

4 September 2019

International Seminar on Literacy and Lifelong Learning

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL),

Feldbrunnenstr. 58, Hamburg, Germany

Thursday, 12th of September, 16:00-18:00

Dear colleagues,

just a few days after the International Literacy Day, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning and the Department for Lifelong Learning at Hamburg University are happy to announce a small and high-level seminar on Literacy and Lifelong Learning. The seminar benefits from invited visiting professors and the co-operation between the two hosting institutions.

Please feel free to share this information. Space is limited and an e-mail registration is required under

anke.grotlueschen@uni-hamburg.de

Kind regards,

David Atchoarena
Director UIL

Raúl Valdes-Cotera
Team Leader, UIL

Anke Grotluschen
Professor

Program:

Introduction (David Atchoarena, Director, UIL, Raúl Valdes-Cotera, Senior Program Specialist, UIL)

Moderation (UHH, Anke Grotlüschen)

Presentations (20mins each)

Adult learning in the control society

Suzanne Smythe, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, Canada

From Heroic Victims to Competent Comrades: Views of Adult Literacy Learners in the Research Literature

Alisa Belzer, Rutgers University, USA

Examining self-directedness and its relationships with lifelong learning and earnings in Yunnan, Vietnam, Germany, and the United States

Huacong Liu, Research Associate, UNESCO-Institute for Lifelong Learning, Hamburg, Germany

Closing remarks

Adult learning in the control society

Prof. Dr. Suzanne Smythe

Associate Professor, Adult Literacy and Adult Education, Simon Fraser University, Canada

Abstract

The presentation reports on ethnographic data and literacy theory-building emerging from a 2-year study of adult digital learning in a public computing centre, where digitally excluded adults come for assistance to negotiate new digital government interfaces and other automated technologies. These algorithmically-driven government services, employment and social media platforms are now known to intensify social inequality as online and offline lives entangle in the data surveillance of automated systems (Eubanks, 2018; Noble, 2018, Williamson, 2018). Given the urgent need for new theories and pedagogies to contend with this new “algorithmic condition” (Colman, et al, 2018), the study asked, 1) What literacy practices are associated with automation and what are the material effects of automation in the lives of these digitally excluded adults? 2) What pedagogies do and could adult educators draw upon to support these learners to navigate automated technologies? 3) What are the broader theoretical and pedagogical implications of automation for the work of adult educators? The study mapped the literacies and pedagogies of automation in the context of Deleuze’s (1992) society of control, finding that automation not only introduced obscure but powerful new forms social inequality, but also implied new literacy practices that engage with nonhuman intelligence and agencies. The presentation concludes by considering potential openings to ‘more than human’ research and pedagogies (Braidotti, 2014; Colman et al, 2018); that reconfigure adult literacy research and practice as sites of resistance to a control society.

From Heroic Victims to Competent Comrades: Views of Adult Literacy Learners in the Research Literature

Prof. Dr. Alisa Belzer

Professor in the Department of Learning and Teaching, Rutgers University, USA

Abstract

Street (1984) played a seminal role in articulating the notion that conceptions of literacy are socially constructed and mediated by history, culture, and the dynamics of power and class. In this conception of literacy, what the reader/writer brings to the task is of significance, as is the social context in which literacy events (Barton, 1994) occur. What Street called an autonomous view of literacy, in contrast, assumes that literacy is a set of neutral and discrete skills uninfluenced by social context. This view leads to a technical/instrumental instructional approach suggesting that if only the right set of tools and strategies are applied to the task of teaching reading, everyone would learn.

This research synthesis analyzed qualitative depictions of adult literacy learners and identified five ways in which they are typically characterized: the Heroic Victim, the Needy (Problem) Child, the Broken (but Repairable) Cog, the Pawn of Destiny, and the Capable Comrade. These types do not capture the diversity or complexity of all adult literacy learners, and we do not argue that they are comprehensive. Rather they are representative of the ways in which adult literacy learners are portrayed in the research literature. We argue that each type, like characters in a narrative, drive the “action” in research, policy, and practice arena. The ways in which they populate research may have very real consequences for how adult literacy learning opportunities are provided and the outcomes that can be expected.

Examining self-directedness and its relationships with lifelong learning and earnings in Yunnan, Vietnam, Germany, and the United States

Dr. Huacong Liu

Research Associate, UNESCO-Institute for Lifelong Learning, Hamburg, Germany

Abstract

In the context of SDG 4.6, the paper provides an empirical analysis of the significance of self-directedness in learning in the labor market and adult education and training in two high-income (Germany, U.S) and two middle-income countries (Vietnam, Yunnan China). The analyses demonstrate that self-directedness is rewarded in the labor market in two middle-income economies. Furthermore, those who are motivated to learn and are resilient are more likely to pursue learning opportunities in the high-income countries as well as in Yunnan where adult learning opportunities are severely lacking. Policy implications pertaining to curriculum-level interventions and adult learning environments are discussed.

Highlights:

- there are considerable gaps in the self-directedness measures between low- and high-SES adults.
- Self-directedness measures have statistically significant associations with earnings and lifelong learning participation in Yunnan, Vietnam, Germany, and U.S., even after controlling for formal schooling and measures of cognitive skills.
- Lifelong learning efforts should be more intentionally geared towards increasing participation in adult education among the most vulnerable groups in Germany and the U.S.; while in Yunnan and Vietnam, the challenge is to translate a guiding framework into actionable practices.