



A Social Justice Perspective towards Empowerment through Lifelong Education and Learning

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Outline

- Introduction
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- Conclusion





Introduction (1)

Background

- ❑ Our contemporary world is characterized by highly dynamic, growing inequalities between and within societies, as well as increased insecurity and vulnerability.
- ❑ Under such conditions, there are no ready, easily applied, and transferable answers about how individuals and societies can cope with these emerging challenges.
- ❑ Facing such new challenges, all individuals and societies become susceptible and vulnerable to various extents.





Introduction (2)

- ❑ Against this background, the present paper focuses on the importance of lifelong education and learning for individual empowerment.
- ❑ Until now, the empowerment role of lifelong education and learning has been discussed only in relation to some social groups who have been defined as disadvantaged.
- ❑ Acknowledging that all contemporary individuals and societies can be susceptible and vulnerable (Fineman 2008), albeit to different extents, we argue that *the empowerment role of lifelong education and learning becomes crucial in contemporary societies, penetrating all its other roles, and applies to all individuals and societies.*
- ❑ We suggest **a social justice perspective towards empowerment** and its role in lifelong education and learning in order to grasp the emergence of 2 phenomena:
 - 1) Empowerment as a universal need &
 - 2) Education as a lifelong and life-wide process in contemporary societies.

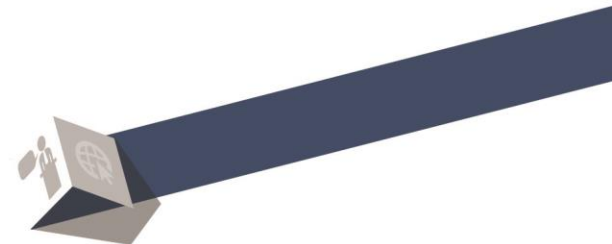




Theoretical considerations (1)

The Multifaceted Character of Empowerment

- ❑ Despite that the word ‘empowerment’ has a long history, which goes back to the mid-seventeenth century, the notion of empowerment remains inherently complex, open to many interpretations, under-theorized, and contested (eg., Samman & Santos 2009; Monkman 2011).
- ❑ Unterhalter (2019, p. 86) outlines “that empowerment as a concept can be deployed in multiple ways.”
- ❑ In a comprehensive review of works on empowerment, Ibrahim and Alkire (2007) systematize 29 understandings of the concept of empowerment used in the period 1991–2006.
- ❑ It should be emphasized that “although different kinds of empowerment may be interconnected, empowerment is domain specific” (Ibrahim & Alkire 2007, p. 383).



Theoretical considerations (2)

Capability approach (Sen 1999, 2009)

- For Sen (1985, 2002), capabilities are freedoms conceived as real opportunities.
- Capabilities refer to the presence of valuable options, in the sense of opportunities that do not exist only formally or legally but are also effectively available to the agent (Robeyns 2013).
- Sen distinguishes 2 aspects of agency: freedom and achievement. Whereas “agency freedom” is related to the “freedom to bring about the achievements one values and which one attempts to produce” (Sen 1992, p. 57), the achievement of a person’s agency “refers to the realization of goals and values she has reason to pursue, whether or not they are connected with her own well-being” (ibid., p. 56).
- the concept of agency takes into account the possibility that people can help to improve their individual wellbeing along with that of others.

Subjective side of empowerment

refers to an individual’s capability to gain control over the environment with the aim of improving their own well-being and that of society

Theoretical considerations (3)

Nancy Fraser's theory of justice (Fraser 2009)

- It includes three-dimensional model of social justice – redistribution, recognition, and representation.
- The conceptualization of empowerment as a matter of justice – similar to Fraser's conceptualization of recognition as a matter of justice – adds new content to the struggle for empowerment.
- Taking into account Fraser's three-dimensional model of social justice, we can differentiate between 3 types of opportunity structures, respectively, 3 types of obstacles that impede people's empowerment – economic structures that deny people "the resources they need in order to interact with others as peers," "institutionalized hierarchies of cultural value that deny them the requisite standing" (ibid.) & the institutional rules and practices that hamper people's participation in decision-making processes.

Objective side of empowerment

reflects the available opportunity structures, which refer to economic, political and cultural sphere



Theoretical considerations (4)

- ❑ *A social justice perspective towards the empowerment role of lifelong education and learning requires taking into account both the subjective and objective sides of empowerment.*
- ❑ Taking into account these considerations and previous research, we will try to answer the following research questions (RQ):

(RQ1) To what extent is participation in lifelong education and learning associated with individuals' empowerment?

