In the following, we briefly present some major concepts and the project background as well as our methodological design. In the main part of the paper, we explain the central phases of the development of professionalism using the example of two case studies. Finally, we discuss the findings with a view to the implications for fostering and supporting professionalism in adult education.

Methodological approach

Dealing with the question of professionalism as a learning process in the course of life requires a methodological design which considers the temporality of those learning processes. As a consequence, research into the learning processes of adults requires a life history approach (cf. Bron et al., 2005; West et al., 2007). In biographical interviews, the adult educators are able to talk about their working situations and requirements, their personal problems, expectations and hopes. As learning is seen as an individual process which involves interaction and communication with others, it is linked with the concept of biographical learning (c.f. Alheit, 1995; Tedder & Biesta, 2009, p. 35). In a biographical perspective it is possible to analyze the social opportunities (institutions, societal movements, pedagogical discourses) in which the individual learning processes are embedded as well as the changing of these opportunities over time. Alheit and Dausien talk of 'biographic learning' (cf. Alheit & Dausien, 2002), and point to reflexive learning processes (ibid., p. 16) which can be described 'as learning about the (trans) formations of experience, knowledge and one's

actions in lifewide (lifehistory and lifeworld) connections' (Smilde, 2009, p. 84). A lifehistory approach allows us to reconstruct the decisions and strategies of the individual and the specific social opportunities that govern these, as they change over the period of a lifetime. Furthermore, to understand the development of professionalism, we need to know *what* the adult teachers know (general and specific knowledge) and *how* they know this (skills and abilities). For the latter, we can refer to the concept of (a critical) reflexive practice as discussed previously and currently (cf. Schön, 1983; Cervero, 2006/1989; Bradbury et al., 2010). As West (2010) mentioned, 'really reflexive practice, which includes engaging with the auto/biographical dimensions of professional interactions, can provoke profound questioning of taken for granted norms in working contexts' (p. 66-67). Thus, forms of introspection and self-observation of one's actions and decisions in (working) life become more crucial. Lönnheden & Bron emphasise the significance of story telling for processes of learning in a case study (2006). This was also seen in our interviews when one adult educator (Gruber) discussed his former interventions with the interviewer and reflected on his experiences saying 'It's a lot more clearer to me when I talk to you about that now – I've hardly thought about that yet' while the other adult educator (Kessler) never reflected on his professional identity and he said to himself during the interview 'I've never asked myself before whether I am now an adult educator because of *doing* courses with adults'.

In connection with the mentioned points, our project observes the process of lifelong professional learning following a qualitative longitudinal design. In contrast to singular inquiries, for example, in the form of single biographical interviews which imply the methodological difficulty that one can 'never draw on the antecedent conditions of the learning process [Bildungsprozess] itself without the filter of the learning process [Bildungsprozess]' (Nohl, 2006a, p. 281), longitudinal studies enable the transformation of subjective perspectives to be captured in the course of life.

For the following analysis, we draw on qualitative interviews with the same person at two different points in time. We use the research potential of qualitative methods combined with a longitudinal design. For the 1980s, we have theme-centered narrative interviews with people who worked as adult educators. Twenty-five years later, we interviewed the same people again. These were autobiographic-narrative interviews (cf. Schütze, 1983), thus illustrating almost the whole professional biography of the individual.

To analyze the interviews, we use the Documentary Method (cf. Nohl, 2006b) which follows the principles of qualitative social research (cf. Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Therewith we differentiate between the level of what is said (descriptive interpretation) and the level at which it is said (reflective interpretation). Moreover, the method focuses on comparisons between different pieces of research material. Only by comparing distinct fragments of empirical data are we able to reconstruct specific distinctions (cf. Hof & Fischer, 2010). The categories for comparison and those for distinction emerge from the research data. For example, forms of what we have labelled as 'acquisition' has been identified and constructed from the narratives. With regard to empirical analysis, this means that people are asked how they became engaged in the profession (via experience, participation in further training, exchange with colleagues, work, reading newspapers etc.), how they maintained this (by acquiring knowledge and ability, volition, community) and what led to changes, for instance, how their actions developed. Only with this open approach can we gain an insight into patterns which allow for an empirically obtained definition of the development of professionalism. Therefore, our research process can be divided into four steps. *Step one and two* make

use of the information included in both interviews alike. We extracted all mentioned life events and transitions from the two interviews (timeline) and then focused on the subjective perspective in form of the interpretative frameworks that the interviewees used. Here we rearranged the reconstructed life events – which were temporally ordered within the timeline – in the form of a life history matrix that outlined interrelationships between life events and transitions within different life domains. In this way we are able to reconstruct the meaning of certain life events within the life course. The specific arrangement of life events over the life course – as the narration depicts it – indicates individual biographical formations ('Bildungsgestalten') in social space and time. As our research focus is professional learning, the reconstruction of these biographical formations emphasises the question of what relevance educational experiences have on the individual's professional life course and how this relevance is expressed within the narration. *Step three* then draws a sharp contrast between both narrations, using the summarised information from step one and two as the counterpoint of the comparison. Narration 1 and narration 2 are now analyzed as artefacts which evolve at a specific time of articulation within the life course. Both narrations indicate individual biographical formations of professional learning. The special quality of both formations can only be understood in contrast to the overarching life history matrix. By contrasting the matrix with two of its fragments, we can reconstruct the time-dependency which is inherent to both narrations. The concluding *step four* then asks for the basic scheme which links both narrations as artefacts of a certain individual's life course. Both individual biographical formations of professional learning are related to each other via systematic comparisons (e.g. narratives about the same events in both interviews with their time specific interpretative frameworks). Herein we are theorising the development or learning of professionalism.

In the next section, we show the initial findings from two case examples in which we have reconstructed the change of time-specific forms of the development of professionalism. For this, different phases in which professional learning has occurred/developed can be reconstructed. Moreover, individual versions of the development of professionalism are shown and it becomes clear whether and which professionalisms are acquired (technical and/or pedagogic professionalism).

The development of professionalism

Learning as process of continuous adjustment

Thomas Gruber (all the names are pseudonyms) is 38 years old at the time of the first interview and works in an adult education centre as a head of department.[5] He describes himself as a person who has specialist knowledge (in foreign languages) as a result of his studies (Latin and Spanish). During his academic studies, he had the chance to work as a teacher in adult education. He primarily acquired the pedagogic knowledge necessary for this in his daily working life. At the beginning, he oriented himself towards teaching/learning settings at the university and tried to vary the experience for participants on the course, but 'to do it in a way I suppose it could be comprehensible'.

He developed his pedagogical competence through experience (learning by doing) and by changing his concepts as result of feedback from participants and colleagues. For example, he used the ritual of drinking a beer after the course with the participants so that they could talk to each other in another way: 'When you can see them simply as humans and not so much as a participant of the course now'. In this regard, the development of professionalism in this phase is embedded in daily work and

additionally influenced by formal teaching training (he trained in Theme Centred Interaction – TCI). Permanent self-observation as well as the exchange with others helped him to deal with different tasks in the Centre.

Within the framework of his professional development, he now describes the teaching and managing of activities as a part of an individual search and learning process which is, not yet completed. This can be seen in the interview for instance when Gruber discusses some of his former interventions in difficult course scenarios with the interviewer. Despite these scenarios, he developed an affinity for pedagogical organization, and confidence in his competence to successfully complete the tasks ahead of him.

At the time of the second interview, Thomas Gruber is 62 years old and three years away from retirement. In this interview, he tells us about his development from a Romance language expert into a pedagogical and organizational expert. The central theme of his story is the *permanence of learning,* necessary as response to organizational transformations and the evolution of teaching subjects and vocational tasks. 'And every time something different. And every time I've learned something as well (…) because of the difficult situations and reactions and so on and group dynamics (…) every time it's so different'. He refers in particular to difficult situations as challenges for learning. His long-term engagement with work activity in the Centre, he changed his duties/responsibilities several times. This meant that he did not only work as a teacher but as a controller and in the quality management of projects - he had to learn continuously: 'Because every time something new came along – well, hence I have – uhm uhm marketing is so far away from my university studies. But then I developed a big marketing concept with others and we have always had external experts with us. Thus I've always learned as well. It was a permanent learning by doing experience.'

His career also took him to the position of Head of Department of the Centre. Not only is this position described by him as a chance for further learning but he also does not consider his imminent retirement as the end of his professional career. Quite the contrary, in fact, as he says: 'well I'm very sure that I will learn as much as I've done in the past ten years in the future'. Moreover he wants to start working as an advisor for his former employer.

Comparing the two interviews, one can see that he describes his professional biography in both stories as a purposeful and intentional process. One difference is remarkable: besides domain specific knowledge (foreign languages), in the second interview, he also stresses the formal skills of structured thinking and analysis acquired during his studies – a competence on which his current professional activities and self-conception are based.

This means that over time, Gruber's identity as a teacher based on expert knowledge of Romance languages and literature, is transformed into that of a permanent learner. Due to this, new situations no longer lead to a change of identity (as one who now has to acquire new knowledge). Instead, the task of continuously adapting to new situations by learning is regarded as a part of the person.

This change or transformation one can see by comparing two sequences from the two interviews (bridge sequences) about Gruber's changing understanding of (lifelong) learning.

Learning depending on group dynamics and situative influences

Yes --- it changes continuously (I: Yes? What?) Well, I've the feeling that I am the one who is learning the most when I teach and use my practical skills. And --- and I realized

> that there are no recipes for adult education. Even if you have methodical skills one cannot assume that the next course will work better than the one before. Something changes at a different level --- every time I have a course I work with another group and therefore I always experience new things.

Learning as an ongoing/permanent matter of course

> Because every time something new came along then – well, hence I have – uhm uhm marketing is so far away from my university studies. But then I developed a big marketing concept with others with - we have always had external experts with us. Thus I've always learned as well. It was a permanent learning by doing experience. […] It's a lifelong learning experience and that was what I liked the most in my job and why I didn't change it even though I thought about it a few times in the past. But it was always so fascinating because of the ongoing changes which meant that there were always new things to do.

While at the first interview Gruber had talked about his need to deal with his (failed) assumption that he only needed methodical techniques and knowledge, at the second interview he outlined the positive effect of his efforts in permanent learning in keeping his work interesting enough. He described himself over time as an individual integrated in an organization, but open-minded to proposals and challenges which might come along. Instead of emphasising the search process, as he had in the first interview, he reflected on the competence and success he had gained by working in different roles within the educational organization. Since Gruber gives a new meaning to his original scientific-classical knowledge base[6], the experience of discontinuity, related to the changes of tasks within the organization can be described as an experience of continuity.

For Thomas Gruber, the development of professionalism takes place via three central phases:

Table 1. Phases of the development of professionalism as a continuous adjustment

Phase 1	Search process	Entrance into an adult pedagogical field of action
		Testing professional measures on the basis of technical and casually acquired pedagogical and practical knowledge
		Handling course experiences and reflecting on these supported by feedback from others
		Participation in additional formal courses
Phase 2	Self-assurance process	Self-observation and reflection as to whether the field of action is the right one and whether the competences required are held
		Transformation of a Romance language identity into the identity of a permanent learner
Phase 3	Demonstration of competence	Result of the identity transformation based on ongoing self-assurance/self-observation

The first phase which – as already mentioned – can only be reconstructed with the first interview, can be characterised as a long-term search process. First of all, entry to public adult education (at the adult education centre) takes place accidentally. Both expert knowledge gained through qualification and casually acquired pedagogical knowledgeare tested through teaching activity. This experience is then reflected on by means of self-observation and observation by others. From this, knowledge and ability

are (have to be) further developed – as it is the case here – in the form of additional formal further education.

The following phase overlaps or lies alongside the two other phases to the extent that even in the first interview Gruber had developed some certainty and confidence of his pedagogical ability and knowledge and knows that he wanted to continue to work in the field. But the glance into the future, however, could not give him certainty (for action) since future challenges were uncertain. In the second interview, professional learning seemed to be a continuous process which is based on academic knowledge. Here we can see the transformation of his identity from a teacher of Romance languages and literature into a permanent learner. During the last phase, the demonstration of competence, in the versatile professional, experienced over a complete professional life, supports Gruber in knowing who he is and acting of the basis of this knowledge and ability.

