



***(Dis)advantaged but where:
The social embeddedness of the influence of social and
cultural capital on individual participation in
adult education***

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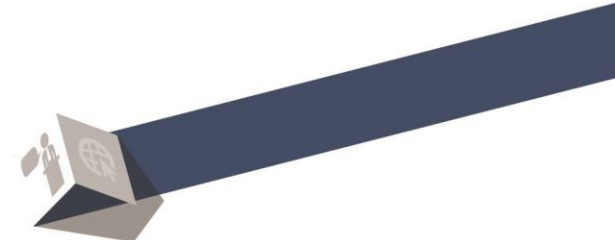
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- 



Introduction (1)

Background

Previous research has shown that people's agency to participate in adult education is influenced by:

- ❑ **a wide range of micro-level factors:** age, highest educational attainment, labour market status, occupation, etc. (OECD 2003; Roosmaa and Saar 2012).
- ❑ **different macro-level determinants:** GDP, innovativeness, overall participation rate, employment rate, ALMPs and characteristics of the educational system (e.g. Wolbers 2005; Groenez et al. 2007).
- ❑ **factors at different levels** – micro, meso and macro (e.g. Boeren 2017; Lee 2018; Lee and Desjardins 2019).

However,

to the best of our knowledge, the literature includes only scarce differentiated analyses that take into account either the interaction between micro and macro factors or the heterogeneous nature of adult education (e.g. Dämmrich et al. 2014; Cabus et al. 2020).

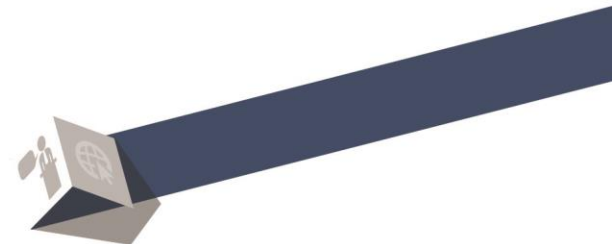




Introduction (2)

Aim

to analyse how the effects of micro factors are embedded in different socio-economic, institutional and cultural milieus for both formal and non-formal education and training.

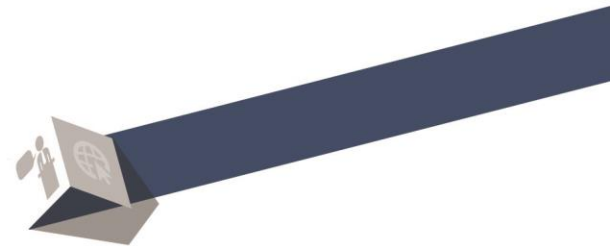




Theoretical considerations (1)

In order to achieve this aim we rely on two theoretical perspectives:

- the capability approach of Amartya Sen (2009)**
- the embeddedness approach of Granovetter (1985, 1992)**





Theoretical considerations (2)

The capability approach

- ❑ is a social justice normative theoretical framework which was first introduced by Nobel prize-winning economist Amartya Sen.
- ❑ is based on a view of living seen as a combination of various 'doings and beings' (called 'functionings'), with quality of life to be assessed in terms of the capability to achieve valuable functionings (Sen 1993, p. 31). Whereas the concept of 'functionings' reflects the various things that a person may value being or doing (eg. being well-nourished, being happy), person's 'capability' refers to the alternative combinations that are feasible for a person to achieve.
- ❑ acknowledges that a person's capability set depends on a variety of factors, "including personal characteristics and social arrangements" (Sen 1999, p. 33). These factors are called 'conversion factors' and refer to those circumstances, which influence how a person can be, or is, free to convert the characteristics of a good or service into a functioning (Robeyns 2005).





Theoretical considerations (3)

The capability approach

We share Unterhalter's view (2007, p. 100) that the capability approach:

“is more than simply a proposal to focus on people's capabilities; it also entails a critical engagement with all social, cultural, and other factors that shape people's preferences, expectations, and perceptions, and thus influence which choices are made from the freedoms that we have”.

However, we are also aware that **the capability approach fails to fully capture the interactive relationship between individual capabilities and social structures** (Ibrahim 2006) and it **“is unclear how the conversion factors combine with each other”** (Chiappero et al. 2018, pp. 231–232).