(RQ2) Does the relationship between individuals' participation in lifelong education and learning and their empowerment differ across different socio-economic, political, and cultural contexts?



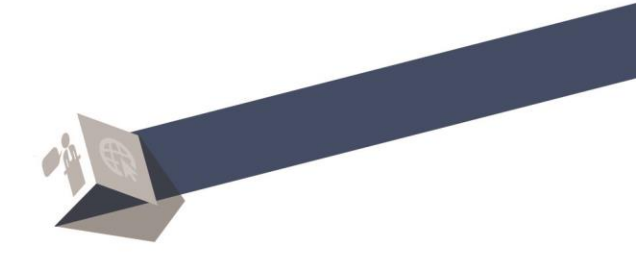


Data and methodology (1)

Data

- ❑ European Social Survey (ESS) Round 6, 2012;
- ❑ Macro-level data from Eurostat website and a report from The Economist Intelligence Unit (2012). These data are as of 2012.

Limitations

- ❑ 24 countries: Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus; Czech Republic; Denmark; Estonia; Finland; France; Germany; Great Britain; Hungary; Iceland; Ireland; Italy; Lithuania; Netherlands; Norway; Poland; Portugal; Slovakia; Slovenia; Spain; Sweden; and Switzerland.
 - ❑ Adults (25-64 years old).
 - ❑ Analytical samples: 27,378 for the first dependent variable, 27,368 – for the second.
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Data and methodology (2)

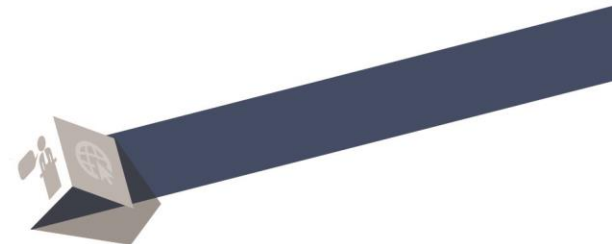
Variables

Dependent variables

- 1) The first dependent variable refers to question D30: *“How difficult or easy do you find it to deal with important problems that come up in your life?”*.
- 2) The second dependent variable refers to statement D1: *“In the past 12 months, how often did you get involved in work for voluntary or charitable organizations”*.

Independent variable at individual level

- The main *independent* variable included at the individual level was the dummy variable of whether people participated in any work-related learning activities over the previous 12 months (1=yes). It measures participation in lifelong education and learning.





Data and methodology (3)

Independent variables at country-level

- Socioeconomic context*: GDP per capita in PPS;
- Political context*: Democracy index;
- Cultural context*: Level of generalized trust.

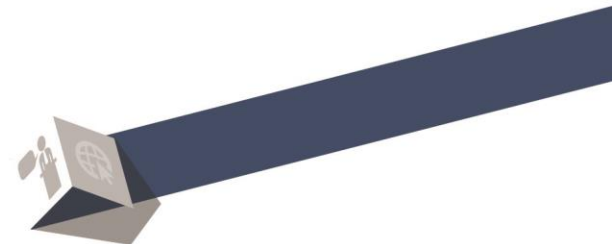
*These variables were standardised and entered into our analysis, being mean-centred and having a standard deviation of 1. This was done in order to have comparability for these variables.

Control variables at individual level

- Age (continuous)
- Level of education (Low: ISCED 0-2, Medium: ISCED 0-4, Higher: ISCED 5-8)
- Gender (1 = female);
- Parents' education as an indicator of social background (1 = high [including persons with at least one parent with higher education]);
- Belonging to a minority ethnic background (1 = yes).

Method

- Multilevel modelling technique



Influence of participation in work-related training and opportunity structures on dealing with important problems in life easily.