Learning as a biographical process of personal fulfilment

Klaus Kessler is 40 years old at the time of the first interview. He studied philosophy and physics at university. During his studies he found a job in a city planning office where he worked for ten years until he lost his job. At the time of the first interview, he was mainly writing his doctoral thesis on a socio-psychological topic. He came across the topic for his doctoral thesis in the context of private themes (relationship problems) while working at the office. 'And then I was looking for a subject for my thesis because I was thinking of doing this and then again by chance in a love life situation (…) there was a colleague who told me to read a special book about socio-psychological issues. And then I read that and I found things in there which affected me a great deal and so I said that I wanted to read a bit more about that'. In addition, he offered classes in the adult education centre and he started a psychoanalytic apprenticeship in order to better understand socio-psychology. These life events show that he pursued a new interest as a consequence of current interests.

His study for his doctoral thesis and his work as an adult educator were both part of his life. By teaching – and discussions with the participants – he was able to acquire new knowledge and thus further develop his individual interests – the topic of his doctoral thesis in this case. 'Actually, I appreciated the course teaching in the beginning for strictly personal reasons. Firstly, I needed the money somewhat, secondly, it was my subject area (…) and then I realized that other people were so interested that they gave me feedback and that I finally had a personal interest in conveying something to people'. In this way, the new knowledge is both deepened and tested and has to prove itself in (the teacher's) daily life (learning on the job). As a consequence, the central point for him was not to impart knowledge to others but to acquire knowledge himself.

In contrast to Gruber who sees the knowledge acquired during his studies as the basis for his activity as a teacher, Kessler is oriented by the respective current possibilities (student's job) and individual (relationship) problems and/or interests (doctoral thesis) within the frame of his professional actions. He only acquires the knowledge and ability necessary for these respective situations.

His activity as a teacher is thus not embedded in the context of professionalism but in an individual learning process which is oriented towards matching the manifold offers of the world and the current 'topic' of the subject (e.g. doctoral thesis or relationship problems). Kessler describes the world as the space of possibilities where one moves according to situational interests so that neither seems to be stagnant or limited. Situational opportunities are seized if they can be coupled with a current

individual interest which means that, for example, institutionalised procedures and patterns of expectation do not play any role.

For him, learning is not geared towards obtaining a certificate, as he wants to pursue his own subjects according to his interests and the respective situation. Thus, volition is directed towards to realization of self-interest although depending on the structures that make some actions more possible than others. Knowledge and ability are further developed but they remain bound to finding the answers to personally relevant questions.

At the time of the second interview, Kessler is 65 years old and has been officially retired for one year. Now he explains that he had studied philosophy, physics and psychology not for a specific occupation but for his future options. 'At the time I didn't know what I wanted to be so I first of all started to study to pick up the right thing for later. And some day I will earn money from it. And it worked like that, yes. If you can do anything well, some day you will earn money with it'. After a job in a city planning office where he developed a number of interests (socio-psychology, politics), he started to work as a teacher. He explains that he explicitly used the latter to escape unemployment but also used the job and the psychoanalytical apprenticeship as a possibility to orient himself towards new things and an opportunity for personal development and learning. After this period of about five years, he explains that he decided against becoming a therapist. He didn't 'dare to be a therapist and to tell clients how to live their life in the right way'. He instead wanted to bring his interest in photography to fruition. 'And then I told myself I needed to do something for myself first, something which is a concern of mine, photography'. This is a change of the professional main thread 'and then an occupation developed from this like learning by doing'. As he says, he then continued with photography, an old hobby. His further vocational life was built around photography, whereby he offers photography classes at the adult education centre. Finally, he independently works his way into the area of digital photography, works in several companies and creates his own company afterwards. At the same time, he holds classes at the adult education centre based on his previous academic subjects as well as new subjects related to photography now and again. In addition to this, he attends seminars at his old university. One year before he officially retires, he leaves the company but continues his activity as teacher.

While in the first interview Kessler describes his activities against the background of individual interests and situational opportunities, in the second interview, he presents the story of a form of the development of professionalism which is embedded in a biographical process of experience.

By comparing two sequences out of the two interviews (bridge sequences) about Kessler's different ways of describing (lifelong) learning, we can see the (dis)connection between interest, learning and occupation.

Learning as continuation of new things

> I started working as a teacher when Mr. X [head of department in an adult education centre] asked me if I would like to do so. But actually it became a kind of a problematic self-dynamic process because I have a 'following' now, and this effects non-learning. They are not interested in new issues or contents. They're satisfied listening to the old stuff. If this goes on I would say I have to get out of the job.

Lifelong Learning as dichotomy of social commitment and personal interests

> Lifelong learning means to me to actually try to be interested forever, to be open and fascinated. I see something new and say to myself that I'm interested in that and that I want to know that. And that's lifelong learning, it doesn't mean that I must do something to further my job prospects. This is necessary and sensible too but I think for me it's important to rejoice in the new thing that I want to learn.

Whilst during the first interview Kessler focused on learning as an ongoing individual and group process for which new content was required, at the second interview he also understood learning as an ongoing process, but now in examination between his own wishes and social requirements. Differences between the interviews mainly refer to the question of whether and how certain partially identical results are referred to and/or omitted at the different points in time. At time t_1, his central activity is the writing of his doctoral thesis while his job as a photographer is not mentioned. With a retrospective view on his (successful) professional path at time t_2, this job becomes the key moment of the beginning of a professional career which results in the founding of his own company via different levels of acquisition. Compared to this, the started doctoral thesis does not have any meaning anymore and is reinterpreted as 'studies' in psychology, since the related path to become a therapist is not further pursued. The striving for independence and non-determination only becomes clear in the second interview, while in the first the continuous consolidation and expansion of the respectively current topic (socio-psychology) is in focus.

In both stories, entrance to the activity as a teacher takes place accidentally, is unplanned and mainly serves as a means to additional financial earnings. It is an activity, however, that makes it possible for him to retest his current knowledge and develop it further, if necessary. From this point of view, activity as a teacher promotes his individual learning more than professional learning. Although Kessler constantly carries out this activity, pedagogic knowledge and ability are not explicit topics. The competence of teaching (ability) appears quasi naturally as the consequence of an interested and skilled teacher. If there is interest (volition), the required knowledge is gained through informal and non-formal contexts and used in the concrete (professional) action without any transfer losses. Self-observation centrally aspires to match individual interests with the available possibilities. It does not serve for the further development of a pedagogic professionalism.

For Klaus Kessler, the development of professionalism takes place via three central phases:

Table 2. Phases of the development of professionalism as a biographical process of personal fulfilment

Phase 1	Search and testing process	Arbitrary entrance into an adult pedagogical field of action
		Activity as a teacher as a possibility of earning money, individual learning and testing of own knowledge and ability
		Parallel to this: beginning a therapeutic apprenticeship and doctoral thesis
		Continuation of activity as a teacher but no explicit (further) development of pedagogical professionalism
Phase 2	Finding process	Assumption of previous 'profession' as a photographer, interruption of the doctoral thesis and termination of a therapeutic career
		Extension of knowledge and ability in the area of photography by carrying out different professional activities
Phase 3	Demonstration of competence	Presentation of the professional way as a continuous biographical process of competence development (i.e. as a close link between knowledge, volition and ability)
		No authentication with certificates but with successful actions (practical legitimisations which create a continuity line)

The first phase seems to be a longer search process.[7] The arbitrary entrance to the activity of teaching is part of a search for an appropriate (professional) occupation and is oriented towards individual interests. The current action in each case, whether in the class, in the form of the doctoral thesis or psychoanalytical apprenticeship, serves for testing and further developing existing knowledge and ability. Pedagogical content is not an explicit topic.

In the second phase which can be called a professional finding process, previous (financially) successful skills are consolidated. These are related to positive professional experience and in addition can be coupled with an individual interest (hobby). During this phase, knowledge and ability are acquired by learning on the job/learning by doing, for instance, in the form of concrete professional activities (also as a teacher). Self-assurance derived from successful selection from options in the past, allows Kessler to select from options for the future and make a move from an academic world to a technical one.

In the third phase, in retrospect, the demonstration of competence, the professional way, can be presented as a continuous learning process. This process is not narrated to be as the result of certified formal knowledge, but as the result of successful actions that are closely linked to biographical development and individual well-being.

Although Kessler's teaching goes on for over 25 years it is not explicitly linked to his acquisition of new knowledge or abilities or his reflection on actions. Thus, the analysis shows the continuity of his teaching activity as well as the development of his professional competence as a photographer, but not the development of an explicit pedagogical professionalism which links knowledge, ability and reflection to pedagogical questions. Instead, this case refers to professionalism as biographical personal fulfilment.

Conclusion

From our point of view, professionalism proves to be an ongoing project. The reconstruction of the development of professionalism covering two different points in time makes it clear that the usually ‘’hidden’ way of individual learning processes’ (cf. Kade & Seitter, 2007, p. 138) can be empirically captured. In case of Kessler, this way is an individual learning process which depends on individual volition and situational possibilities. The world is permanently looked at with a perspective on possible points of contact for the realization of individual interests. His reflection of the link between his own actions/ability, knowledge and volition is thus placed in the context of coping with life and thus on the biographical level. His way of professional learning – without acquisition of any systematic professional knowledge in adult education – means that no explicit pedagogical professionalism is developed. Professional learning is accordingly realized in the context of a biographical personal fulfilment process. According to Alheit, the term of ‘biographicity’ (2003) can be used here: ‘Biographicity means that we can always reinterpret our lives in the contexts where we (have to) live it and that we get to know these contexts themselves as ‘formable’ and shapeable’ (ibid., p. 16).

In contrast to this, an individual intentional process of professional learning which is directed towards qualification and enlightenment can be observed with Gruber. This results from experience of discrepancies between his knowledge and ability and the requirements of a changed world. The discrepancy between subject and world is compensated by subject changes. At the beginning of his pedagogical professional learning, formal acquisition via courses of skills and lacking knowledge is in the foreground. Afterwards, Gruber transforms his identity into that of a permanent learner, so that the acquisition of contents can be decoupled and new situations (changes of the world) do no longer have to lead to a subjective experience of discrepancy. The new identity can thus be used in any situation, as a targeted process for overcoming specific problematic situations, since it is adjusted to a world that is continuously changing.

Scientific positions usually assume that professionalism is based on academic education and that professional actions (abilities) are linked to related knowledge (cf. Dewe, 2002). In the context of the expert-novice model (cf. Bromme, 1992), it is furthermore found that experts are characterised in that conscious reflection steps back and a ‘reflection in action’ becomes relevant instead of a ‘reflection on action’ (Schön, 1983). We show here empirically that teachers develop their competence in close relation to their biography and that learning through experience plays a central role in practice – as found by Kraft and Seitter (2009, p. 189). In addition, the analysis of two biographical narrations of the same person at two different points in time shows that professional learning takes place through a search process. In this process, two forms of professional learning can be differentiated through these examples: first, the development of professionalism as the continuous adjustment to professional requirements by acquiring knowledge and ability and second, the development of professionalism as a realization of individual interests and competence because of available possibilities. In addition to this, the evaluations of the interviews make it clear that the dimension of self-observation decisively influences the professional learning and therefore the development of professionalism.[8] Thus, to develop professionalism it is necessary that the individual move from phases – in which knowledge and skills could have been gained – to phases where knowledge and ability can be tested and reflected upon. ‘There is a great need for transparency and for learning from each other to improve one’s own practice.’ (Lattke, 2008, p. 163).

However, there are many professional training programs for people working in the field of adult education, and there is the danger of deprofessionalisation – as Bron and Jarvis (2008) found for the Anglo-Saxon area for example, the question is how the development of pedagogical professionalism can be supported. Here, one must think about the institutionalisation of moments for reflection where not only pedagogical knowledge and ability can be acquired, but where biographical self-reflection can be combined with pedagogical professional (self-)observation (e.g. with forms of consultation among colleagues). In the words of Linden West: 'research (…) can provide space for really reflexive learning' (West, 2010, p. 79).

