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From What We Have Discussed to What We Have to Discuss

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Abstract:
The purpose of this study is to conduct a critical reflection of the assumptions embedded in adult migrant education discourse based on a transnational perspective on migration. I reviewed the assumptions embedded in adult migrant education and sought to clarify what assumptions should not be taken for granted, and what can be further discussed to enrich this area of study and practice.

Keywords: adult migrant education, critical reflection, transnationalism

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to conduct a critical reflection of the assumptions embedded in adult migrant education discourse based on a transnational perspective on migration. I will adopt relevant typologies mainly developed in migration studies, and review adult education literature on this issue.

Theoretical Background

Critical Reflection. This paper critically reflects on the premises embedded in adult migrant education discourse. Critical reflection has been discussed by scholars such as Dewey, Habermas, Mezirow, Freire, and Brookfield(Redmond, 2004). Mezirow(1981; 1990) and Brookfield's(1987; 2000) concepts and classifications were used. Mezirow(1990) defined critical reflection as addressing "the question of the justification for the very premises on which problems are posed or defined in the first place(p. 12)." According to Mezirow(1981)'s classification, I focused on 'judgmental reflectivity' – that is, "making and becoming aware of one's value judgments, perceptions, thoughts, and actions in terms of their place in a value continuum (Redmond, 2004)." Brookfield(1987) also stressed the importance of identifying "the assumptions, which sustain ideas, beliefs, and action(p. 7)" so that individuals can critically reflect on their validity. Reflecting on what has been taken for granted in adult education for migrants will contribute to "the development of alternative perspectives on possible new ways of behaving(Brookfield, 1987: p. 28)" in the discourse.

Transnational Migration. Transnational migration will be a useful concept for the reflection. Guo(2015) explicated "the term transnational migration describes the multiple and circular migration across transnational spaces of migrants who maintain close contact with their countries of origin (p. 7)." Transnationalism challenges the premises which are embedded in the discussion surrounding migration. First, it rejects the idea that permanent settlement is always the desired result for migrant learners. As Guo(2015) showed, quoting OECD(2008), a significant number of migrants return to their countries of origin or move to other countries within 5 years of arriving in the host country. OECD(2017) also suggests that temporary labor migration far exceeds the number of permanent labor migration. Increasing multiple and circular migration shows that permanent settlement is no longer the only goal of migrant learners. Secondly, the transnational migration concept leads to rethinking acculturation. In adult migrant education literature, acculturation tends to be regarded as an inevitable result of learning(*see, for example,* Alfred, 2003; Maitra, 2017). However, in the

current era of transnational migration, the level of desire to acculturate in the host society can vary. Lastly, it rejects the assumption that contexts affecting the migrant learners' experience are limited to the host society. Increasing mobility and communication enabled migrants to interact with various actors across the world(*see, for example,* Brooks *et al*., 2007). This indicates identifying the transnational actors surrounding the learners and understanding their intentions is important for adult education. Not all migrants are transnational - many migrants wish to settle and acculturate in the host society. While this is acknowledged in this paper, I apply transnational migration concept to challenge the premises in adult migrant education discourse and highlight the aspects that were not sufficiently discussed in the discourse.

Andragogy Model. The andragogy model(Knowles *et al*., 2005) was adopted to discuss the components of adult education. This model is criticized that it left structural influences undiscussed. This paper will take advantage of the 'blankness', by filling out the unspecified areas of sociocultural context with discussions closely relevant to adult migrant learners. Knowles *et al*. (2005) suggested that the andragogy model is flexible and adaptable – that it embraces such reflections in the model. In this paper, I re-adjusted the classifications of andragogy model into two parts: individual and sociocultural context. Individual context includes core andragogy principles, individual difference, and individual goals and purposes in the original model. Sociocultural context includes situational difference and institutional and societal growth. It is to recognize the importance of understanding the individual context in adult learning and to highlight the importance of sociocultural context, which is relatively less specified in this model. The following section will critically reflect on what assumptions have been taken for granted in the individual and sociocultural contexts regarding adult education for migrants. I will adopt relevant typologies and suggest alternative perspectives on the assumptions to expand our view of adult education for migrants.