Odds ratio (standard errors in parentheses)

	Model 0	Model 1a	Model 1b	Model 2a	Model 2b	Model 3a	Model 3b
Participation in work-related training in the previous 12 months vs. Not	1.170** (0.034)	1.183** (0.035)	1.169** (0.034)	1.179** (0.035)	1.169** (0.034)	1.171** (0.035)	
GDP per capita in PPS		1.232* (0.130)	1.263* (0.134)				
GDP per capita in PPS X Participation in work-related training			0.940* (0.026)				
Democracy index				1.305** (0.124)	1.335** (0.128)		
Democracy index X Participation in work-related training					0.948+ (0.027)		
Generalized trust						1.400** (0.122)	1.408** (0.124)
Generalized trust X Participation in work-related training							0.988 (0.028)
Constant	0.783* (0.096)	0.778* (0.094)	0.779* (0.094)	0.772* (0.089)	0.774* (0.089)	0.774* (0.083)	0.774* (0.083)
Intraclass correlation	0.097	0.073	0.073	0.065	0.065	0.053	0.053
BIC	35538	35069	35075	35066	35073	35061	35071



Influence of participation in work-related training and opportunity structures on getting involved in work for voluntary or charitable organizations. Odds ratios (standard errors in parentheses)

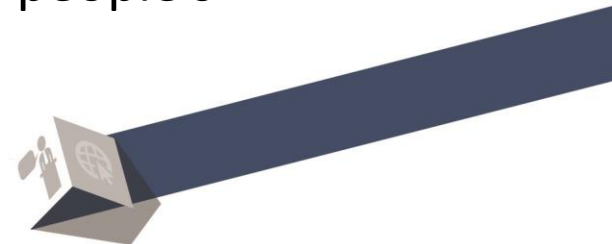
	Model 0	Model 1a	Model 1b	Model 2a	Model 2b	Model 3a	Model 3b
Participation in work-related training in the previous 12 months vs. Not GDP per capita in PPS		1.682** (0.060)	1.788** (0.069)	1.681** (0.060)	1.780** (0.067)	1.683** (0.060)	1.725** (0.063)
GDP per capita in PPS X Participation in work-related training		1.845** (0.183)	1.970** (0.193)				
Democracy index			0.862** (0.030)	1.630** (0.191)	1.767** (0.204)		
Democracy index X Participation in work-related training					0.844** (0.031)		
Generalized trust						1.423* (0.197)	1.497** (0.207)
Generalized trust X Participation in work-related training							0.905** (0.030)
Constant	0.206** (0.035)	0.067** (0.008)	0.065** (0.008)	0.066** (0.010)	0.065** (0.009)	0.067** (0.011)	0.067** (0.011)
Intraclass correlation	0.174	0.064	0.061	0.095	0.090	0.125	0.123
BIC	24974	24425	24418	24435	24424	24442	24444





Discussion (1)

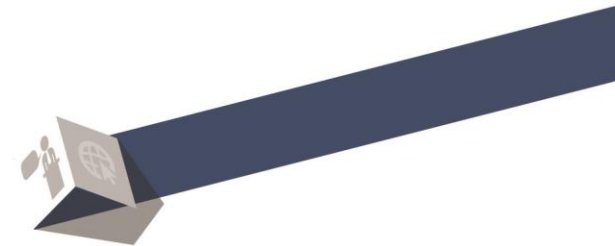
- ❑ **The present study shows that participation in work-related learning activities is positively associated with individuals' capacity to deal with the important problems they face as well as their involvement in voluntary work.**
 - ✓ This suggests that either lifelong education and learning has the potential to empower individuals to cope with everyday challenges in ways which take into account not only their well-being but also the well-being of other people or that coping with everyday problems and involvement in voluntary work encourage participation in work-related learning activities.
 - ✓ Further studies are needed to prove the causal influence of participation in work-related learning activities on people's empowerment.





Discussion (2)

- Our results also demonstrate that the empowerment role of lifelong education and learning is embedded in different social contexts and depends on the available opportunity structures.**
- ✓ The associations between measures of available opportunity structures and individuals' capacity to deal with important problems and their involvement in voluntary work were relatively lower among those who had participated in work-related learning activities than those who had not.
- ✓ This deserves special attention and can be interpreted as suggestive evidence that participation in lifelong education and learning enhances individuals' capacities and thus makes them more autonomous actors who are less dependent on their social environment in comparison to those not involved in lifelong-learning activities.