Notes

[1] For the development of a reference model within the frame of the national framework of qualification for the development of professionalism in Germany, see. Kraft, Seitter & Kollewe 2009.
[2] In the DFG (main German Research Association) funded research project, with the title "Precarious Formations of Lifelong Learning (original german title: "Prekäre Kontinuitäten. Der Wandel von Bildungsgestalten im großstädtischen Raum unter den Bedingungen der forcierten Durchsetzung des Lebenslangen Lernens") we analyze the ways in which lifelong learning and individual biographies interact and how they change over a lifetime. The data base consists of 30 narrative interviews with individuals (participants and teachers of adult education) living in German urban centers who were first questioned 1980s on the subject of "Learning and Teaching" and again between 2007 and 2009. As a qualitative longitudinal study, we have two interviews which were conducted with the same person at two different times. (Project Leader: Prof. Dr. Jochen Kade und Prof. Dr. Christiane Hof, Frankfort University; Project workers: Sascha Benedetti, Monika Fischer, Ulrike Funk, Dr. Cornelia Maier-Gutheil, Heike Breckle.)
[3] These interviews have been analyzed and previously published (cf. Kade 1989).
[4] We follow a broad understanding of the term "Bildung" and understand "Bildung" as acquisition and constitution of world" (cf. Humboldt, 1793/1969). In this way, not only processes of learning but also other forms of acquisition may be researched (cf. Fischer, Kade & Benedetti, 2010).
[5] This information is however not explicitly mentioned in the interview but can only be concluded from a written remark of the interview.
[6] The basic knowledge of Latin is re-formulated as a skill of "logically structured thinking".
[7] This can, however, only be reconstructed in detail with the first interview.
[8] However, we can only speak of a pedagogical development of professionalism if the self-observation is as well-linked to professional educational knowledge as it is directed towards concrete tasks and problems within the framework of adult education.

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European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults, Vol.2, No.1, 2011, pp. 89-105

In the framework of videoconference classrooms at local learning centres in Sweden

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Abstract

This article explores the practice of videoconferencing and draws on interaction in class based on ethnographic fieldwork carried out at local learning centres in Sweden. The study is based on participant observations focusing on communication and the role of the teacher in a videoconferencing class. The results of the study shed light on different functions of the teachers' questions such as rhetorical, expanding and provocative. Further, talk in videoconferencing lacks systems of proper back-channel cues and communication often fails as a result of low feedback. The study also shows that there is a lack of balance in the distribution of utterances between the teacher and the students and that interaction is often one-way. The teacher becomes an actor in class reacting against low feedback. Questions and statements posed by the teacher are designed to break through the barriers of mediating technology. Also interaction patterns are impaired by misunderstandings and the practice is described as a learning space imbued with the rationale of communication technology.

Keywords: videoconference; local learning centres; adult education; education technology

Introduction

In recent years, videoconferencing has been established in the context of local learning centres in Sweden to promote adult and distance education in rural districts. This study aims to investigate interactions between participants in the classroom. The videoconference classroom is a socio-technical environment in which communications technology plays a significant role and is an inseparable part of practice. The interplay between physical settings and human actors has been discussed by Comber and Wall (2001), the materiality of schools and workplaces by McGregor (2003) and the impact of material actors in videoconferencing by Lögdlund (2010). This article focuses on

ISSN 2000-7426

DOI 10.3384/rela.2000-7426.rela0038
www.rela.ep.liu.se

how actors communicate; the different forms of talk between the teacher, students and technicians in videoconference classrooms.

Goffman (1959) explores the identity of the individual and the significance of group behaviour to evaluate the meaning of encounters in everyday life. The dramaturgic perspective views interaction as performance, which is shaped by audience and environment and staged to provide others with impressions that are consonant with the desired goals of the actor. It can be argued that 'virtual teaching practices' may have established a new range of frames of interaction and altered the ways actors present themselves in their interactions with others. Goffman argues an actor wishes to present oneself effectively to minimise a failing presentation. Interactive cooperation with others makes an important contribution to the individual's performance as well as the performance of a group or a team. It can be argued that successful interaction in videoconferencing is dependent on the mutual definition of the situation as a teaching practice holding the premises face-to-face interaction origination from conventional education.

Videoconferencing is a collective of technologies utilized to transfer digitized data in the form of images and audio, including video clips, photographs, music and other information (Wilcox, 2000). It has been argued that the expansion of flexible learning strategies and advances in information and communication technologies have altered the conditions for teaching (Keegan, 2000) and created new learning environments of (Garrison, 2000; Edwards & Usher, 2003). It has also been said that information and communication technologies are components that impact practice (Bijker; Hughes & Pinch, 1987) and learning (Paetcher et al., 2001) by changing relations in space and time. The combination of online communication technologies and traditional face-to-face teaching has been referred to as virtual education by Keegan (2000), on-line instruction by Kearsley (2000) and virtual universities by Barjis (2003).

In studies conducted in the field of videoconferencing, technical equipment is presented as an obstacle to communication. Tyynelä (2004) argues that successful interaction is dependent on good audibility and visibility. Students in videoconferencing must be able to hear what is said and see facial expressions and body language in order to participate. MacKinnon et al. (1995) state that the type and position of the microphones is crucial to communication as well as the position of the monitors and the light in the learning environment. Students report negative attitudes towards the cameras and the sound system (Unander, 1999) and technical disruptions are experienced as annoying and may affect interaction negatively. Knipe and Lee (2002) state that the quality of teaching in videoconferencing is not has high as in traditional classrooms since teaching via a monitor, camera and microphones will always reduce the quality of learning. Waltz (1998) claims that the equipment in videoconferencing has usurped the teacher's pedagogical choices and transferred control of the virtual classroom to technicians, manufacturers and engineers.

The physical distance between students and the teacher in remote settings is one topic in studies carried out in the field of videoconferencing. Knipe and Lee (2002) report that students in remote sites occasionally feel isolated when eye contact is not made with them and questions not repeated to them. Students located at the origin site receive more information and explanations from the teacher than do remote students. Detachment from class causes students to lose concentration and interest in the subject matter. McHenry and Bozik (1995) as well as Unander (1999) report little or no interaction in videoconferencing classes due to students feeling distant from the teacher. It seems as if physical and psychological distance poses potential problems for effective distance learning (Wolcott, 1996) and 'transactional distance' may lead to

communication gaps and the potential for misunderstanding between teachers and the students (Harry, John & Keegan, 1993).

One issue in videoconferencing is the role of the teacher. Unander (1999) connect the teacher's ability to stimulate and motivate participants to the actual outcome of interaction. The author argues that the language used by the teacher as well as the tone of his/her voice is crucial when it comes to students' attitudes towards videoconferencing. Dupin-Bryant (2004) asserts that the teacher in videoconferencing often takes on a teacher-centred approach due to geographical separation and technological barriers. McHenry and Bozik (1995) claim interaction is the plain responsibility of the teacher and MacKinnon et al. (1995) argue that instructors should sustain interaction of participants by means of dialogue. The teacher must invite participants to interrupt speakers in order to ensure dialogue rather than monologue (ibid.)

The group organisation in remote settings is a subject that has attracted considerable interest. In contrast to individual distance education, group-based videoconferencing makes individuals feel that they belong to a cohort of students sharing the same experiences (Olsen, 2003). Svensson (2002) investigated group behaviour in temporary student gatherings and discovered that communities were established and reformed based on collective negotiations. The roles of the teacher and students were determined in communities adopting typified patterns of communication. Summing up the field of videoconferencing most research done concerns technology. The actual handlings of equipment as well as the fact that communication is mediated among dispersed groups of students are seen as intriguing problems. On the other hand, communication and the role of the teacher are subjects that have attracted less attention. This study takes the perspective of the teacher and seeks to describe how participants talk in videoconferencing classrooms in terms of verbal and non-verbal communication.

Classroom observations

The study is based on participant observations guided by an overt research strategy in which the researcher is identifiable (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2000) and by moderate participation where the researcher does not actively participate in the classroom activities (De Walt & De Walt, 2002).

The study covers both quantitative and qualitative outcomes. The quantitative aspect of communication accounts for the frequency and the allocation of utterances while the qualitative results focus on the character of utterances made in class. The study comprises thirty seven different occasions made between 2003 and 2005 at five different local learning centres. The majority of data were collected at one single location. One typical observation lasted for approximately one hour and was recorded and transcribed similar to the procedure of traditional interviews.

Data used in the study concern two different forms of educational sites; the remote classroom and the origin site. The remote classroom is the physical locality of the local learning centre. In the remote classroom, data were recorded directly on the spot and comprise both the local students' face-to-face communication and the interaction with the teacher and students at the origin site. The origin site is the place where the teacher (and occasionally students) is located during broadcasting. Data from the origin site were recorded from the television set. The observational post alternated between different remote classrooms and all observations made on the spot concerned students

engaged in adult education at upper secondary school level and in undergraduate studies.

The analysis involves different educational contexts; courses provided by the university college as well as adult education provided by the municipality at upper secondary school level. Data embrace the activities in the classroom focusing on the spoken language, gestures and the behaviour of the actors involved such the students, the teacher and supporting technicians. The process of analysing qualitative data involves structuring observations and interpreting findings. The results of the study can be described as a 'condensate' of analyses in which observations were successively interpreted and categorised.

The sample of locations is based on access given by a cluster of local learning centres located in a region in the south of Sweden. The centres collaborated in providing adult education in a region by sharing a set of university courses and by using the same project management. The local learning centres take on an 'intermediary' function as brokers of education in the region (Roos, Dahlöf & Baumgarten, 2000; Roos, 2001; Lögdlund, 2008) distributing undergraduate studies, municipal adult education and in-service training provided by university colleges or other educational arrangers situated at a distance. The centres try to emulate a campus by offering a learning environment not unlike ordinary schools. At the local learning centre, facilities are offered, such as classrooms, studies, a dining-room, libraries and other professional services associated with contemporary educational organisations. The distribution of distance education in local settings is believed to enhance the attractiveness of rural districts, prevent people moving away and promote schooling. Videoconferencing is the core activity of the local learning centre.

Interaction in the videoconferencing classroom

My data show that there are two main types of communication in videoconferencing classrooms that deserve more detailed study: verbal and non-verbal communication. The spoken language involves all utterances made in class addressing students, teachers or technicians. Further, my results show that there are four main categories of utterances significant for the practice of videoconferencing: questions, statements, storytelling and small talk. Goffman (1981) argue that questions are designed to receive answers, being oriented backwards to what has been said and forward to what lies just ahead. In the study, questions have been defined as all utterances requiring a reply. In contrast to questions, statements can be stated as utterances that do not explicitly require an answer. The study also shows that storytelling and 'small talk' are significant for communication in class. Storytelling refers to the anecdotes told by the teacher or by the students during class. Storytelling and anecdotes do not necessarily involve questions, although they often seek some kind of response from the audience. Small talk is the idle talk of the teachers and technicians. Small talk takes place mainly outside the framework of the actual lecture and may involve both questions and statements.

From the teacher's perspective, questions directed at the students usually concern the subject matter. The teacher may pose questions to the students for many reasons; to investigate the students' knowledge, to find an interesting topic or to follow up previous lectures and assignments. Questions could also concern theory or practice and result in factual answers, solving problems or develop imaginative or reasoned ideas.

From the students' perspective, questions concerning the subject matter are rarely asked of the teacher or peers during the videoconferencing class. The most frequent

questions posed by students instead concern administrative or routine matters. For instance, the students may want to know the forms of an examination, deadlines for submitting written tasks or the date and time of future broadcasts. The differences in the nature of the questions are significant to videoconference. The teacher lays focus on the content while students are engaged in forms, rules and settings.

Questions and statements

The teacher is an actor who informs, describes and explains the state of matters, circumstances and opinions to the students. As has already been mentioned, a significant amount of the teachers' communication is based on questions. My data show that questions asked in videoconferencing class have different functions. Questions may have a

- rhetorical function
- expanding function
- provocative function
- management function

Some questions have a rhetorical function such as when the teacher asks the students *"do you follow"* or *"can we start now?"* Rhetorical questions are not generally meant to be replied to and the teacher often continues instantly. The intentional lack of response makes rhetorical questions similar to statements. For instance, when the teacher asks a group of students a ticklish question about teacher training *"do you want them to internalise knowledge"*, not waiting for a reply the question transforms it into a statement. Further, my analysis shows that rhetorical questions in videoconferencing may have different purposes. The teacher may pose rhetorical questions in order to mark the structure of the lecture or to conclude or start the next section. Rhetorical questions can therefore be used as 'pacemakers' for maintaining a certain speed of the broadcast.