Reflecting Adult Migrant Education

Reflecting the Individual Context.
Prior experience. A learner's previous experience is an important part of the andragogy model(Knowles *et al*., 2005). Existing adult learning research focused on the learners' educational level, creativity, learning style, personal characteristics, and autonomy(Merriam, 2001). Prior experience regarding migration was limitedly discussed as a term of 'life cycle' in adult migrant literature(Velazquez, 2000; Alfred, 2003). Studies on the migration stages can be useful to further explicate this subject. Drachman (1992) defined the phases of migration as pre-migration, departure, transit, and resettlement. Kley (2010) focused on the decision-making process and divided the process into the pre-decisional phase (planning migration), actional phase (realizing migration), and post-actional phase (living at destination). McKenzie and Yang (2014) suggested pre-departure, during migration, and a possible return as stages of the migration cycle. Applying an adult education perspective, the following classifications can be useful: the stage the learner does not have any experience in migration(pre-migration); the stage that the learner just arrived in the host society but does not have sufficient knowledge about the host country(arrival); the stage that the learner has significant experience and knowledge about the host society(resettlement); and the stage in which the learner is considering a return or another migration.

Learners' assets, goals, and possible challenges vary depending on the migration stage they are in. Previous research supports this idea, especially regarding the pre- and early stage of migration. For example, Adamuti-Trache's(2012) work shows the importance of assessing adult learner's language skill before they arrive at the host society. The economic success, social integration, and perceptions of the settlement are largely affected by the learner's

language skills before the arrival. Deskilling of migrants' prior learning is also closely related to the stages of migration. Morrice(2012) depicts the shock and stress that refugees experience during the early stage of migration because the educational degrees and professional knowledge that the individuals achieved in their countries of origin were not recognized as they arrive the host country. Slade(2015), quoting Galabuzi(2006), asserts that the first three years after arriving in the host country are crucial for migrants in maintaining their profession. The author also suggests that adult education can take a vital role in assisting migrant learners to maintain their connection with their professional knowledge and practice. While the early stages of migration have been a popular subject, little has been discussed concerning learning in the pre-return period of migration. Programs such as Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration(AVRR) show that there is a need for education for returning migrants(IOM, 2018). Analyzing such programs with education perspective can enrich the discourse of adult migrant education.

Needs and Motivation. Knowles *et al.*(2005) stress the importance of learners' willingness to learn. Boshier's(1991) categorization helps further understanding the types of motivation that an adult learner has, such as social contact, social stimulation, communication improvement, professional advancement, external expectations, cognitive interest, and family togetherness. In addition, motivation to migrate has been considered as what explicitly or implicitly connected to their motivation to learn. Motivation for migration is roughly divided into voluntary and involuntary migration(Castles *et al.*, 2014). Portes and Rumbaut(1996) present a more detailed typology based on migration motivation. Voluntary migration includes labor migration, professional migration, entrepreneurial migration, and international students, while forced migration includes refugees and asylees.

Meanwhile, the motivation for acculturation has been implicitly assumed to not vary between learners. Guo(2015) described this as a part of the "sameness" approach, "which assumes that all learners have the same background and learning needs.(p. 13)" However, Bornstein(2013), quoting Berry(2007), explained one can aim to retain the culture of one's original society, incorporate the new culture into their identity, some combination of the two, or can immigrate without any specific goal. The difference in acculturation goals can be affected by the causes of the learners' migration and their plans for remaining in the host society. Studies have discussed the challenges that migrant learners face because of the gap between the willingness to acculturate and what is socially or institutionally desired. For example, Mathews-Ayndinli(2008), revealed that English Language Learners(ELLs) must negotiate their level of acculturation. The author explains even though the learner does not want to learn "to an extent that might risk a loss of those native cultures and languages(p. 205)", employers often make them renegotiate the expectation by devaluing strong accents in English. Further exploration is needed on cases such as when the learners refuse to assimilate, and how the different degrees of motivation affect their learning experience.

