AN ANALYSIS OF EUROPE WITHIN ADULT EDUCATION LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT: This literature review analyzes how Europe is situated within adult education literature from 2005 to present. Europe as a place and an idea influences and is influenced by adult education as well as historical and current events. The conceptualization of Europe within the dynamic field of international adult education is a necessary realm of investigation in order to gauge trends in scholarly work to inform future inquiry. The literature related to adult education and Europe was analyzed to identify main themes and subthemes. Main themes include Europe situated as a space, a standard, and a voice. These themes lead to a discussion of the ideal vs. dominance, insider vs. outsider, and third space. The literature connotes specific centering with regard to context and geography suggesting a need to further explore lived experiences and worldviews, which may be less known or marginalized at the intersection of Europe and adult education.

Regions within international adult education fluctuate in organizational and strategic importance. Cavanagh's (2015) article "'Non-strategic' Eastern Europe and the Fate of the Humanities" scrutinizes what makes an academic area "non-strategic" in United States higher education. Part of Cavanagh's analysis is that the non-strategic label is a result of neoliberalism, which adult education scholars have examined in-depth (Leach, 2010; McLean, 2015). In addition to this critique of neoliberalism within higher education, I argue that the adult education field needs a current and broader picture of Europe within the literature in order to better map Europe and its relationship to our diverse foci within adult education. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to describe and analyze how Europe is situated within adult education literature.

Europe as a place and an idea influences and is influenced by adult education and historical and current events. At present, we are in the midst of Brexit, the well-known vote of the United Kingdom of Great Britain to leave the European Union, a migrant crisis in Europe, and a divided populace in European nations and the United States. The question, *How is Europe situated within adult education literature?* is of great interest to scholars whose work is based in European spaces. Such an analysis also may provide starting points to further explain and ground our work, including program planning for adult learners, in international spaces in an era of program elimination and isolationist movements to turn inward.

As European outsiders, insiders, and those walking a space in between, we have more to unpack about Europe in relationship to our adult education practice and research. I purposefully leave Europe undefined here so that the emergent concept as a focus of this paper develops within the analysis presented. The methodology of the analysis will be addressed first followed by a discussion of the thematic findings of a space, a standard, and a voice. Finally, points of discussion supported by a concept map, limitations, and implications will be explored.

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Methodology

The keywords "Europe" and "adult education" or "adult learning" were used to identify peer-reviewed texts with keywords as well as within abstracts. The parameters of 2005 – 2016 were used in order to hone the analysis on the recent geopolitical and social context. Texts that made a tangential reference to Europe without an incorporation of Europe into the whole of the analysis were excluded. Subsequently, 198 texts were selected for the analysis. Concept mapping (Carnot, 2006; Novak, 2010) was utilized as a strategy to organize the data into themes and sub-themes related to the main focus of analysis: How is Europe situated within adult education literature? This visual organization process facilitated the coding and a view of the interrelationship between themes.

Findings

Three main themes were identified in the thematic analysis: Europe was situated as a space, a standard, and a voice within adult education literature.

Space

Europe as a space emerged as the first theme. Within the literature, this space is addressed as a geographic area (Beblavy, Thum, & Potjagailo, 2014; Szakos, 2014) or a region of adult education partnerships (Billett, 2014; Dang, 2013; Garavan, Wilson, Cross, & Carbery, 2008; Hunter & Austin, 2015; Piazza, 2010).

How Europe is discussed as a space within adult education varies. In empirical studies on educational attainment, certain European countries may be grouped based on findings, for example, Nordic, Central European, and Ireland and the United Kingdom (Beblavy et al., 2014). Central and Eastern Europe and South Eastern Europe may be considered different geographic regions as well such as in the case of science education reform (Kapanadze & Eilks, 2014) and lifelong learning advocacy (Dimitrova, 2007). Literature focusing on the European Union (EU) (Szakos, 2014) may address Europe, but not all EU countries may be included. For example, Stanziola's (2011) study examining issues of monitoring and evaluation of lifelong learning in public libraries includes twelve European Union countries. How each independent nation state is situated within "the European setting" (Avis, Canning, Fisher, Morgan-Klein, & Simmons, 2012, p. 187) or "European space" (Lareki, de Morentin, & Amenabar, 2010, p. 491) is important within the literature as well, such as in the case of vocational educators in England and Scotland (Avis et al., 2012), ICT training for faculty in the autonomous Basque region of Northern Spain (Lareki et al., 2010), the recognition of experiential learning in France (Mehaut & Lecourt, 2009), and participation in continuing education in Germany (Ozturk & Kaufmann, 2009).

