




ENLIVEN

Encouraging Lifelong Learning for an Inclusive & Vibrant Europe



Reflecting on the impLOED recommendations: a researcher's perspective

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MY RESEARCH INTERESTS



- Long-term interest in participation in adult education, mainly in Europe
- Worked with large scale surveys, including the Labour Force Survey, the Adult Education Survey and the Survey of Adult Skills
- Expertise-building on the conceptualisation of participation in adult → insights of 10 years research brought together in a book



PARTICIPATION STUDIES



- Focus of participation studies in adult education until the 2000s was very much on social psychological explanations:
 - ✓ Motivation
 - ✓ Attitudes
 - ✓ Intentions to participate
- strong 'individual' focus
- the field has moved on: put into context



PARTICIPATION STUDIES



- Lifelong learning participation in a changing policy context: an interdisciplinary theory
- Published by Palgrave-Macmillan in 2016

→impLOED:

Policy recommendations at various levels are indeed needed

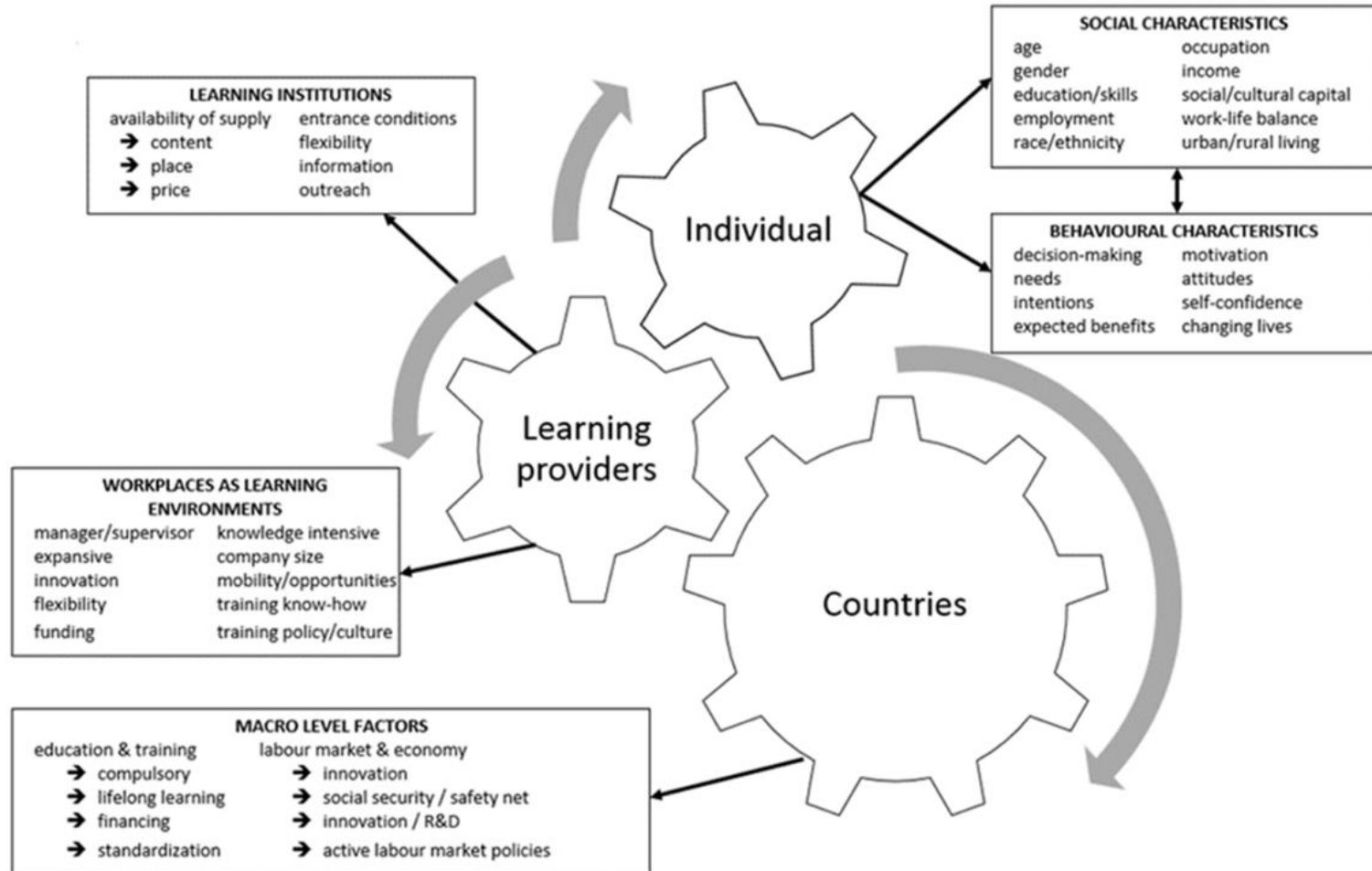
see model next slide



UNDERSTANDING PARTICIPATION



Boeren
(2016)





impLOED: EUROPEAN LEVEL



- Interesting focus on benchmark on learners with low qualifications – core policy method
- Benchmarks tend to be formulated at the ‘**micro**’ level, what would be the feasibility of ‘meso’ and ‘macro’ level benchmarks? E.g. investment targets?
- Europe is still a very **diverse continent** with North-South-East-West patterns, culturally embedded practices might be hard to change



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- Non-formal education: **broad concept**, need to further diversify? 75 percent of non-formal education in Europe is work-related!
- Learning for active citizenship, democracy and citizenship: contrasted to **employability** → dichotomy or integration of concepts?
- Basic skills standards: validation and recognition of skills as important theme – how far will this be achieved by initiatives like **Upskilling Pathways**?



impLOED: NATIONAL LEVEL



- Reach out to under-represented groups: problem of **'parking' and 'creaming'** → targeting those who will appear as successful cases in statistics
- Underline the benefits of adult education: much of this evidence is cross-sectional in nature, not longitudinal, be cautious we do not promise the outcomes of adult education to be a 'silver bullet' → non-participation is outcome of a **negative cost-benefit analysis!**



impLOED: NATIONAL LEVEL



- Analyse and remove barriers and financially invest: strong focus on financial frameworks. What about '**time**'? Lack of time as major reason for non-participation.