Other questions posed by the teacher are intended to expand the dialogue. For instance, when the teacher asks the students *"is there anything else you are thinking about"* or when the teacher asks a single student to give his point of view as in the example below.

> Teacher: Roberto can you comment on the election in Chile?

My data show that questions, which are intended to expand discussions and are directed at a specific student, seek to encourage an individual or a group of students to express their perspectives, to create another angle or insert tension into the discussion. 'Expanding' questions may also be used to initiate further discussion among groups of students located at different remote sites.

> Teacher: Does anyone else have something to add?

Some of the teacher's questions take on a provocative form. My studies show how the teacher exhorts the students by trying to provoke them to interact. The provocative questions may purposely give rise to new questions and further discussions related to the subject matter.

> Teacher: No, he had raped and humiliated and forced two women into prostitution. Isn't it good that he was given the maximum punishment?

It can be argued that expanding and provocative questions may be appropriate for videoconferencing in order to overcome distance and break through the barriers of technical resistance. The teacher seeks to influence the students and create interaction despite them being located physically distant. Provocative questions are also used more often by the teacher in videoconferencing than face to face in traditional teaching. This observation reinforces the idea of the provocative function of questions with the purpose of overcoming distance and getting through to the students despite communication being mediated.

Other forms of questions likely to occur in videoconferencing classes concern the management of the class and involve supervising and routine and administrative issues. Supervising questions concern maintaining the task activity or monitoring the students in class. Questions can be admonitory as when the teacher asks students to change seats in order to see them better or when he or she asks the students to turn towards the camera. Supervising questions may involve technical audio equipment such as when the teacher asks the students to move closer to the microphone. Supervising questions are also posed by the teacher to establish contact. For example, the teacher may ask whether a certain location (classroom) is still connected. Supervising questions are asked most frequently in the initial phase of the videoconferencing class and in the event of temporary transmission breakdowns.

One situation when supervising questions are asked is when the teacher addresses and identifies students from one location by using the name of the municipality. This category of supervising questions has a certain nature. The teacher attempts to distribute and direct communication among groups of students in different locations. For instance, the teacher may ask *"What do you answer in Viik*?" or *"Höög, do you have something to add?"* The teacher may also encourage a certain location to respond in order to verify a connection by asking *"Kiisa, where are you?"*. Supervising questions can also be asked in order to confirm the structure of the lecture. These kinds of questions (and statements) occur when the teacher supervises turn taking by addressing a certain location. The following excerpt from a course provided by the municipality illustrates the supervising turn-taking functions that are used in the initial phase of the broadcast.

> Teacher: We'll start in the municipality of Viik with topics of the day. Is there anything you'd like to tell us?

Supervising questions are a management strategy for checking on attendance and distributing cue-taking notes among the interconnected sites. It could be argued that the supervising questions 'communalise' the groups of students and 'substitute' people with places. Local places become identification marks. The students are also recognised by the instructor as a specific group of students from a local place, rather than a group of students. The students seem accustomed to being 'substituted' and they use the name of the district themselves when calling for attention. A region may be defined as any place that is bounded to some degree by barriers to perception. Goffman (1959) argues any individual located in a certain space-time manifold will be in a position to observe the performance and be guided by the definition of the situation which the performance fosters. The students may, for instance, talk about themselves in terms of a specific place both within and outside the immediate practice of videoconferencing.

A significant proportion of the management questions concern visual contact between the teacher and the remote classroom. For example, the teacher may ask the students if they can see what is written on the whiteboard (or the blackboard) or if images viewed through image viewer. Question may also have a routine nature. For

instance, when the teacher welcomes the students to the class, asking them how they are or asking them about the local weather. Administrative questions chiefly concern broadcasting times, examination procedures and attendance lists. Finally, all forms of management questions posed by the teacher usually answered by the students.

Statements can be categorised according to the intention of the teacher. Statements made in class can be directly connected to tasks such as factual information or related to ideas and problems. For instance, when the teacher states *"I've used this material in school and I know it works"*, it is a fact and not a question. Statements can take on a supervising mode by telling students what to do, giving feedback or praising efforts made by students. Statements may also have a general nature such as *"let's move on"* or *"let's start now"*. Finally, statements can have a specific character similar to one of the provocative questions.

> Teacher: Hate crimes have increased in the Swedish society. Such crimes are directed at homosexuals, but also religious groups such as Muslims and Jews. These crimes have increased dramatically in the last few years.

As regards, the nature of teacher's statements, it seems that a large number of utterances have a certain open or closed nature. As has been mentioned earlier, the study covers both the remote classroom and the original site. The analysis also concerns different educational contexts: education provided by the university college and adult education provided by the municipality. In the excerpt below, which comes from the remote classroom at upper secondary school level, the teacher is looking for a certain answer that is determined the context.

> Teacher: (…) by now there is plenty written here [whiteboard], which has to be proved right? And I can't hear any of you protesting loudly.
>
> Student: I don't think this is correct at all. Do you want me to explain why?
>
> Teacher: Yes, please.

The excerpt illustrates how the teacher requires a certain response from the students, which limits the scope of possible replies. The reply has to follow the prescribed statement written on the whiteboard, which is formulated in a way that provokes a given response. We can construe this particular question posed by the teacher as restricted or closed to elaborated or spontaneous replies and it can be argued that questions and statements take on a 'productive' or 'counterproductive' character. Productive questions or statements encourage the receiver to elaborate on his or her answer and they may be 'open' to feedback. In contrast, counterproductive questions may not encourage further elaboration since a factual answer, or a short yes or no, will do. In conclusion questions and statements become 'closed' to further feedback. The excerpt above is an example of 'counterproductive' interaction since the teacher sets the frames and the reply has to follow the line of argument displayed on the whiteboard. The question becomes counterproductive in that it does not encourage further arguments and therefore set limits on learning. The closed character of questions also occurs in videoconferencing provided by the university college as a majority of the questions that concern the subject matter are short (brief) and do not encourage elaborated replies. The excerpt below is an example of such a counterproductive question.

> Teacher: Do you think the form is demanding nowadays, to write neatly and correctly?

Student: Yes.

Teacher: Yes, isn't it.

A small part of the teacher's question might be interpreted as being productive and seeking an open reply that cannot easily be falsified. Teachers' productive questions more often than not enhance an on-going discussion or are posed in order to initiate new discussions. Some productive questions may encourage the students to draw their own conclusions.

Teacher: What is a society?

Student: We are the society?

Teacher: Yes, aren't we?

One interpretation based on the data concerns the occurrence of productive questions, which is a consequence of the climate in class as well as the teacher's approach. Productive questions seem to be encouraged by the attitude of the teacher and the climate in the group rather than by individual achievements. The willingness of students to more detailed answers and initiate discussions depends on the specific composition of the group in the remote classroom. New groups and groups consisting of inexperienced students are more careful about giving feedback.

In addition to questions and statements asked in class, the teacher may relate stories or anecdotes. The subject of anecdotes usually concerns the task. Anecdotes commonly characterised by a personal approach, revealing the interests and the experiences of the teacher. It seems as if the teacher tells personal stories in order to encourage others to do the same. The main function of relating anecdotes is to 'break the ice' and get other students to start talking.

Non-verbal communication

A second form of interaction that takes place in videoconferencing classrooms is 'non-verbal'. Goffman (1981) argues that the process of 'ritualisation' of communication involves the movements, looks and vocal sounds we make as the unintended by-product of speaking. Non-verbal communication consists of physical gestures given by the teacher and students. Gestures may, for instance, signal interest or indifference and body language may signify (consciously or not) e.g. fatigue or excitement.

My interpretations of the data show that non-verbal communication occurs parallel with verbal communication, mainly in order to strengthen or modulate messages given verbally during videoconferencing. The teacher may nod approval or make an inviting gesture with his hand that means please go ahead. Gestures may also be used as a communication strategy with some teachers intentionally exaggerating gestures, looks and smiles. Body language becomes a tool used to break through to the students.

One example of non-verbal communication is the position of the body. In videoconferencing, the teacher is restricted by technical appliances. The teacher has to stay in the centre where he or she is well-lit and in range of microphones and cameras. The position of the teacher in class becomes crucial and he or she has to always remember the positions of the cameras. In education provided by the university college, the teacher may change positions temporally. For instance, the teacher may alternate between standing in front of the audience or sitting behind a desk. However, being able to change position during class is dependent on assistance from a technician. In

education provided by the municipality, the teacher often lacks the full-time presence of a technician and is 'chained' to a single position.

To the category of non-verbal communication we can add all the situations where the teacher displays images (photographs, graphs and charts) with a technical apparatus in order to communicate non-verbal messages. The teacher may also write on the blackboard or the whiteboard instead of using the technology designed for viewing images during videoconferencing. It can be argued that writing by hand, using a whiteboard as a form of communication medium, is a strategy for creating a sense of intimacy. The teacher tries to overcome distance by neutralising the student's experiences of the videoconference situation as a televised broadcast.

It can be argued that the main distinction between videoconferencing and face-to-face teaching is the occurrence of technological shortcomings that make gestures and body language less comprehensible to actors. In contrast to conventional classrooms, physical signs may be vague or even missing during videoconferencing. For instance, students may sit out of range of the camera, the camera may switch perspective suddenly or go temporarily out of focus. Students may also sit in the shade and wear dark clothing which makes them almost invisible to the camera.

In addition to what can be seen in the videoconferencing classroom, some gestures are missing. My data shows that there is a scarcity of 'traditional physical signs' in videoconferencing such as turn-taking cues. For instance, the students seldom raise their hands or wave them to get the teacher's attention.

My study points to verbal communication as the main category of interaction in videoconferencing classrooms. The spoken language dominates communication in a way that may make us risk overlooking sudden pauses and temporary moments of silence in the stream of communication. The lack of interaction, in so far as nothing is communicated intentionally, occurs, for instance, when the teacher leaves the classroom, reads notes or does personal things without involving the students. Some time is also spent waiting for responses in class. Transmission breakdowns can be added to this category of non-verbal communication and the teacher may postpone the broadcast in order to make technical corrections. The temporary lack of verbal interaction is crucial to the maintenance of the videoconferencing class. Silence and stagnation may create dissatisfaction among the participants.

Interaction sequences and communication patterns

Goffman (1981) argues that whenever people talk, they seem to follow the dialogic format as a certain structure based on questions and replies. One utterance is temporally followed by another and they are organised in pairs. In the following, I will shed light on two typical situations that occur in videoconferencing. The first situation is an example of communication that works as intended and the second example concerns a situation when communication fails.

My data show that communication in the videoconferencing class follows a 'triadic pattern' based on adjacency pairs. Typically, the teacher initiates a discussion by asking a question or making a statement and then concludes interaction sequence by giving feedback on students' responses.

> Teacher: (…) a certain verdict was handed down in the Supreme Court in Sweden today, wasn't it?
>
> Student: It was about the pastor.

Teacher: Yes, and… [demanding]

Student: He was found not guilty.

Teacher: Yes, he was found not guilty. Thus, it was not a crime to claim that homosexuality is a cancerous growth in society.

From the excerpt above, we learn that the teacher initiates the interaction sequence by addressing a topic of interest in the general public debate in Sweden. The teacher confirms the reply and insists on a follow-up by the student as he/she regards the answers as unsatisfactory. The triadic interaction sequence is finally concluded by the teacher who substantiates the student's reply in order to obtain a full understanding of the subject. The communication follows the predicted structure of adjacency pairs of questions and replies linked in a chain. In videoconferencing a large proportion of talk follows this form of triadic interaction sequence.

Communication structures may fail to complete the triadic interaction pattern. The excerpt below is an example of how the interaction sequence is interrupted and how the communication structure breaks down.

Teacher: In our school there is a filter blocking the information and I don't think… [interrupted]

Student: No, but I also believe it's… [interrupted]

Teacher: …it's possible to visit sites like that. But I'm not sure.