Regions of educational partnerships also comprised a space situated in Europe. These educational partnerships between continents, such as Asia and Europe (Dang, 2013); within Europe, such as European Union member state initiatives informed by the European Commission's Action Plan on Adult Learning (European Commission, 2007 as

cited in Buiskool, van Lakerveld, & Broek, 2009) or learning regions within Europe (Piazza, 2010); or in virtual or on-line spaces (Hunter & Austin, 2013; Manning, 2007). In a postmodern analysis, Europe may refer to a connecting space for adult learning in which Europe is a "learning region between pedagogy and economy" (Piazza, 2010, p. 402). "Learning cities and regions" (Preisinger-Kleine, 2013, p. 521) are also indicative of how Europe is situated within adult education literature. Educational partnerships may transcend the boundaries of the continent or the EU and represent Europe as a connector of ideas in a specific space.

Standard

Europe as a standard within the realm of adult education emerged as the second theme. Within the literature, a standard is defined as a policy (Alquézar Sabadie, Castaño Muñoz, Puni, Redecker, & Vuorikari, 2014; Biesta, 2006; Johnson, 2013; Lee, Thayer, & Madyun, 2008), a benchmark (Ala-Mutka, Gaspar, Kismihok, Suurna, & Vehovar, 2010; Boeren, 2012), or a framework (Bohlinger, 2012; Deissinger, 2009; Pirrie & Thoutenhoofd, 2013; Tierney & Clarke, 2008; Young, 2008).

Policy most often was referred to as a European policy (Alquézar Sabadie et al., 2014) related to various areas of adult education. For example, the European Union approach to open educational resources (OER) (Alquézar Sabadie et al., 2014) is an example of a policy impacting adult education and learning. European Commission programmes related to agreements such as the Bologna Process are also a focus on the European as a standard. Johnson (2013) discusses the Bologna process as an agreement to establish qualifications within European countries related to higher education. This process impacts adult education in areas such as library science and information studies (Johnson, 2013). Lifelong learning policies are another example of European Union policy that impacts adult education (Lee, Thayer, & Madyun, 2008) and agenda setting for policy, which have been critiqued by some for lack of a democratic approach (Biesta, 2006).

With regard to a benchmark, European is often determined as a benchmark to which countries need to maintain or strive to reach. This benchmark refers mainly to those within the European Union or those that aim to be part of the European Union. For example, Ala-Mutka et al. (2010) analyze the status of eLearning in ten European Union member states. They refer to existing digital divides as related to economic, regional, and social divides within some member states and discuss the ideal condition in information and communication technology (ICT) skills as one in which new member states such as Estonia, Hungary, and Slovenia still are "catching up to older member states" (Ala-Mutka et al., 2010, p. 494). In addition, there are European benchmarks on adult lifelong learning participation such as the Eurostat Adult Education Survey, with which Boeren (2014) notes some limitations and weaknesses for policy development. Therefore, the established European benchmarks also are debated within the literature.

A European framework is an undergirding system that may be formalized or simply considered a European approach informing a standard. Bohlinger (2012) discusses the challenges for European frameworks and lifelong learning and suggests motives to

participate in formal adult education are impacted by "labour market, education, and social policy" (p. 279) in a nation state, challenging the overall European approach, which Young (2008) argues should be treated as an important threat to social cohesion. Frameworks also may connote a perspective or philosophy to which European countries "need to cope" (Deissinger, 2009, p. 1) in areas such as vocational education and training and lifelong learning (Pirrie & Thoutenhoofd, 2013). European frameworks may be those instituted in agreements among individual nation states and are examined within the experiences of respective countries such as Ireland in the case of further education and training (Tierney & Clarke, 2008).

Voice

Europe as a voice emerged as the third theme around three sub-categories: a voice of solidarity (Boeren, Nicasise, & Baert, 2010; Castaño Muñoz, Redecker, Vuorikari, & Punie, 2013; Gornitzka, 2010; Harris, 2012; Lundvall, Rasmussen & Lorenz, 2008; Macha & Bauer, 2009; Negt, 2008), a voice of colonialism (Beyer, 2010; Geertz, 2011; Glasson, Mhango, Phiri, & Lanier, 2010; Knijnik, 2007); and a voice on the margins (Borg & Mayo, 2008; Milic, 2013; Zarifis, 2009; Zinser, 2015).

Europe as a voice of solidarity refers to a European perspective (Lundvall, Rasmussen & Lorenz, 2008; Macha & Bauer, 2009), a Europe of knowledge (Gornitzka, 2010), a European vision (Harris, 2012), or a European identity (Negt, 2008). Within the literature, Europe as a voice of solidarity is the connection to shared values and beliefs. For example, participation in adult education as a value is part of the European voice (Boeren, Nicaise, & Baert, 2010). Planning for open education and adult learning while avoiding social exclusion is a European vision (Castaño Muñoz, Redecker, Vuorikari, & Punie, 2013; Harris, 2012). The diversity in Europe and nation states comprising Europe is addressed; however, a European perspective is one that connects all of Europe through educational "cultures of collaboration" (Lundvall et al., 2008, p. 681), social justice (Macha & Bauer, 2009), and focusing on real world problems in education as a principle (Macha & Bauer, 2009). This concept of a European identity is a democratic voice that positively aims towards and embraces "political, social, and cultural unity" (Negt, 2008, p. 744) in Europe.