Given this, we think that there is a need to further strengthen, both theoretically and empirically, this embeddedness aspect of the capability approach – crucial as it is in the analysis of participation in adult education.

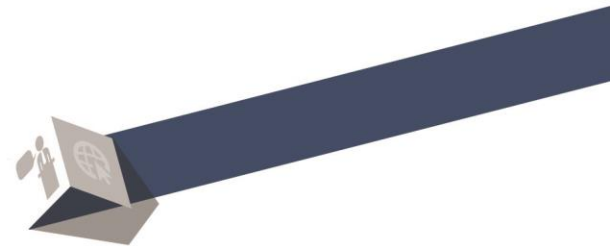




Theoretical considerations (4)

The embeddedness approach

- ❑ assumes that all human actions are socially situated and human actors do not act as atomised entities.
- ❑ goes beyond the ‘structure vs. agency’ opposition and provides a framework to account for both the constraining and enabling effects of social environments on different phenomena situated within them.
- ❑ points to the social determination of the way education as an individual action and outcome or as a social institution is realised – through the social relations and structures from which it has emerged and in which it is situated (Granovetter 1985, 1992)



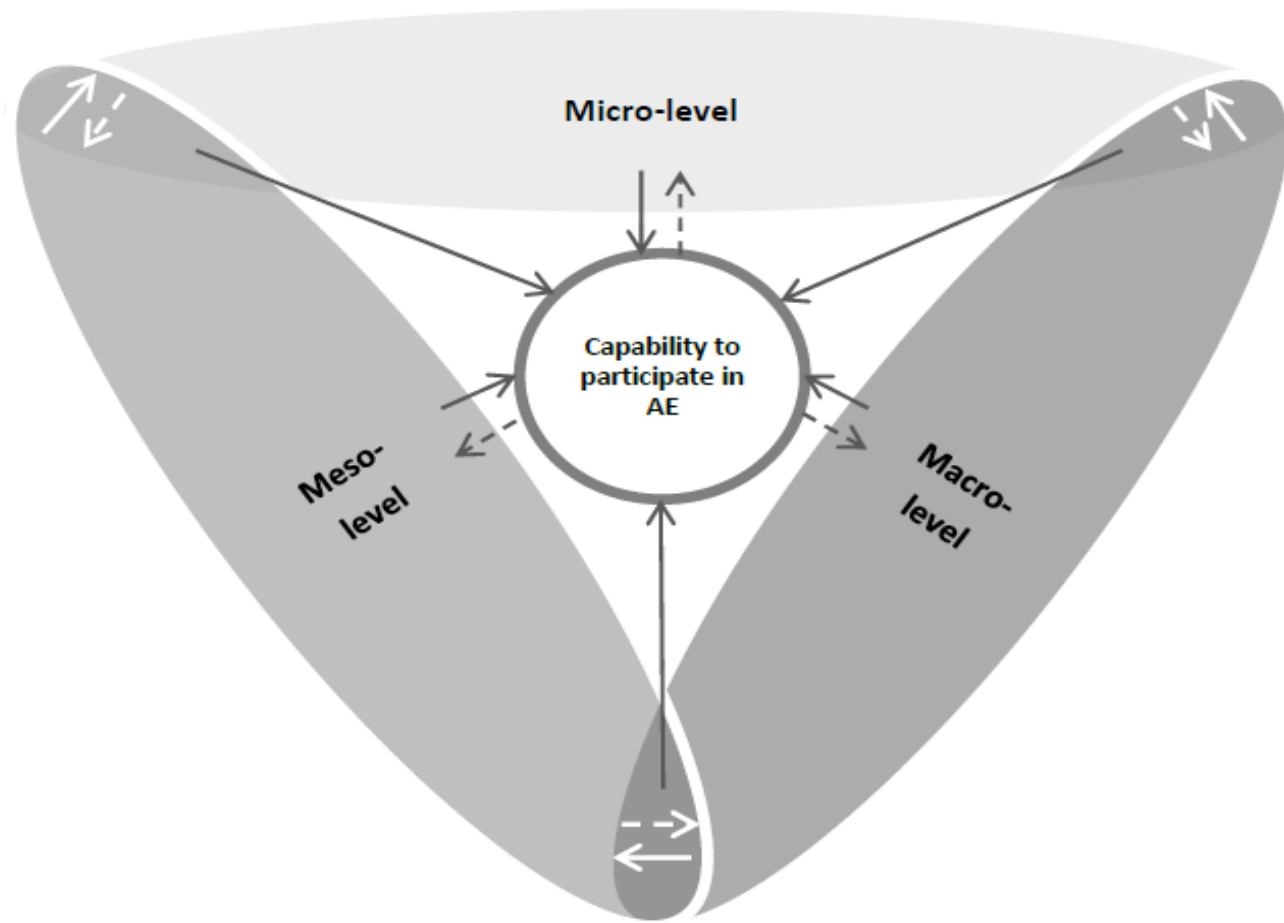


Theoretical considerations (5)

- ❑ We define *the capability to participate in adult education as a person's freedom to be involved in adult education that s/he has reason to value.*
- ❑ An assessment of the capability to participate would, therefore, involve analysing *both constraining and enabling factors* that might affect the freedom of a person to attend various forms of adult education.
- ❑ Building on that – and following Robeyns' (2017, p. 117, emphasis in the original) requirement that we should “*be clear when something is a social structure that is shaping our capabilities, rather than a capability itself*” – we have developed **a model which illustrates the embeddedness of the capability to participate in adult education.**



Model of social embeddedness of the capability to participate in adult education (AE)





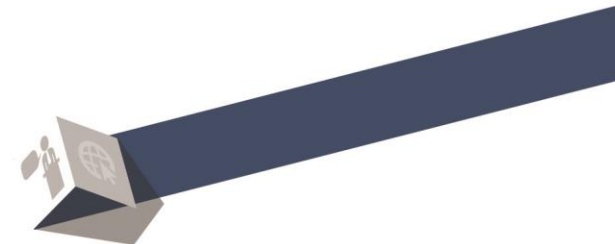
Methodology (1)

Data

- ❑ Adult Education Survey 2016
- ❑ Macro-level data from various sources (eg. Eurostat, OECD)

Limitations

- ❑ 29 countries: 27 EU countries (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom), Norway, and Switzerland.
- ❑ Young adults (25-34 years old).
- ❑ One of the features of the capability is that it is not directly measurable. As such, most scholars evaluate outcomes (functionings) and draw conclusions about the capability of people.