Conclusion (1)

Limitations and directions for further research

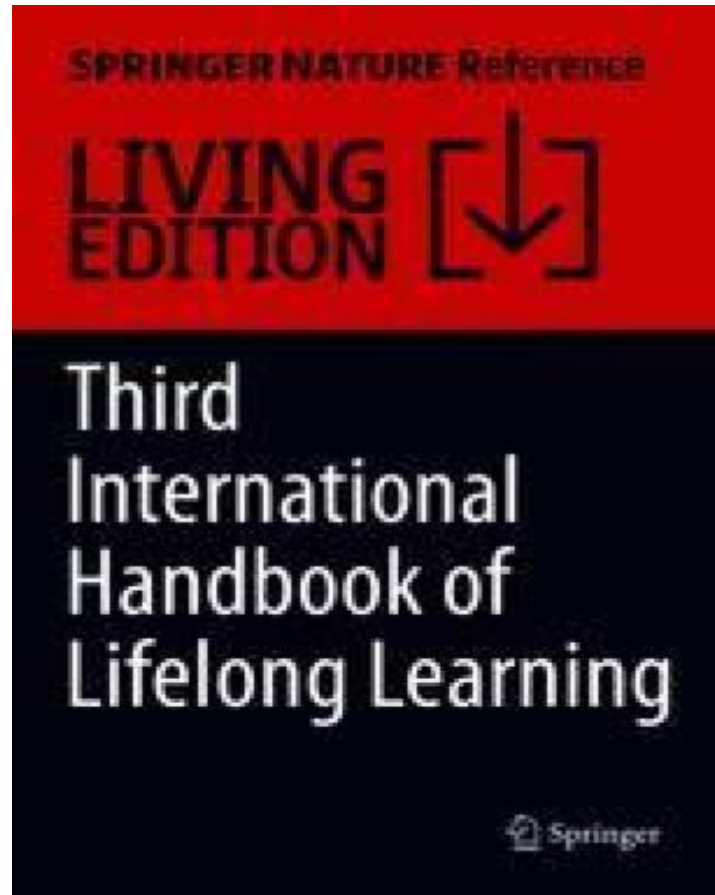
- 1) The first one refers to the empirical data used. In order for empowerment to be accomplished with learners, not for them, we have to hear their voices. However, the empirical analysis in this study is based on a large cross-national survey, remains “deaf” to the voices of individual learners. So, it is important in further research the results from the analysis of quantitative data to be combined with qualitative research.
- 2) For measuring individuals’ empowerment, our analysis has relied upon the available questions in the ESS. A specially designed study in accordance with the accepted theoretical assumptions will provide better alignment between the theoretical understanding of empowerment through lifelong education and learning and its empirical verification.
- 3) The study refers to work-related lifelong education and learning. It is worth studying the empowerment potential of other forms of lifelong education and learning, as well as – e.g., personal-related, non-formal, and informal.



Conclusion (2)

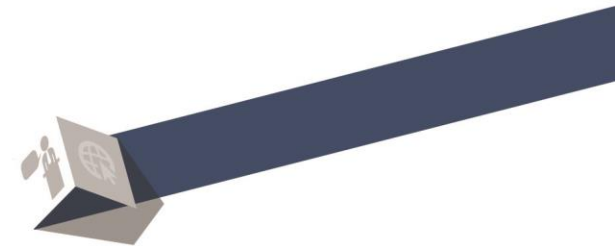
To sum up

- ❑ By discussing empowerment through lifelong education and learning, as well as by revealing some factors that influence the way it is realized in different social contexts, our study has elaborated a solid conceptual basis for developing strategies and concrete policies at different levels.
- ❑ Undoubtedly, the understanding and realization of the empowerment role of lifelong education and learning require in-depth and sustainable research both on and in lifelong education and learning.
- ❑ In our highly complex contemporary societies, and in the face of the universal character of vulnerability, the empowerment of individuals becomes indispensable. It is beyond doubt that individuals themselves and lifelong education and learning as a policy and practice have their responsibility for dealing with fragility of human reality.
- ❑ Acknowledging this, however, should be inseparable from paying due attention to the embeddedness of individuals' empowerment in different social contexts and its dependence on the available opportunity structures.



Boyadjieva P., & Ilieva-Trichkova P. (2022). Empowerment Through Lifelong Learning. In: Evans K., Markowitsch J., Lee W.O., Zukas M. (eds) *Third International Handbook of Lifelong Learning*. Springer International Handbooks of Education. Springer, Cham.

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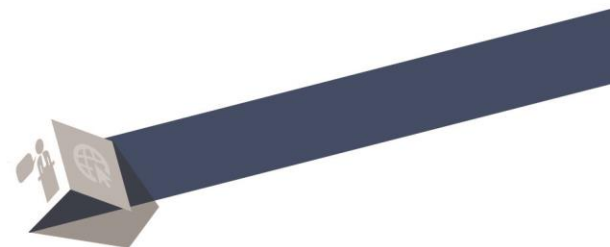




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<https://justedu2020.eu/>





THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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