Student: Yes, but… [interrupted]

Teacher: OK, we are waiting for two more students (…), but I think we'll start anyway. [changing subject]

In the excerpt, the teacher tries to argue, not in the form of questions anticipating a certain reply, but in the form of statements. Communication is still organised in adjacency pairs and the student tries to reply to the teacher's statements, but his/her feedback is not getting through. The teacher continues his statement 'unaware' that the student trying to say something. Finally, the teacher changes subject abruptly. We can interpret the excerpt as an example of communication failure due to a number of possible reasons. For instance, we cannot exclude the possibility that the teacher chooses to ignore the student in order to maintain the pace of the lecture. On the other hand, there is a technical failure if the teacher actually does not hear the student. In any case, the student is left dissatisfied and the communication sequence may be confusing to other participants. It can also be argued that the excerpt above is an example of a communication failure due to the lack of proper requirements of the communication system. Goffman (1981) claims that the speaker needs to know whether his message has been received and understood, which is based on the recipient's abilities to acknowledge the accuracy of the message sent. Feedback in the form of 'back-channel' cues, such as facial gestures, is needed to know whether we have succeeded or failed to get our message across.

Videoconferencing seems to lack proper back-channel cues in many respects, which may 'delay' the messages sent and result in misunderstandings. The lack of cues conveys what we may interpret as 'substituting' conversations. The following example, recorded during the initial process of the broadcast, displays a bouncing of more or less

relevant questions and statements between the teacher, technicians and support personnel.

1st technician: Are you the teacher?

Teacher: Yes, at least I'm working as a teacher. But personally I don't know. [laughing]

1st technician: I can't reach Kinda

Teacher: No, I've noticed that

1st technician: Nobody has phoned from there… so I don't know

Support personnel: I can give them a call and check it up for you

1st technician: I mustn't lose their IP number in any case

2nd technician: You have to push the remote control to get rid of the slide

Support personnel: Now there's something other than an image

Teacher: Yes, I can see and hear you

Support personnel: You're visible, at least here in Holm

Teacher: Yes, hello, hello

Teacher: Are you having trouble in Holm?

Support personnel: Yes, we've had some trouble. Now it's working anyway. Let's see what's happening with the others

Teacher: Okay, our technician has left. It isn't good but thanks anyway [ironically]

The communication structure described above can be interpreted as 'manifold'. The principal line is delivered by the teacher while a second line ensues from the discussion of the technicians. The questions and statements asked by the support personnel figure in between. Initially, the technicians involve the teacher by asking him a question and then continuing to discuss the problems of connection, IP numbers and slides with each other. The teacher and the support personnel believe they are part of the technical discussion. In fact, the technicians have already left. This is not discovered until later.

It seems that a large amount of talk is needed and that 'overacting' replaces the lack of body language and facial expressions. This form of substituting small talk seems important for verifying what has been said and for clarifying misunderstandings. In addition to small talk, the excerpt also illustrates the 'manifoldness' of the communication structure in which different conversations take place simultaneously. The excerpt exemplifies how jokes can be ignored and how statements can be given in non-chronological order. It seems that the communication pattern is out of order due to the lack of back-channel cues and questions and statements are delayed in time.

Distribution of utterances in the videoconferencing classroom

Of all the utterances given on seventeen different occasions in the university college's courses, only a small proportion (3%) of the total number are given by the students. On some occasions, no more than two or three questions were asked during a 1-hour lecture

and occasionally students were completely silent during a full session. The lack of feedback applied mainly to the situation in the remote classroom. As regards the origin site, where the teacher was present, the activity of the students was slightly higher (8%). The distribution of utterances between the teacher and the students was 92 percent, respectively, of the total number.

In education provided by the municipality, the degree of interaction between actors in the classroom setting is generally higher than in courses held by university colleges. Based on observations on twenty different occasions in the remote classroom, the students were likely to account for almost one third of the communication (28%). The number of utterances given by students in classes at the origin site was higher (37%). The distribution of utterances between the teacher and the students is 75 and 25 percent, respectively.

Based on the quantitative results of the study, we can conclude that the degree of interaction between the students and the teacher is generally 'weaker' (lower) in courses provided by the university colleges than in adult education provided by the municipality. In courses held by the university college, the teacher rarely asks the remote students questions and likewise the students are not likely to 'interrupt' the session with reflections, comments or questions. Although communication in adult education provided by the municipality shows the same pattern as in higher education, the feedback is more extensive and interaction more comprehensive both at the origin site and in the remote setting.

The frequency and distribution of utterances in class show that the communication where the teacher addresses a single individual is most common. However, the direction of communication may shift from a single pair to involving several actors. For instance, the students can address statements and questions to the teacher, to other students in the classroom or to other groups of students located in another remote classroom. The initiative passes from the teacher to the students, occasionally as a result of interruption, and discussions are intersected by new perspectives, ideas or related topics. Communication becomes multi-oriented, in all directions. Multi-oriented communication is usually spontaneous and more often than not initiated by the students. Multi-oriented communication between groups of students in separate locations rarely occurs (1-2%). when multi-oriented communication occurs, the teacher still monitors the subject, the direction of the discussion and the length of comments. Communication never stops being supervised by the teacher even though he/she does not participate in discussions.

Table 1. The Distribution of utterances in videoconferencing class	Percent (%) of student communication
University college (17 observational occasions)	
- origin site	8
- remote classroom	3
- distribution between teacher and students	92/8
- multi-oriented communication	2
Adult education (20 observational occasions)	
- origin site	37
- remote classroom	28
- distribution between teacher and students	75/25
- multi-oriented communication	1

Table one shows that the teacher addresses the majority of the questions and statements to the students. The teacher becomes the main character. The teacher-centred approach has been observed by Knipe and Lee (2002), Dupin-Bryant (2004) and Unander (1999), who consider a lack of interaction in class as a problem in videoconferencing. However, the actions of the teacher are not the only factor that affects the interaction in videoconferencing and my interpretation of the data points to a number of additional factors. First, my interviews with students shows that those who are experienced in handling the technology or those who are used to the teaching methods in videoconferences are in general more active in class than students who lack experience. Similar to the results of Unander's (1999) studies, I discovered that students who are experienced also have a more positive attitude towards the technology of videoconferencing.

> It's intriguing and it's fun to try new things. In small villages it's great not to have to travel to the city in order to study. [Student in upper secondary school]

Second, interaction increases if the students and the teacher have met before face-to-face, or if they know each other from other situations outside the videoconference classroom (for instance, in other courses).

Third, my studies show that the expectations of the students are important for how interaction in videoconferencing takes place. Not knowing beforehand that videoconferencing will be used as a teaching method may result in general dissatisfaction.

> It's not a proper forum for discussions at all. No, it's not enough… I don't know. It takes a lot of courage to make oneself heard. [Student in upper secondary school]

Fourth, it seems that all the actors, both students and teachers, need to learn how to communicate using videoconferencing systems. Knowledge about how videoconferencing really works in practice seems to be an important factor when it comes to increasing interaction.

Fifth, the teacher's knowledge and experience affect how he or she acts in class. My observations show that teachers who are used to the technology of videoconferencing behave more confidently in class. Experienced teachers also make better use of Technical equipment and seem to be more sensitive to the expectations of the students.

> It all depends on the teacher in videoconferencing. If the teacher can get the students interested or not. Else it will… I mean he is not present in class after all. [Student in upper secondary school]

Discussion

In order to further break down the nature of the questions and statements, communication can be categorised in different functions such as rhetorical and provocative. Kumpulainen (2001) argues that communication can be interrogative, such as when the teacher poses questions to the students, or informative when providing information. My study shows that the interrogative function of communication is more likely to occur in videoconferencing provided by the municipality. As mentioned earlier, the degree of interaction is less comprehensive in the university college settings,

which is also consequence of the interrogative communication function. However, there are situational circumstances to take into consideration. The interrogative nature of communication that occurs in the municipal setting is primarily a consequence of a slower pace. The teacher often allows for plenty of time to wait for the students to reply. This is not the case in courses provided by the university college where the pace is higher.

Another cause of extended interrogative communication has to do with the presence of students or not. In settings with an audience (the students) the teacher's attention is more often than not focused on students in the physical classroom. The audience present face-to-face seems to have a higher priority than students located in the remote classroom at a distance. My studies show that communication is more likely to maintain an interrogative function if actors are present at the same location. Questions addressed to students in the remote settings may instead have a somewhat informative or rhetorical character. Taken as a hole, the interrogative function of communication occurs primarily in municipal education and in situations where the teacher is present.

My analysis shows that some questions take on a character that may be significant for videoconferencing. The 'expanding' and 'provocative' questions serve to force the receiver to further explanations, to develop different perspectives on a subject or simply to stir the imagination of the students. Argumentative questions are designed to receive feedback and are used in order to capture the interest of the students. My analysis also shows that a large number of questions have a closed character that does not support discussions in the same way as open questions and statements do. Kumpulainen (2001) argues that argumentative discussions are more effective in fostering the student's critical thinking. It has also been said that discussions that serve to stimulate and support 'higher-order thinking' throughout the curriculum are preferable (Cazden, 2001). In videoconferencing, a large number of questions are dismissive, i.e. they do not encourage further interaction. Once again, videoconferencing risks becoming a one-way televised lecture.

My study shows that there is an unbalanced distribution of utterances between the teacher and the students where the teacher is responsible for most of the communication. This unequal situation is apparent in courses provided by the university college as well as in adult education provided by the municipality. The main reason is low feedback from the students. As pointed out by McHenry and Bozik (1995) and Unander 1999, it seems as if videoconferencing suffers from low response from students in class. Based on my quantitative data, videoconference has become a televised broadcast and the idea of interactive mediation has been weakened. It has also been argued that videoconferencing strives to span scattered actors and reproduce the experience of interaction as naturally as possible, viewing interaction as a highly desirable component of a teaching-learning process (MacKinnon, et al., 1995). The lack of feedback as well as transmission breakdowns makes a learning situation critical in videoconference. Goffman (1959) finds that the definition of the situation projected by a particular participant is an integral part of a projection that is fostered and sustained by the intimate cooperation of more than one participant. Videoconferencing simulates face-to-face interaction, but what maintains the image? Failures in self presentation may ruin the performance of the teacher or the student, but more importantly failures may ruin the common definition of the situation. What would happen if students re-define the situation? Would they leave the classroom if they apprehend videoconference as a one-way televised lecture?

Furthermore, it can be argued that the triadic communication pattern is a way of enabling the teacher to control the structure and content of the lesson. Goffman (1981) argues that the triadic communication pattern is a collective meaning-making process in which the parties collaborate. In videoconferencing, the teacher may maintain the triadic communication pattern in order not to lose the initiative, control and pace of the lesson i.e. broadcast.

The act of substitution is common among participants in videoconferencing. Teachers frequently address students by using the name of a place and students respond in the same way. Students also identify themselves according to places, rather than as individuals, to facilitate interaction and make communication run smoothly. It seems as if personal identities merge with places, which is sometimes a practical necessity in order to maintain order during the broadcast.

The videoconferencing system seems to lack fundamental communication requirements. In order to better understand the intention of the question, the addressee needs to interpret the tone of the voice as well as the body language. Mehrabian (1971) states that facial expressions are important in order to fully comprehend and interpret communication and increase the precision of messages. Goffman (1981) argues for the need of turnover signals, which are a means of indicating the end of messages and the taking over of the transmitting role by the next speaker. In the event of more than two people communicating, the participants need next speaker selection signals. Cues are not available in videoconferencing in the same way as in face-to-face communication. It can be argued that in videoconferencing, physical signs may be vague or even missing. Nor can the participants sense the atmosphere of the remote classroom, which makes interaction more difficult for all the actors involved. What may be achieved in class is what Goffman (1981) calls a 'working agreement' in which actors accept the shortcomings of communication. In conclusion, conveying expressions in videoconferencing is more complicated than when teaching face-to-face regards trying to break through the technical barriers.

Several scholars argue that the teacher is responsible for interaction (e.g. Dupin-Bryant, 2004; Unander, 1999). In the videoconferencing practice, several remote classrooms are linked to the primary teaching site, which means that the teacher has to consider not only the students present in classroom, but also different groups of remote students as well. For instance, the teacher, being located at a distance, is not able to see all the participants and cannot know whether students are present or not.