Methodology (2)

Variables

Dependent variables

- whether people have participated in at least one non-formal education or training activity during the last 12 months (1) or not (0).
- whether people have participated in at least one formal educational activity during the last 12 months (1) or not (0).

Independent variables at individual level:

- gender* – 0 for male, 1 for female;
- having a higher education degree as an indicator of cultural capital* – 1 for yes (ISCED 2011 5–7) and 0 for no (ISCED 2011 0–4); and
- social background* measured by parents' education as an indicator of social capital – 0 for low social background, including persons whose parents have no higher education, and 1 for high social background, including people who have at least one parent with higher education.





Methodology (3)

Independent variables at country level:

- ❑ As an indicator for the country's socio-economic context we have used *level of innovation*, measured at country level according to the Innovation index as of 2015 (European Union 2017, p. 90).
- ❑ We capture institutional educational context with level of educational stratification, measured with *educational selectivity – first age at selection in the education system* (OECD, PISA 2015 Database).
- ❑ As an indicator of the cultural context we have used one important cultural value – *generalised trust*. *Generalised trust* was measured at country level as the proportion of those who answered 'Most people can be trusted' in the European Values Study.


Control variables:

- ❑ *age (years)*; *current labour market status* (0 for full-time employed; 1 for part-time employed; 2 for unemployed; 3 for inactive); *net monthly household income* (5 quintile groups); *marital status* (0 for not living in a consensual union; 1 for living in a consensual union), *economic growth* as real GDP growth rate (Eurostat) and *vocational prevalence* as the percentage of all students in upper secondary education enrolled in vocational programmes (UNESCO).

Method


- ❑ Random intercept logit models






Influence of adults' individual characteristics and country's level of innovation on participation in formal and non-formal education and training (AES 2016, odds ratios & st. err.)