However, literature focusing on colonialism views the solidarity of a European vision in adult education as a voice that has overshadowed other voices. Europeans or European approaches to adult education are critiqued as voices having silenced indigenous voices in the United States (Beyer, 2010; Geertz, 2011) as well as regions of Africa, for example, in sustainability science education (Glasson et al., 2010) and teacher education in Lesotho (Griffin, 2009). The critique within the literature is that European vision has become that of a Eurocentric discourse within all areas of adult education such as mathematics instruction in Brazil (Knijnik, 2007). Therefore, Europe often is situated as the voice of a colonial power in countries having experienced European colonialism.

Voices on the margins are those European voices that are a part of Europe, but are not as dominant and in many ways seem to be asking to be heard. For example, several authors

(Borg & Mayo, 2008; Zarifis, 2009) argue that Southern Europe's voice has not been fully incorporated into EU policy and that Nordic and Central European voices are those that have been the major focus in areas such as non-vocational adult learning. Borg and Mayo (2008) also address migration from the South to the North as indicative of existing economic opportunities and divisions. As another example of a voice on the margins, Milic (2013) describes the twenty-first century university and the concept of lifelong learning in Montenegro. He problematizes the current situation in adult education and describes transitioning to the future of a European standard in which the university's role in the positioning of adult education and lifelong learning is ambiguous.

In other cases, the author is the voice of an outsider for a European experience on the margins, such as in the case of the analysis of vocational education and training in Ukraine (Zinser, 2015). The article provides the voice of a country; however, statements such as "Ukraine is struggling to establish itself as an independent, modern country" (Zinser, 2015, p. 685) ask the reader how the writer's positionality of an outsider looking in impacts the analysis and may situate the country's experience on the margins. Adult educators may be positioned as a European voice on margins and Nicoll and Edwards (2012) argue that their voices need to be included as voices in the development in the push for adult educator standards.

The main findings of how Europe is situated in adult education literature within the three main themes of space, standard, and voice have several interconnected points of discussion and areas for potential research that will be explored next.

Discussion

Europe as a space, standard, and voice provide important areas for discussion to help inform future directions in the adult education field as we situate our work and research. Figure 1 provides a concept map of the previous findings and this discussion section.

Throughout the literature, the thematic tension between the representation of Europe as an ideal and Europe as dominance reoccurred. Adult education projects aim to facilitate the development of the ideal European, democratic citizen who has access, education, and opportunity. European, often specifically European Union, initiatives aim to encompass common European ideals, beliefs, and values. These initiatives can be understood as a peace project informed by the experiences of two world wars in the twentieth century. However, this ideal also was described as a kind of adult education standard to which the Central, Eastern, and Southeastern European countries needed to "catch up" (Ala-Mutka et al., 2010). This adult education benchmark often recognizes that lived experiences of Central, Eastern, and Southeastern European countries were different from those in the west in the form of Soviet domination or authoritarian governments. However, researchers may wish to further deconstruct statements of "catching up" to better understand what it is Central, Eastern, and Southeastern European countries wish to catch up to and how they view their contributions to Europe to which others may wish to aspire. How are these ideals incorporated into shared adult education