Videoconferencing is a complex teaching situation to which we must add the complexity of mediating technology. Waltz (1998) sees the teacher as an actor left powerless in the hands of engineering. My results show that technology is important. For example the teacher does not pay attention to remote students to the same extent as he or she does to students in the primary teaching site and the interaction pattern breaks down into a number of situations as a consequence of the technical medium. The videoconference's learning space can be described as a web of interrelations between people, the environment and technical artefacts that are processed and given life by means of learning activities. These interrelations are characterised by technical superiority over human actors, and the different forms of talk presented in this study are an example of how technology impacts, changes and controls interaction.

Finally, one may ask oneself if the communication pattern described in this study is typical in videoconferencing or if it is dependent on certain conditions or specific teachers? One may also debate the results of the study based on development of educational technology. The value of data is mainly to make visible the nature, extent and direction of communication in videoconferencing. The varying conditions in classes

make my results difficult to generalise to other situations than my specific sample. For instance, the number of students in the classes varied between different observations and the teachers used different approaches during the duration of the study. In conclusion, this study is not conclusive, but an example of how actors talk in videoconferencing. This study shows the impact of technology in videoconference. It can be argued that whenever technology is used in educational and social settings as a mediating tool of communication interaction is influenced one way or another. Observations made some years ago in videoconference classrooms in Sweden are as much relevant to understand the relation between material objects and people as subsequent studies focusing any technical design applied in distance education. In general virtual universities and distance education are seen as a solution to growing education demands of the knowledge society. The rapid implementation of Internet accelerates this trend. The emergence of local learning centres in Sweden and Europe is based on networking of actors striving to provide access to learners. However, it can be argued that the implementation and the design of educational tools are critical for learning outcomes (Knowles, 1989; Boud & Felletti, 1997; Boud & Garrick, 1999) and it can be discussed if the conditions for learning in videoconference are favourable for learning. Research still need to investigate how knowledge is produced in virtual universities settings and how knowledge is included in artifacts and material settings. The role of technology is often missing in educational studies.

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European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults, Vol.2, No.1, 2011, pp. 107-121

Competing discourses and the positioning of students in an adult basic education programme

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Abstract

This article presents a case study of the learning processes of students enrolled in an adult basic education programme in the social and health care sector in Denmark. Theoretically the project draws on 'positioning theory', i.e. a poststructuralist approach. The issues being researched are how the students are positioned and position themselves in relation to the discourses mobilised in the programme. A qualitative inquiry, the empirical aspects consist of observations, interviews and studying documents. In addition to suggesting that competition exists between the opposing discourses mobilised in the programme, the preliminary constructions presented in this article point to processes that involve the inclusion and exclusion of students.

Keywords: positioning theory; adult basic education; poststructuralist research; inclusion and exclusion

Introduction

Due to the demographical development in the western countries there has been an increased focus on elderly care throughout the recent decades. Retrenchment, modernisation and professionalisation are some of the keywords in the discussion (Dahl, 2005) although the focus may vary considerably. A number of recent studies within the research field of elderly care emphasise how embodied care workers perceive care work, e.g. Liveng (2007) and Larsen (2004-2006).Working within the life history tradition Liveng and Larsen are attentive to the participants' feelings and their understanding of the lives they have lived and also, for example to their present working conditions. The psycho-societal perspective is applied in numerous other studies (e.g. Dybbroe, 2008; Hansen, 2008), of which many include analyses of how the status of care work is influenced by the historical embedding of the domestic work of women, linking the research history of care work to feminist research, cf. Wærness (2005).

ISSN 2000-7426

DOI 10.3384/rela.2000-7426.rela0039
www.rela.ep.liu.se

Other studies on care workers apply a poststructuralist approach i.e. a strict discourse analysis, e.g. Dahl (2005) and Fejes (2008) or a combination of discourse analysis and ethnographical studies, e.g. Lehn-Christiansen (2011) and Somerville (2006). Dahl focuses on the discursive development within the field in order to understand the development of elderly policy; she identifies some discursive threats pointing at a new paradigm within the sector. Dahl concludes that the consequence for the caregivers may imply either de-professionalisation or on the other hand may entail increased professionalisation, depending on the future development. Similar to Dahl, Fejes conducts a discourse analysis; however, he focuses on a particular aspect, 'reflective practices', as part of a governing technology within an in-service programme to prepare healthcare assistants to become Licensed Practice Nurses in the elder care sector. Neither Dahl nor Fejes investigate how the discourses perhaps are taken up by the care workers, an aspect Lehn-Christiansen, in contrast, includes. Focusing exclusively on the health discourse put forward in the theoretical courses of the programme, she analyses how the students take up or resist the intended shaping of their identity. Somerville includes both theoretical courses and traineeships in the Australian context, and points to a conflict between learning in preparatory training and learning in the workplace. Lehn-Christiansen, Fejes and Somerville engage – albeit at different 'levels' – with student identity (development) and so does this article. However, unlike the aforementioned studies, this article highlights governmental technologies, which involve processes of inclusion and exclusion within the first theoretical course of an adult basic education programme in the social and health care sector in Denmark.[1] In order to investigate the students learning processes the article touches upon discourses mobilised in the classrooms, how the discourses interact and how they influence the positioning of the students. Furthermore, the issues dealt with are how the students are positioned by the teachers and other students; how the students position themselves, and how the students perhaps take up the positioning. The article points out that the students in the programme may find themselves caught between competing discourses, with some of the students receiving preferential treatment and others being more or less excluded – before they ever set foot in practice.

The programme being studied is for adults who would like to work in the social and health care sector at a basic level. In January 2010, a group of 56 highly heterogeneous students, aged 17-61 and consisting of 50 women and 6 men, began in two classes. Eleven of the students have a different ethnic origin than Danish. Some of the students have more than 20 years of work experience in the health care sector, while others have none at all; some students have completed another education and some of the young students have only completed a basic course. The teachers also come from a variety of backgrounds and include nurses, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, social workers, school teachers (bachelor's degree) and upper secondary school teachers (master's degree).

The rest of this article is structured as follows. First, there is a section introducing the theoretical framework. Next, the methodological approach and the method are outlined, followed by some preliminary constructions. Finally, the issues looked at in this article are discussed.

Theoretical framework

The school the case study is based on has posed the question: Why do some students benefit from the programme and others do not? They state that they would like to look

into the students' brains to find out why the students do or do not learn. Using this approach indicates an understanding of learning aspects as being mainly situated within the students, and the research process as a matter of uncovering a hidden truth. In order to understand the meaning of the concept 'learning' within this programme, I pose the question: What are the students supposed to learn? According to the curriculum, the students are expected to acquire theoretical knowledge, practice related competencies and develop specific personal skills. These curriculum goals are captured as the development of a care helper identity, an expression that frequently occurs in the programme setting. Consequently identity is a central element in this research project on student learning processes and means that my conceptual understanding of it is crucial to the focus of the project. Viewing identity as being relatively fixed entails an outset in and a focus on the students' backgrounds, whereas viewing identity as fluid and changeable draws attention to the processes that the students undergo while enrolled in the programme. One's identity is open to transformation, but the individual is also shaped by previous experiences. Basically, I consider identity to be anti-essentialist and discursively constituted and the present reality to be a result of contingent processes (Collin, 2003).[2] Furthermore, within this poststructuralist understanding of identity, all students learn *something*, but not necessarily what the curriculum intends. Thus, seeing research as a truth-uncovering process (the school's understanding) is in my view an illusion and posing a why-question means asking for clarifications for causalities that do not exist. To carry out my research, I then have to challenge the view of research as truth and move from 'why' to 'how' (Bacchi, 2009), stressing that the researcher can only construct certain aspects of what is going on. Using a poststructuralist approach allows me to focus on learning and the care helper identity as ongoing processes and not as determined by the students' backgrounds.

As for identity, the discursive view can be realised in two ways: Identity as a construction in interaction and identity as a historical set of structures with regulatory power upon identity (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). The goal of this project is to deal with dimensions of both ways. Focusing exclusively on interactions between embodied students and teachers in a specific school may in the context of educational research seem of little interest as the research constructions cannot suggest anything about the broader embeddings of the students. On the other hand, omitting the interactions and doing a strict policy analysis may risk over generalising, predictability and, not taking the particular setting and the embodied individuals into account. Applying both approaches may be considered controversial, which is why I further address the topic in the section 'Methodology and method'.

Identity as (also) a construction in interaction

In order to closely examine interdependent processes this project draws on the theoretical framework 'positioning theory' developed by, for example, Australian psychologist Bronwyn Davies (Davies & Harré, 1990; Langenhove & Harré, 1999; Harré & Langenhove, 1999). Positioning theory focuses on the construction of identity between interlocutors and ''Positioning' refers to the process through which speakers adopt, resist and offer 'subject positions' that are made available in discourses or 'master narratives'' (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 43). Davies, who applies the positioning theory approach in her educational research (e.g. Davies, 1990; Davies, 2000; Laws & Davies, 2000; Davies, 2001; Davies & Gannon 2009) and as a feminist theorist (e.g. Davies, 2007, Davies, Browe, Gannon, Hopkins, McCann & Wihlborg, 2006), has contributed to the discussion of theory and methodology in the poststructuralist field that she positions herself in (e.g. Davies & Davies, 2007; Davies,

Browe, Gannon, Honan, Laws, Mueller-Rockstroh & Petersen, 2004). Davies builds on, for example the works of Michel Foucault and Judith Butler.

According to Davies, 'positioning' is central to understanding how people discursively, interactively and structurally are being assigned to different categories, such as e.g. 'female' or 'male'. Davies states that, 'one takes oneself up in terms of these familiar positionings that become 'inseparable from the subjectivity of that person'' (Davies, 2000, p. 71). Entering a new category entails the acquisition of a new perspective, i.e. a sense of oneself as belonging in the world in a new way. This development involves a series of processes in which the individual, little by little, adopts the new perspective. At first people become aware of the new category and then participate in the various discursive practices through which meaning is allocated to the category. People then imaginatively position themselves as they belong in the new category and finally recognise that they have the traits that locate them as a member of the new category (Davies, 2000; Davies & Harré, 1990). An individual is constituted through multiple discourses but the dominant humanist discourse of a coherent self entails the obligation to take oneself up as a knowable, recognizable identity (Davies, 2000) and forces, as such, the individual to integrate the non-integrable into one unified, non-contradictory rationale self (Davies, 2007). Poststructuralist discourse, in contrast, 'entails a move from the self as a noun to the self as a verb, always in process' (Davies, 2000, p. 137). Davies believes that the subject is always already a discursively constituted subject and that it is constantly in process; it only exists as a process (Ibid.) and, because discourses are contradictory, subjectivity is necessarily contradictory. The process through which one acquires (the non-fixed) subjectivity is "subjectification" (Davies, 2006). In other words, people constitute and are constituted by the discourses of the collectives of which they are a member and subjectivity is the current result of the process. Agency, from this perspective, is never free of discursive constitution and it never means autonomy in the sense of being an individual standing outside social structures and processes. Agency is the possibility of critically examining one's conditions of possibility. Davies explains it as, 'A sense of oneself as one who can go beyond the given meaning in any one discourse and forego something new, through a combination of previously unrelated discourses, (...) or through imagining not what *is,* but what *might be*' (2000, p. 67).

According to Foucault (2005a), whose notions Davies builds upon, discourses make subject positions available to individuals and Davies argues that individuals may or may not take up the positions made available to them. In accordance with Foucault, Davies defines discourse as 'an institutionalized use of language and language-like sign systems' (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 45) and states that institutionalisation can occur at the disciplinary, political, cultural and small-group level. The process of subjectification, consists of positioning and of being positioned within various discourses on a daily basis, i.e. through interaction with other people. Conversations can have various positionings, e.g. interactive positioning in which what one person says positions another person and reflexive positioning in which one positions oneself. Furthermore a person can resist being positioned by another person by arguing (ibid.).

Entering a new category and being acknowledged as a legitimate member by others entails a submission to the rules of the category (Davies, 2006; Davies et al., 2006; Claiborne, Cornforth, Davies, Milligan & White, 2009). To be a successful member and be someone who masters the demands of the new category requires an adjustment to the discursive practices of the category in question. Thus, Davies concludes – drawing on Judith Butler – that submission and mastering are simultaneous processes that constitute the subjectification of the individual. In the present project these considerations draw

attention to the struggle students undergo to be acknowledged as (student) care helpers in the programme setting. These considerations also raise questions concerning how the students have been positioned and how the students have positioned themselves throughout their lives up until this point.