	Non-formal education			Formal education		
	Model2a	Model2b	Model2c	Model2a	Model2b	Model2c
Female vs. Male	1.013 (0.026)	1.020 (0.026)	1.018 (0.026)	0.901** (0.034)	0.892** (0.032)	0.895** (0.033)
Having higher education vs. not	2.049** (0.056)	2.034** (0.056)	2.047** (0.056)	2.165** (0.082)	2.232** (0.087)	2.160** (0.082)
High social background vs. low	1.385** (0.041)	1.386** (0.041)	1.375** (0.041)	1.511** (0.057)	1.509** (0.057)	1.551** (0.062)
Level of innovation	1.670** (0.164)	1.688** (0.165)	1.712** (0.168)	1.577** (0.136)	1.651** (0.143)	1.594** (0.136)
Level of innovation X Female	1.078** (0.029)			0.970 (0.033)		
Level of innovation X Higher education		1.065* (0.029)			0.885** (0.030)	
Level of innovation X High social background			1.042 (0.031)			0.927* (0.033)
Intraclass correlation	0.066	0.066	0.067	0.049	0.049	0.049



Influence of adults' individual characteristics and country's educational selectivity on participation in formal and non-formal education and training (AES 2016, odds ratios & st. err.)

	Non-formal education			Formal education		
	Model2a	Model2b	Model2c	Model2a	Model2b	Model2c
Female vs. Male	1.036 (0.027)	1.035 (0.027)	1.037 (0.027)	0.886** (0.033)	0.902** (0.033)	0.902** (0.033)
Having higher education vs. not	2.033** (0.056)	2.029** (0.056)	2.037** (0.056)	2.159** (0.082)	2.171** (0.083)	2.160** (0.082)
High social background vs. low	1.398** (0.042)	1.400** (0.042)	1.397** (0.042)	1.512** (0.058)	1.511** (0.058)	1.518** (0.058)
Age of selection	0.834 (0.125)	0.840 (0.126)	0.853 (0.128)	1.165 (0.135)	1.324* (0.154)	1.333* (0.154)
Age of selection X Female	1.058* (0.025)			1.211** (0.042)		
Age of selection X Higher education		1.067* (0.027)			0.956 (0.033)	
Age of selection X High social background			1.023 (0.028)			0.934+ (0.033)
Intraclass correlation	0.128	0.128	0.128	0.078	0.078	0.078



Influence of adults' individual characteristics and country's level of generalised trust on participation in formal and non-formal education and training (AES 2016, odds ratios & st. err.)

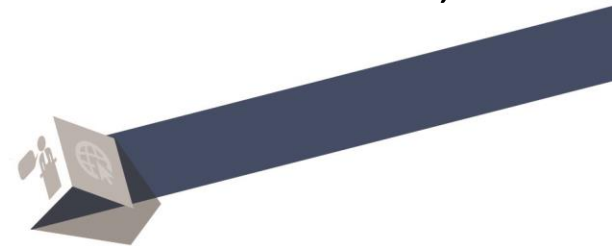
	Non-formal education			Formal education		
	Model2a	Model2b	Model2c	Model2a	Model2b	Model2c
Female vs. Male	1.015 (0.026)	1.019 (0.026)	1.018 (0.026)	0.894** (0.034)	0.894** (0.032)	0.895** (0.033)
Having higher education vs. not	2.047** (0.056)	2.040** (0.056)	2.047** (0.056)	2.169** (0.082)	2.244** (0.088)	2.161** (0.082)
High social background vs. low	1.386** (0.041)	1.388** (0.041)	1.380** (0.041)	1.508** (0.057)	1.505** (0.057)	1.558** (0.063)
Generalised trust	1.357** (0.151)	1.384** (0.153)	1.394** (0.154)	1.570** (0.103)	1.660** (0.108)	1.620** (0.105)
Generalised trust X Female	1.073** (0.026)			1.001 (0.032)		
Generalised trust X Higher education	1.037 (0.026)			0.899** (0.029)		
Generalised trust X High social background				1.026 (0.028)		
Intraclass correlation	0.102	0.102	0.102	0.034	0.033	0.033



Discussion of the results (1)

By bridging the capability approach and the embeddedness approach and by testing the theoretical framework empirically, our paper:

- ❑ Develops a more comprehensive framework for analysing the capability to participate in adult education while highlighting its social embeddedness.
- ❑ Demonstrates that the notion of ‘capability to participate in adult education’ is richer than that of ‘participation in adult education’, as it clearly refers to individual opportunities to be involved in education, i.e., the freedom to take part in educational activities that one has reason to value.
- ❑ Shows that the impact of individual characteristics on one’s capability to participate in adult education is embedded in different socio-economic, institutional, and cultural contexts.





