



From Learner-Centered Education (LCE) to Emancipatory Learner-Centered Education (ELCE): A comparative case study of language education for adult migrants in four European countries

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Abstract This article discusses the findings of qualitative case-study research that looks at pedagogical contexts of adult education programs for migrants in Cyprus, Scotland, Malta, and Estonia. The goal of this research is to understand how Learner-Centered Education (LCE) is promoted within a human-rights framework and implemented as an approach to emancipatory social change. The findings show significant discrepancies in the implementation of LCE. Differences emerged between educational interventions that influence the language-learning and assimilation-integration processes of adults with migrant backgrounds. Informed by these findings, this article builds a case for Emancipatory Learner-Centered Education (ELCE)—a pedagogical approach that goes beyond course

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adaptations, to engage migrants in consciousness-raising and confidence-building, while fostering communal action between migrants and adult educators.

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The Migration Data Portal (2021) reports that in mid-2020 there were about 280 million migrants in the world. The global movement of migrants impacts lifelong learning policies and provisions and the related curricular experiences and pedagogies. Both conceptually and in practice, the nexus between adult education, migration, and integration is complex, multifaceted, and multilayered. As the subject of intense political debate, it touches on larger issues and disputes about the orientation and goals of European education systems as well as border security, European citizenship, and the rise of nationalism and racism within the European space (Gravani et al., 2021a).

A growing corpus of literature focuses on the challenges confronting adult education, including the impact of migration (Britton, et al., 2019; Morrice, et al., 2017; Slade, 2015). Some studies, which endorse the existing framework of adult education provision for migrants in Europe and elsewhere, examine its performance or limitations capitalize principles(e.g., Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants [LIAM] Guiding Principles [Council of Europe, 2021; Fejes, 2010; Garsten & Jacobsson, 2004; Krumm & Plutzar, 2008]). Other research, in which critical interest is more focused on the sub-text of the contexts studied, highlights the processes, subjectivities, and social relations that are neglected, silenced, or undervalued by contemporary adult education programs for minorities (e.g., Kral & Schwab, 2016, on indigenous populations in Australia and migrants in particular [Arasaratnam, 2013; Martin, 2015]). Far fewer studies treat pedagogy as a central theme for investigation, with an interest in the intersection of migration and adult education. An example of one such study is Nieuwboer and Van't Rood (2016), which targets language learning for migrant mothers without formal education who are living in Western countries. Their editorial “Migration, adult education and learning” in the special issue of *Studies in the Education of Adults* (Morrice, et al., 2017, p. 133) also indicates the need for further research into practices that embrace the learning of both migrants and longer-term settled communities and enable migrants to determine their own learning needs and set their own goals (p. 133).

The European agenda on adult learning is essentially silent on the question of pedagogy in general and seemingly neutral on the promotion of particular pedagogical approaches. In the entire text of the *Council Resolution on a Renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning* (Council of the European Union, 2011), there is only one brief reference to the vital need to develop “new pedagogies and creative learning environments” (p. 6). However, the text does not specify these new pedagogies; they are merely conceived as inherently connected to the acquisition of transversal key competencies; to the enhancement of the role of cultural organizations, civil society, and sporting organizations in the provision of non-formal and informal adult learning programs; and to the better use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in these programs.

Using a comparative, qualitative investigation of adult education language learning programs for migrants in four European countries (Cyprus, Scotland, Malta, and Estonia), our research explored the extent to which Learner-Centered Education (LCE) was being enacted and implemented in these contexts as a driver of social change.

Learner-Centered Education

Learner-Centered Education (LCE) can be considered a concept, an approach, a narrative, and a traveling policy (Schweisfurth, 2013a, 2013b). International organizations such as UNESCO and UNICEF either promote LCE within a rights framework or include the concept as part of their definitions of quality education (Schweisfurth, 2013a, 2013b).

Schweisfurth (2013b) sees educational practice as existing along a continuum, from less learner-centered to more learner-centered, with LCE at one end of the continuum. At the LCE end, learners have more control, not just over the content of learning, but also over how they learn, what is learned, and how the teaching-learning process is shaped by the learners' needs, capacities, and interests.

Schweisfurth identifies several elements on this continuum that comprise LCE practice—techniques, relationships, motivation, and epistemology (2013b). These elements were employed heuristically in the present study as a framework to unveil the extent to which LCE is used as an approach for social change in the context of adult education language-learning programs for migrants in four European countries.

The first element, techniques, relates to activities that teachers use with learners. These include group work, independent inquiry, project- or problem-based learning, and “scaffolding”, which tailors learning to an individual student's needs. This element is in accord with Knowles's (1980) emphasis on selecting the appropriate format, such as individual, group, or mass activities, for experiential learning.

The second element, relationships, refers to the range of possible relationships between educators and learners. Schweisfurth (2013b) suggests that these are on a continuum from authoritarian to democratic. The type of relationship affects the amount of control that learners have over their learning.

These first two elements are linked to a third—learners' motivation (Schweisfurth, 2013b). Learners need to be intrinsically motivated to be successful in the education process. According to adult learning theory, people tend to feel uncommitted when their incentive is imposed from outside.

The final element Schweisfurth identifies is epistemology, which she also regards as a continuum. On one end, the knowledge and curriculum to be taught are fixed; on the other end, knowledge is fluid, and the content is negotiable with learners. In this regard, Knowles (1980) argues that students come into an educational program with previous experience and specific needs, priorities, expectations, preferences, and aspirations and are most interested in subjects that have obvious relevance to their professional or personal lives.