Identity as a historical set of structures with regulatory power upon identity

Discourses shape the conditions of what is possible to say (and think), what knowledge and what practices are acknowledged and which ones are dismissed (Foucault, 2001). Consequently, discourses constitute the conditions of possibility, i.e. certain subject positions for – in this case – the students (Foucault, 2005a). Throughout the years and after several reforms, the programme being studied has been shaped into its present form with a specific curriculum and e.g. with a certain combination of theoretical courses and traineeships. Thus, the present form co-constitutes/shapes the students' conditions of possibility. However, the shaping is reciprocal. The programme is constituted by the discourses, and at the same time the programme constitutes the discourses. Discourses in society as such are interconnected, and consequently the programme and the students have and have had impact on discourses regarding e.g. elderly care, youth educational programmes and pedagogical development. The discourses that are mobilised in the specific programme setting circulate in society as a whole, and they are mobilised in other settings.

The acknowledged knowledge established by the discourses is linked to power relations in society as a whole; power is considered to be everywhere and not possessed by anyone (Foucault, 2005b). According to Foucault the exercise of power is to shape the conditions of possibility, e.g. for certain parts of the population and at the same time make individuals into self-governing subjects. The subjects have to internalise a coming-from-the-outside-behaviour in such a way that they feel it as a coming-from-the-inside-behaviour (Foucault, 1994a; Foucault 2006). In the project these theoretical aspects draw attention to *how* the student identity is influenced, i.e. how the identity as care helpers is suggested and shaped by the programme setting. The programme setting is defined as topics that are directly related to the programme, e.g. the curriculum and how it is taught, which again is influenced by wider discourses in society.

The micro and the macro level are considered to be interdependent, influencing one another. One example is that one might expect that the demographic development, the aging population, and the related discourse about how to handle the situation would be mobilised in a programme educating people for elderly care. Another example might be the aim of the Danish government that 95 per cent of a youth cohort should complete a youth education programme by 2015. The different discourses at the interconnected levels of the society – macro level, i.e. society level; meso level, i.e. school, teacher team; and the micro level, i.e. individual teacher (educational background) – can be expected to compete, converge, oppose each other, intersect or be intertwined. In short they may all be interconnected or even dependent on one another, and consequently the distinction between the macro, meso and micro level is mainly to be seen as an analytical distinction applied to facilitate the approach.

Methodology and methods

In a poststructuralist frame of reference the methodology and the method are intertwined on an analytical, strategic level (Esmark, Laustsen & Andersen, 2005). How

the researcher conducts the research and constructs the empirical data defines the researcher's position and the research field simultaneously. Choosing one method allows certain aspects and relations to appear at the expense of other aspects/relations. Ideally the construction itself needs to be deconstructed. In the present project the basic assumptions and choices, such as focusing on positioning (processes) and discourses, must entail an empirical approach that focuses on aspects relevant to these concepts within the programme setting. With regard to the following empirical issues my knowledge (constructions) about the interactive and reflective positioning (Davies & Harré, 1990) is based on observations done in the classroom (71 lessons) and at meetings (3) as well on interviews with teachers (3), students (9), a focus group interview with four students and numerous informal talks with students and with teachers. The conditions of possibility created by the programme setting are constructed by consulting documents, attending meetings and conducting interviews and informal talks with school staff.

The combination of a Foucauldian approach (genealogy) and ethnographical research within positioning theory may seem contradictory if ethnography is perceived as traditional ethnography, which is deeply rooted in modernism (Tamboukou & Ball, 2003). Influenced by the postmodern paradigm, however various postmodern ethnographies have emerged (Fontana, 2001, 1994). These ethnographies stress, for example, the status of the researcher and also share some of the same aspects as genealogy in that they:

> ... interrogate the validity and universal authority of scientific knowledge, adopt a context-bound critical perspective, transgress closed theoretical and methodological systems, point to the limits of dominant power/knowledge regimes, recover excluded subjects and silenced voices, highlight the centrality of the body in the sociohistorical analyses, restore the political dimension of research. (Tamboukou & Ball, 2003, pp. 3-4)

Although they point out these similarities, Tamboukou and Ball do not claim that the combination of genealogy and ethnography is indisputable; they characterize it as 'an 'intellectual border crossing' full of dangers' (ibid. p. 3). Within genealogy and traditional ethnography the understanding of power relations and the subject differ in that the former considers power to be everywhere and not possessed by anyone (Foucault, 2005b) and the subject as being constituted by/constituting discourses. The latter, in contrast considers power to be exercised over some individuals by other individuals or groups and it strives to uncover the intents and purposes of social actors that are considered to intervene in the making of history. Postmodern ethnographies may bridge the differences by emphasising Foucault's concept of resistance and e.g. continually interrogate and problematise the stories we are told and those we tell (Tamboukou & Ball, 2003). Thus, similar to other researchers (e.g. Laws & Davies, 2000; Brown, 2003; Middleton, 2003) I take up the challenge of doing border-crossing research – genealogy and postmodern ethnography – arguing that this is exactly a way to challenge the acknowledged knowledge within research, i.e. a way to fight the limitations of the dominant discourses and to create new ways of questioning 'reality', which according to Foucault is the task of academia (Foucault, 1994b).

Doing postmodern ethnography encompasses a persistent consciousness regarding the status of the researcher and the researcher's influence on the researched while doing interviews and observations. The interviews are partly semi-structured and partly narrative (Brinkmann & Tanggaard, 2010; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Staunæs & Søndergaard, 2005; Søndergaard, 2005). This is due to the postmodern perspective implying that the role of the interviewer and the interviewee are blurred and that the two

parties collaborate in constructing the narratives (Fontana, 2001). As a result, I strive to let the interviewee choose (partly) what is important to discuss and some of the questions are phrased as follows: 'Could you tell me about a good experience concerning ...?' Questions of this nature elicit replies containing 'how' or 'what' descriptions rather than the analytical responses why-questions bring out.

For classroom observations (Madsen, 2003; Andersen, 2005; Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2005) I sit in the back of the classroom (in different spots), focus on the interactions taking place and take notes on a laptop. The use of e.g. video or a Dictaphone might be helpful to hear what students and teachers say during lessons, but assistance of this kind would make no difference regarding the co-constructive role I play. The teachers may feel uncomfortable when they are being recorded and their focus on my presence seems to be much stronger. In one instance when I used a Dictaphone, the teacher lowered her voice so much that neither I nor the students could hear what she said. As a researcher I am part of the same discourses (constituted and constituting) as the students, teachers and supervisors, which means that when I do my research I unintentionally reinforce some discourses and suppress others. Furthermore, the knowledge produced by this project has the potential to influence some discourses and will, as such, be related to power relations (cf. Foucault, 2001).

The analytical strategy concerning the ethnographical part – relevant to the present article – focuses on how specific subjectivities are reinforced or emerge as well as on how they are being constituted and constituting themselves throughout positioning. This implies a focus on e.g. acknowledged and dismissed statements, student resistance and, regarding the organisation of the lesson, how the students are given or take up the positions made available to them. Specifically I look for regularities, binaries, established categories and ruptures. Then, based on the regularities, I suggest that various discourses are mobilised. However, referring to the above considerations concerning the status of the researcher, the process is constantly shadowed by the question: Who exactly is creating e.g. the binaries?

Preliminary issues: Competing discourses and the positioning of the students

Statements are frequently made concerning the self-understanding of the school involving 'we', and a certain vocabulary is recurrent. These statements are of a pedagogical nature. Throughout the years, several pedagogical development studies have been carried out at the school and according to the staff the results have been implemented in the organisation of the programme. The school has implemented several initiatives that support students, e.g. a mentor programme, and the focus on the pedagogical aspect is constant. Outlining the position of the social and health care schools within the system of vocational education, the director of the school states that the schools hold a politically neglected position even though they educate a much greater number of students than the other programmes in the vocational system. In doing so, the schools carry out a 'remarkable amount of pedagogical work', especially since many of the students enrolled have personal problems; come from a weak social background etc. The teachers interviewed also emphasised the pedagogical aspect. One teacher, Vivienne, explains:

> I think that as a school we succeed in meeting the students with an open mind; we are a school that takes in bilingual students [ethnic minorities] and students from a variety of cultural backgrounds from within the country (...) I think we succeed in making everyone

> feel that they can attend with their 'I', that they can be given the support they need to succeed – after all, the theoretical level within a single class varies greatly (...).

When they characterise the school, the director and the teachers never mention the topic elderly care; they all communicate within a pedagogical open-mindedness discourse instead. Given that the majority of the teachers have a background in the health care sector, this is unexpected. Similarly, when the teachers explain what they take into consideration when planning lessons, they focus on the pedagogical and individual aspects. Vivienne states, for example,

> When I plan the lessons I constantly try to have the present class in mind so I can ask myself 'what kind of a class is this? Do they like to debate? Do I have to discipline them? Are they able to work seriously on the topic or?' I try to focus on who they are and what's special about them (...).

Another set of statements that frequently recurs involves the dropout rate. The government discourse regarding the aim of 95 per cent of a youth cohort finishing a youth education is apparently mobilised within the school. Like the proceeding discourse, the anti-dropout discourse is mobilised at the school level, but contrary to the open-mindedness discourse, this discourse is obviously connected to a discourse also heavily mobilised within society.[3] The 95 per cent aim is reinforced by the way the school is financed in that funding is based directly on the number of students completing the programme. Moreover, if students drop out in the beginning of the course, they have to be replaced. If this is not possible, the number of students in subsequent classes must be higher. The head of the school focuses on retaining the students, obligating teacher teams to work to prevent students from dropping out. The pedagogical aspect and the anti-drop out aspect are not directly mixed by the staff and thus appear to be separate discourses. Nevertheless, being able to handle such a heterogeneous group of students is a prerequisite for reducing the dropout rate and means the discourses are interconnected. Underlining the pedagogical aspect separately can be perceived as making a virtue of necessity. At the school level, the discourses on open-mindedness and the dropout-rate are strongly mobilised, but classroom observations suggest that other discourses are also mobilised.

The observation period involved observing student behaviour in the classroom, including the degree to which they took an active part in the learning activities initiated by the teachers or the degree to which they paid attention to other activities such as Facebook. Furthermore, I observed student attitudes towards fellow students, observing whether they were including or excluding, for example when independently forming groups. Based on these observations I created the following *analytical* categories: active and excluding students; active and including students; quiet students and less or non-successful students. In line with the theoretical framework of this project, these categories must not be perceived as an assessment of the students' inner disposition. They serve as analytical tools to study student positioning. Choosing behaviour in class as the defining criteria for the categories avoided the use of ordinary categories such as *young students, students of ethnic origin* etc. Categories of the latter kind imply a level of homogeneity non-existent within the groups. The category 'quiet' in the following analysis only refers to in-class behaviour. In addition, a student can appear quiet *and* be excluding.

The constructions presented in the following suggest that these groups are positioned differently by teachers and that they respond differently to the positioning of the teachers. The teachers' positioning of the students appears to be related to a

mobilised 'health professionals' discourse. The health studies teachers in the two classes stress repeatedly that the students will have to be professional in their future jobs. One teacher, Dora, defines professional as:

> You must be able to "hide" the sad feelings [that stem from the poor situation the elderly are in] – you almost have to be actors; you have to get rid of your emotions by talking to your colleagues. We must be able to distinguish between professional and general care – how do we do that? (...) Professional care is contracted, general care is done out of sympathy.

And she also stresses the importance of being objective, for example by saying this to a student, 'Now you've started being subjective, stick to the objective comments''. This example suggests that in the process of becoming a professional, students must distance themselves from their personal experiences with caring and – in the event that they have work experience from the health sector – distance themselves from previous work experiences, which are not regarded as professional'. The latter comprises aspects of a mobilised discourse of 'development' (Dahl, 2005) embedded in the health discourse. During the theoretical course, the topic frequently comes up of how to motivate the elderly people and how to have a motivating conversation with them. Future care helpers must be aware of letting the people help themselves as much as possible in order for them to live as independently as possible:[4] Vivienne tells students that,

> Throughout your traineeship you must focus on people's resources (...) if you give their hard disk a day off, it won't function afterwards (...) As a care helper you work in an activating way, this is how you differ from temporary workers.