Reflecting the Sociocultural Contexts
Situational Differences. Several studies on adult migrant education contributed to a better understanding of the sociocultural aspects of the learning experiences. In adult migrant education, the notion of sociocultural contexts includes state policies, history of migration, public discourse and media, workplaces, and group discourses and dynamics(Alfred, 2003; Morrice, 2012). Different education providers should be considered. Brooks *et al.* (2007) addressed the complexity of identifying the social context of migrant adult education, by presenting the providers of education for Mexican migrants who are already in or planning to migrate to the United States. The governments of both receiving and sending countries, the labor department of the sending countries and the consulates in receiving countries, churches, and NPOs are all actors of the education for migrants. These diversified contexts might

harmoniously affect individuals' learning. However, it is also possible that the values that they try to project toward the learners often conflict with each other and create a double bind in the learning experience. Therefore, it is important to identify the structures surrounding the learner and critically reflect on each perspective.

Perspectives on Migration. In regard to migrant adult learning situations, Castles *et al.*(2014) suggest a useful framework to reflect what value that society projects towards a migrant. The *folk* or *ethnic model* refers to a perspective that defines a citizen based on ethnicity, that is "common descent, language, and culture(p. 67)", and who does not belong to this group or is excluded from citizenship. The *republican model* considers a newcomer as a possible citizen as long as they are willing to adapt to the culture and comply with the political rules of the host country. In the *multicultural model,* an individual may become a citizen of the host country without giving up his/her original culture(Steiner, 2009; Shan & Walter, 2015). The *transnational model* embraces that "identities of the members of transnational communities transcend national boundaries, leading to multiple and differentiated forms of belonging.(p. 68)" Even though this typology is presented for defining the policy of governments, it also can be utilized to understand how each context surrounding the learner defines 'who does and who does not belong to the society'.

Based on the identification of various subsets of sociocultural contexts as well as this classification, we can observe the conflicting perspectives that social contexts have on the same migrant group. For example, Park and Kim(2014) found that educational programs that the South Korean government provides for North Korean defectors aim to help them successfully settle in the society become citizens, while the local communities and workplaces in the learners' everyday live seemingly try to exclude them from the majority. This can be interpreted as the South Korean government providing education for migrants based on the republican model's concept of citizenship, while local communities and workplaces took the folk model's perspective on the learners. This kind of conflicts between state policies and public discourses on migration can be seen in many cases and they show that migrant adult learners experience severe stress and often have to unlearn their identities and culture to survive in their host society(see, e.g. Morrice, 2012; Alfred, 2003). Another interesting case is Prins'(2007) work. The author depicted that interpersonal tensions among adult learners in a class are often caused by the learners' perceptions of belongingness. Certain ethnic groups often refused to define another ethnicity as a legitimate member of the region. This implies a social context which seems multicultural might not be so when it is observed in a narrower context. Further exploration is needed on conflicting views on migrant learners and its influence on their learning experiences is sparse.

Discussion

In this paper, I conducted a critical reflection on assumptions embedded in adult migrant education and sought to clarify what assumptions should not be taken for granted, and what can be further discussed to enrich this area of study and practice. Reflection on individual contexts revealed that adult migrant educators need to consider different stages of migration and the experience of the migrants in the migration process and that the learners have varying motivations regarding acculturation in the host society. Each intragroup of society might have different ideas about membership in society, which often affect the learning experience of migrants. I believe that this reflection showed the possibility for expansion of adult migrant education discourse. The reflection calls for a review on current educational practices for migrants, to further investigate the individual and sociocultural contexts that are addressed in this study. Different ethnic groups in the class and local society, families, and friends overseas, hosting state's and even sending countries' policies should be taken into consideration. It also shows that it is necessary to further investigate current and possible educational approaches to

embrace the newly recognized learner groups, such as returning or re-migrating learners and migrants who are not willing to either assimilate or integrate to the host society. To further develop the discourse of adult migrant education, it is necessary to conduct continuous reflection and discussion on this topic, as well as to encourage the participation of the migrant learners to encourage involvement in this conversation. This article mainly focused on adult education literature for examining the applicable issues while adult migrant education is a growing discourse in many other areas of studies such as social work, ethnic and racial studies, and migration studies(see, for example, Liang, 2011; Dahlstedt & Bevelander, 2010). Literature reviews that cover these principles will deepen this discussion.

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