standards, benchmarks, or frameworks? How are those outside of the EU part of Europe? These questions pose areas for further exploration in adult education.
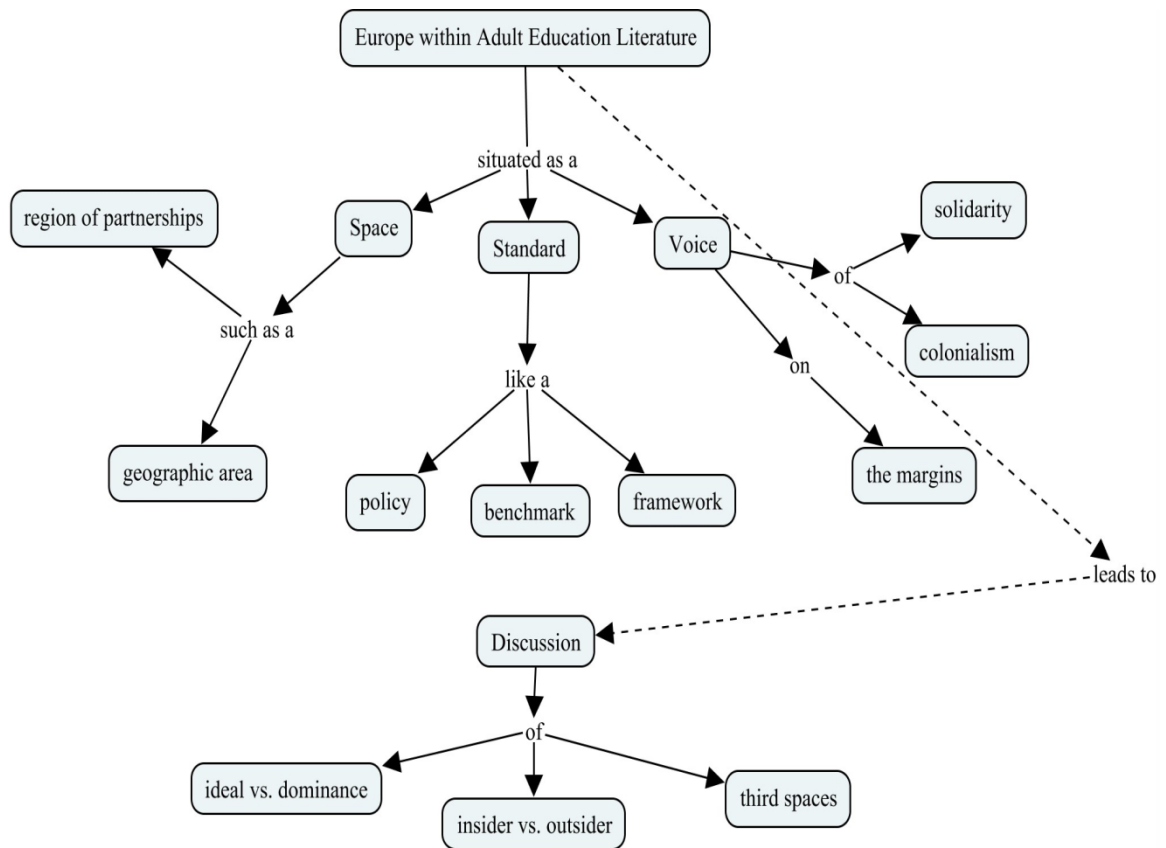

Figure 1. Concept map of findings and discussion

The tension between insider and outsider within the concept of Europe is present within the analysis as well. As adult education researchers and practitioners, this literature review prompts the question: How do we divide European spaces, how do we label them, and why? Who is inside and who is outside Europe deserves greater attention, particularly if Europe as an ideal transcends geography. Parameters of inclusion in studies are not always stated clearly, which may limit participation of some EU member states and nations outside of those member states. In addition, groups who may be at risk of social exclusion most often are addressed in empirical studies without the inclusion of the voices of individuals within these groups. Therefore, more in-depth analysis on how we decide who matters as Europe deserves attention.

The tension between the insider and outsider may lead to a third space, or an in between space, in which authors, practitioners, and concepts reside. Insiders, outsiders, and those on the margins can form new, adult education models of reciprocity to work and research in educational partnerships. Within those spaces, we may have an opportunity for incorporating additional spaces, standards, and voices. For example, Milic (2013)

discusses lifelong learning strategies in transition in Montenegro. How can we incorporate additional voices of adult education in transition? Zinser (2015) writes as an outsider about Ukraine, but what would the piece look like co-authored with a Ukrainian counterpart? Therefore, this third space could bridge the insider and outsider voices to create something new.

The discussion of the ideal vs. dominance, insider vs. outsider, and third spaces may give us ways of more contextual ways of thinking about our research and practice related to Europe. Program planning, curriculum design, and nonformal education could be guided by concepts presented within this literature review.

Limitations

The strength of this literature review and analysis is that it provides a broad lens through which to view how Europe is situated within adult education literature; however, additional in-depth analysis is needed on each thematic category. In addition, the analysis did not take into consideration white papers and academic journals of nation state countries written in languages other than English. Therefore, more specific inquiry building on the questions and themes raised should examine additional works in order to build on the concept map of themes and discussion.

Implications and Conclusion

This literature review focused on how Europe is situated within adult education literature 2005-present. Main themes include Europe situated as a space, a standard, and a voice. These themes lead to a discussion of the ideal vs. dominance, insider vs. outsider, and third space. The literature connotes specific centering with regard to context and geography, specifically EU and Western European standards, suggesting a need to further explore lived experiences and worldviews, which may be less known or marginalized at the intersection of Europe and adult education. Additional research and practical guides for novices and experts could focus on specific program planning within third spaces in order to bridge the ideal vs. dominance and insider vs. outsider paradigms situated in Europe.

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