Discussion of the results (2)

Our results show that:

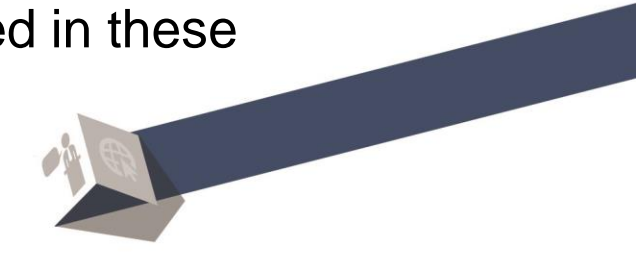
- ❑ Female gender confers certain advantages in relation to one's capability to participate in non-formal education, under certain macro conditions – such as living in high trust-societies or in countries with high levels of innovation and less selective educational systems. The same applies to women's capability to participate in formal education in countries with lower selectivity within their formal education systems.
- ❑ possessing higher education can confer greater advantages with regard to the capability to participate in non-formal education, particularly for adults living in countries with higher levels of innovation and higher age of selection.
- ❑ there are no cross-level interaction effects between social background and the studied country-level variables when looking at non-formal education. However, we have found that adults with high social backgrounds are less likely to participate in formal education when they live in high-trust, highly innovative societies and in countries with less selective educational systems.





Discussion of the results (3)

Our study is consisting with previous research by:

- ❑ confirming the existence of the so-called ‘Matthew Effect’, which denotes the tendency of those individuals who are more advantaged to participate more. This is in line with other research which provides “much empirical support for the Matthew effect that adult learning tends to reproduce and reinforce the outcomes of initial education” (Blossfeld et al. 2020, p. 21).
 - ❑ showing that a high social background and having higher education are associated with a higher likelihood of participating in both formal and non-formal education. (e.g. Boudard and Rubenson 2003; Desjardins 2015).
 - ❑ showing that workers with higher educational degrees have the basic skills required in order to be able to cope with innovations (Bassanini et al. 2007).
 - ❑ showing that capabilities represent a contextual-level mechanism that is not reducible to individual-level education but instead refers to individuals’ environments and the educational opportunities provided in these environments (Högberg 2019).
- 



Discussion of the results (4)

Our results contribute to:

- ❑ the literature which argues that the existing typologies of welfare state regimes are insufficient for carrying out in-depth international comparative studies of adult education (e.g. Riddell and Weedon 2012; Boeren 2016; Desjardins and Ioannidou 2020).
- ❑ the literature by showing that the influence of individual factors on the capability to participate in adult education is embedded in wider socio-economic, institutional, and cultural contexts.
- ❑ The further development of the capability approach by empirically revealing that:

[i]t is not a single factor that determines individual advantage or disadvantage, but rather the combination and interrelation between personal characteristics and a plurality of contextual factors that affect individuals' positions and may determine individual differences in terms of functionings or capabilities (Chiappero et al. 2018, p. 232).





Conclusions

- ❑ The developed framework of the social embeddedness of the capability to participate in adult education demonstrates its **multifaceted and complex determination**.
- ❑ There is need for further systematic research on the diversity of factors at micro, meso, and macro levels, and their interactions, in order to better understand individual agency regarding adult education.
- ❑ There is also a clear necessity to pay special attention to the explanation of these findings and revealed trends.
- ❑ By introducing the notion of capability to participate in adult education and asserting the social embeddedness of this capability, this paper provides arguments in favour of developing more differentiated and nuanced policies in the sphere of adult education – policies which simultaneously take into account not only the characteristics of target individuals but also the social, institutional, and cultural environments in which they live.





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