Thus, the discourse put forward by the teachers stresses the importance of being professional in a developmentally focused way that emphasises distancing oneself privately. This discourse entails a different positioning of the students.

Positioning of the students

Among the students, there is an ambitious, hard working group that is active in the classroom in an appropriate way, has little or no work experience and talks and answers questions within the same discourse as the teachers. Following the rules, they position themselves as 'competent students' (Laws & Davies, 2000; Davies, 2006; Claiborne et al., 2009). This group reads and refers to the educational materials and repeats during lessons what teachers have said in other lessons. Their answers are acknowledged by all of the teachers and their position as bright students is underscored when teachers ask other students to raise their hands. Dora requests, for example, 'Can someone else raise their hand?', and Vivienne says: 'Won't anybody else answer? I keep asking the same three students over and over again'. Thus, this group significantly positions itself and is positioned as excellent students, while this group simultaneously positions the teachers as experts (cf. Davies, 2001). These positionings, the interactive and the self-positioning, are constantly ongoing and the latter reoccurs in the student interviews. One student explains, 'I'm a perfectionist; I get up at five in the morning to study. I come here at 7:30 and when the others go home [2:10] I stay until 3-3:30'.

Another group of students who are older and have extensive work experience speak partly within the teachers' health discourse partly in opposition to it. Qua their experience, they possess a large amount of factual knowledge and they are familiar with the caring system itself. Their experiences, however do not always fit the reality the

teachers describe; sometimes they bring in their views and sometimes they retain their divergent opinions. When interviewed about this, two students explain:

> We are told that when you are a care helper you have to do this and that and – well, we will do that, but the actual work differs from theory (...) I'll bring the acquired knowledge with me, but I also know that I will have to sort out some things (...) We agree that motivating conversations are fine, but you might find yourself with someone who is of another opinion (...) and I'm not sure that when I'm 83 I'll want to listen to a care helper who tells me to go to an activity because I need to exercise etc. Maybe I want to be left in peace and I want others to accept that (...).

When commenting on how to phrase their answers during course, the students say, 'In real life we use general concepts, but here we have to use more specific vocabulary and we have discovered that this is what you do in a theoretical course, so that is what we do (...)'. These examples indicate a submission to the rules (Davies, 2006; Davies et al., 2006). In order to be recognised as a suitable care helper, students comply with course expectations.

When the teacher uses the term temporary workers she positions the workers as non-professionals; this positioning implies that their experience is regarded as unreliable. The teacher uses the word temporary even though, as is the case with one student, workers can have been employed in the sector for over twenty-five years. The general attitude appears to be that temporary workers have not gained professional insight and that you cannot expect them to have carried out their role as a care helper in the 'right way'. This positioning is sometimes challenged by the group and indicates a reciprocal positioning between the students with work experience and the teachers. The students, positioned as non-professionals, position the teachers as teachers who lack authentic hands-on knowledge. This power struggle can work to impede a fruitful relationship between the different types of knowledge.

The classroom positioning for quieter students (in the classroom) who do not raise their hands to answer questions is relatively negative merely because they are the polar opposite of the bright students. Nevertheless, according to the remarks quiet students make during interviews, they are quiet for a variety of reasons. Their lack of participation can stem e.g. from not paying attention because they are doing other things or from needing more time to think and respond. One woman who does not have Danish as her native tongue explains, 'I need more time to formulate an answer; while I am still thinking, they have moved on to the next question'. In an interview this same woman positions herself as competent and ambitious in any other ways. One quiet student explains in an interview that in the past she was demeaned, i.e. negatively positioned, for an extended period, which is why she does not raise her hand, '... when I'm in class and I want to say something, it's as if those [degrading] words come into my head and then and I cannot say anything'. Like the non-attentive students, these two women are positioned as not-so-bright students. Their examples also highlight how students are shaped by the past; how prior positioning is embedded in the current positions; and how students are already constituted as subjects.

Another significant positioning takes place for the quiet students when all of the students have to independently form small working groups. Sometimes the teachers make up the groups, but they generally leave it up to the students as the course goes on. The following example indicates how certain students are positioned in the negotiations about who should be in a group. The example also points out the excluding/including behaviour of different groups.

The teacher asks the students to form groups themselves but nobody answers. After repeating the question, the ambitious group that speaks using the teacher's discourse quickly forms a group on their own. The teacher then points at this group of students and at five other students of ethnic origin and says, 'Here are two groups'. From an observer's perspective this remark is off the mark because the students of ethnic origin did not signal that they wanted to form a group. The ambitious students then leave the class and the teacher also leaves to photocopy some papers.

A student from the older group with extensive work experience points at the students of ethnic origin and says, 'We'd like one of the girls to join us'. Two students of ethnic origin also join another group, leaving two students of ethnic origin alone to form their own group while all of the other groups consist of four or five people. Several times after all of the groups begin working, one of the students of ethnic origin who joined another group turns to the two people who were left out and asks them if she should join their group, an offer they refuse. After a while, the teacher returns and talks to each group one by one. The following conversation takes place when she talks to the group of two:

> Teacher: How come you are in such a small group?
>
> The students: The others formed groups.
>
> Teacher: And you didn't hang on to a group? You have to learn to do that. Don't just wait until somebody invites you into a group.
>
> The students: Next time.

This example indicates that some students take responsibility for including others and that other students simply form the strongest group possible. However, the overt idea of taking care of somebody, works to position 'the caring' as well as 'the cared for'. The caring students consolidate their position as strong and including, while the cared for are positioned as helpless students. In the group of students of ethnic origin, the same positioning takes place. Unlike the strong and including students, however, the caring student is not in a position to offer inclusion.

The process of handling how groups are formed can be called taking independent responsibility. This approach mobilises a pedagogical discourse that emphasises processes and derives from the pedagogy: Reform pedagogy (Hermann, 2007). This teaching approach stresses, for example that students must take responsibility for themselves. The personal competencies of independence and responsibility that students must develop (cf. the curriculum) also reflect this educational discourse which is strong in Denmark. Due to the empirical focus of this article on interactions, this aspect will not be explored further, but was briefly touched upon to point out assumed embeddings of interactions. By allowing students to independently handle the process of forming groups, the teacher sustains the students' established positions and ignores their previous positioning.

About the group forming processes varying opinions are revealed in the interviews: The ambitious group that speaks using the teacher's discourse definitely prefers to form its own groups: 'We [four students] like to be together; we are ambitious – it is about ambition – we write and we compare the notes. We don't want to frighten the others. We have formed a group; we are comfortable around each other (...)'.

The group of students with extensive work experience changes its attitude during the course. In the beginning they include students who are not attractive because of their

language difficulties or who have difficulties understanding the theoretical content. The teachers' decision to mix them with these students meets with their approval. By the end of the course, however, they prefer to form groups on their own that primarily include themselves. They think they have been exploited; they are frustrated, and state that from now on they will concentrate on their own learning process. The interviews indicate that at the end of the course all of the successful students – successful according to the teachers/their marks – prefer to form groups on their own. The less successful and the non-successful students prefer the teachers to be in charge. At the end of the theoretical course, two of the three non-successful students are told that they cannot continue and the third one is asked to start all over again. An additional four students have decided to drop out or to do the course again. The teachers see this as a normal situation. Vivienne explains, 'Well, I have to keep the students, but sometimes I think that we should not allow all of them to finish the programme'.

Discussion

Several discourses seem to be mobilised at different levels in the programme setting and some of them seem to compete with each other, while others seem to be intertwined. The open-mindedness and the anti-dropout discourses work together and emphasise the number of students who finish the programme. The former discourse seems to be part of the positioning of the school among other schools, while the latter one part of a financial discourse. At the class level, however these discourses seem to be opposed, in part, by the mobilised health professionals and the independent responsibility discourses. This mobilisation indicates that some teachers, who themselves are professionals in the health care sector, position the heterogeneous group of students being studied in such a way that an alliance comprised of the most resourceful students is established and sustained throughout the course. My preliminary constructions indicate that how the teachers position students at the micro level does not compensate for the differences between the students at the outset. Furthermore, a specific view of elderly care seems to be in play in the programme setting. Teaching within the health professional discourse, some teachers construe the care helper as activating and motivating helpers, while the elderly are simultaneously construed as objects for activation. The elderly are looked upon as a homogeneous group that must be activated and the teachers do not appear to be especially open to including the experiences students have from working. As a result the experienced students are positioned in a somewhat non-positive way, which is reflected in the group's feeling of not being appreciated. To conclude: Throughout the theoretical course some students catch and adopt the teachers´ discourse, and these students are appreciated by the teachers. The experienced students disagree with the teachers, however they understand how to comply with the course expectations, and consequently, they too, appear successful. In the organisation of the lessons, the group of students with quiet behaviour are not receiving the support they need in order to position themselves as competent students. Consequently, some students cannot hang on and they are told that they cannot continue, or they choose themselves to drop out. The students´ conditions of possibility are influenced throughout the theoretical course; student identity is shaped through appreciation of participation in the desired discourse and on the other hand through neglect of some students´ needs. I.e. governmental technologies, which involve processes of inclusion and exclusion, are at play in the programme. Considering the limitations of this article one can point to the fact that the

teachers are embedded in discourses and master narratives, just as the students are; this article does not examine this aspect.

Approaching the programme setting applying the theoretical and empirical framework outlined above creates the possibility of focusing on the students' (required) acquisition of a care helper identity. By taking on a positioning theory perspective that highlights the discursive embeddings of the students and the programme, this project contributes with a process perspective to the field of research related to care workers. The project considers identity to be socially constructed, which is also the case for e.g. the psycho-societal perspective, but the latter focuses on the individual. In contrast, the influence of discourses/master narratives on individuals is a central aspect of the present project. By combining this with a postmodern ethnographical approach, it is possible to question the otherwise seemingly naturalness that saturates the agency of the individuals and be 'sensitive to the missed agendas and categories that are hidden behind the centrality of the subjects of history' (Tamboukou & Ball, 2003, p. 10) without turning to inner psychological elements.

The constructions of the embedded discourses at play in the programme being studied open up for taking into consideration not only opposite or intersecting knowledge but also possibly knowledge that is silenced or dismissed. The aforementioned considerations may elicit reflections on the curriculum of the programme and the organisation of the lessons as well as the positioning of students. As the construction of student identities is closely linked to the construction of elderly identities, this project may also draw attention to and further question this aspect. The latter aspect, as well as how students are positioned in the traineeship, remains to be analysed and may be the subject of a future article.

Notes

[1] The article presents preliminary constructions, which are part of an ongoing PhD project. The entire project focuses on the development of students´ identity throughout a whole education programme, Social and Health Care Helper. The programme is part of the system of vocational education and training, and the course and training activities alternate between theory and on-the-job training. Begun in June 2009 and projected to conclude in May 2012, the case study used in the project includes two classes, and the empirical phase covers a full programme, 14 months.

[2] 'Contingent' meaning irregular, unpredictable but not arbitrary.

[3] e.g. the Danish Ministry of Education (2010) and the National Association of Municipalities (2010).

[4] This discourse is undoubtedly related to the goal of minimising the financial costs incurred by the increasing number of elderly in society, a topic that will not be discussed further in this paper.

Acknowledgements

This PhD project is co-financed by the Social- and Health Care School in Randers, the Municipality of Randers, the Region of Central Jutland and the Danish Research Council.

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Aims & Scope

The European journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults (RELA) is a refereed academic journal creating a forum for the publication of critical research on adult education and learning. It has a particular focus on issues at stake for adult education and learning in Europe, as these emerge in connection with wider international and transnational dynamics and trends. Such a forum is important at a time when local and regional explorations of issues are often difficult to foreground across language barriers. As academic and policy debate is increasingly carried out in the English language, this masks the richness of research knowledge, responses and trends from diverse traditions and foci. The journal thus attempts to be linguistically 'open access'. Whilst creating a forum for international and transnational debate, contributions are particularly welcome from authors in Europe and other locations where English is not the first language.

RELA invites original, scholarly articles that discuss the education and learning of adults from different academic disciplines, perspectives and traditions. It encourages diversity in theoretical and methodological approach and submissions from non-English speakers. Contributions will be subject to a rigorous peer review process. Clarity and conciseness of thought are crucial requirements for publication.

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ISSN 2000-7426