- Time barriers are very gendered: women constrained by family barriers, men by busy work schedules → making time for adult education in the often conflicted **work-life balance!**



impLOED: NATIONAL LEVEL



- Enable progression: countries with low participation rates tend to have **weak levels of provision**: e.g. visible in Eastern European countries – lack of basic skills education (Boeren et al., 2017)
- Need for geographical spread – more educational offers needed in **rural areas** → bringing adult education to people



impLOED: NATIONAL LEVEL



- Integrate adult education in existing strategies: adult education research lacks insight in the extent to which alternative services or activities potentially generate similar outcomes – e.g. sports, choirs, volunteering, ...
- What are complementary activities and what are competitive activities? Rethink this in terms of time: 24 hours per day, 168 hours per week – time is limited!



impLOED: NATIONAL LEVEL



- Inequality, poverty, being low-qualified, cumulative disadvantages ... are often **intergenerational**. Need for strong links with compulsory/initial schooling system:
 - ✓ avoiding vulnerability among children/teenagers
 - ✓ reach out to parents through children's compulsory participation in learning
 - ✓ adult education as compensation versus accumulation



implOED: adult education practice



- Include learners voices: Importance of **individualised approaches** targeted towards the needs of learners
- Recent research has demonstrated that disadvantaged learners in different European countries share similar experiences, with a strong need for individualised approaches to match their needs



implOED: adult education practice



- **Confidence building** as one of the major areas of attention, role of adult educator vital in setting up a welcoming classroom environment
 - Reach out to underrepresented groups: many **good practices** can be identified and adult learners are generally happy
- real problem is low participation rates, difficulty of getting vulnerable adults into adult education



CONCLUSIONS



- Longitudinal data collection needs to be organised at the European level to be clearer about long-term benefits, e.g. AES, LFS, ...
- This is needed to make sure society can be more upfront about the benefits of adult education
- At the local level, more follow-up of participants is recommended



CONCLUSIONS



- We cannot create more ‘objective’ time, but need to search for ways in which we can include adult education in our lives
- Financial support is important, but is it enough to overcome time and confidence related barriers?
- Countries with low participation rates could look into their spread of adult education provision