Adult education for social change

With roots in popular education and movements advocating for social transformation, such as the Plebs League and the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee, adult education for social change foregrounds critical reflection and collective action (Borg, 2021). Adult education for social change generally draws on popular culture—drama, music, literature, art, folk stories—to affirm knowledge other than that which is exclusively scientific (Borg, 2021).

Guo and Sork (2005), who researched the role of adult education programs in bringing about social change in migrant communities, argue that adult education is also an important

forum for building inclusive citizenship. Similarly, Derwing (1992, as cited in Guo & Sork, 2005) suggested a community-based, learner-centered model in which members of cultural and linguistic communities are involved in every aspect of the program's design, development, and evaluation. More recently, Manninen et al., (2019, p. 5) introduced an alternative conception of the term *change-oriented adult education*, arguing that it

encompasses an approach, philosophy and set of teaching and learning methods that seek to create individual and/or social change. Learners can also move beyond individual transformation to a collective empowerment based on critical awareness, new ways of thinking, and active participation . . . According to this conception, change-oriented adult education differs from mainstream adult education provision and policies (Manninen et al., 2019, p. 6).

Various concepts of adult education for social change converge around active participation and an educational space that generates hope and possibility. Within such spaces, democracy is experienced pedagogically and change is achieved through action that is intrinsic to the program's design (Borg, 2021).

Theoretical framework

LCE is understood here as a pedagogical approach that gives learners, and demands from them, a relatively high level of active control over the contents and processes of learning as well as an educational practice and approach to social change. This understanding builds on Schweisfurth's (2013b) three "justificatory" narratives for LCE:

1. The cognitive narrative, suggesting that the learner has control over the content and process of learning. In this sense, "what is learnt, and how, are therefore shaped by learners' needs, capacities and interests" (Schweisfurth, 2013b, p. 20).
2. The preparation narrative, implying that the skills developed through inquiry-based self-regulated learning, such as flexibility, critical independent thought, and entrepreneurship support the development of and sustain an effective knowledge economy; and
3. The emancipation narrative, according to which learners not only have more control over what they learn and the process of learning but are encouraged to question critically canons of received knowledge and the unequal structures of society that they support. This echoes Freire's (1972) work on adult education, which argued that learners' questioning of their own realities is a central aspect of learning.

Aims and research questions

The research informing this article contributes to adult (migrant) education studies by revealing how LCE is enacted, implemented, or neglected in specific educational contexts. Our discussion is led by the following research questions:

1. To what extent are the adult education programs learner-centered, particularly in terms of techniques, relationships, motivation, and epistemology (Schweisfurth, 2013b)?
2. How do the case studies of Cyprus, Scotland, Malta, and Estonia compare in this regard?

3. Is the capacity for emancipatory social change a learning outcome of the adult education programs under study?
4. To what extent is the capacity for social change or the lack thereof related to identified LCE practices?

Methodology

The study used a comparative research strategy, crucial for exploring the complex global, regional, national, and local dynamics that account for varying forms of implementation (or non-implementation) of LCE in different settings; for appreciating the thin or wide differences in practices of implementation; and for assessing the successes, failures, and need for improvement of diverse LCE programs (Gravani & Slade, 2021). The aim of the study is to find explanations for similarities and differences and to generalize from them to gain a greater awareness and a deeper understanding of social reality in various national contexts (Hantrais & Mangen, 1996). Research on migration and migrants further justifies the adoption of a comparative approach because it can be deployed to identify similarities and differences between the different national, regional, and urban settings (e.g., Jørgensen, 2015) in which adult-migrant learners—as citizens or noncitizens—live and learn (Pisani, 2012).

Contexts of the case studies

Qualitative cartographies (Fejes & Wildemeersch, 2015) mapping (adult) migrant education provision and migration policies (Brown, et al., 2021) in Cyprus, Scotland, Malta, and Estonia shed light on the relevance of a cross-case comparative research strategy.

There were similarities and divergences among the four locations. The two Mediterranean islands (centrally located Malta and Cyprus in the eastern Mediterranean) vary significantly in size and population from Scotland and Estonia. Malta, Cyprus, and Estonia have been colonized. Scotland has been part of the United Kingdom since 1707; since 1974, Cyprus has been split between the northern Turkish-occupied area (41%) and the south and west (59%), where the Cypriot case study was conducted. At the time of the study, the four countries were European Union member-states (except for Turkish-occupied Cyprus) and all had parliamentary democracies.

At a cultural level, the study featured multiple official languages: Scotland (English, Scottish, and Gaelic), Malta (Maltese and English), Cyprus (Greek, Turkish, and English), and Estonia (Estonian and Russian). The Orthodox faith dominated, to varying degrees, the Greek-Cypriot and Estonian religious landscape. Other Christian faiths broadly prevailed in Scotland (Protestant) and Malta (Roman Catholic). Other religions included Muslims in Malta and among Turkish Cypriots, Maronites among Turkish Cypriots, and Lutherans in Estonia. These diversities co-existed with relatively increasing population percentages not associated with (or disassociated from) any religion, particularly in Scotland (Scotland's Census, 2021) and Malta (Discern, 2017).

A review of demographic trends revealed that at the time of the research the overall share of non-nationals stood below 20% in the respective resident populations of the four countries. All four were receiving immigrants from Eastern European countries, including Poland, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Ukraine (Eurostat, 2019; IOM, 2018; NRS, 2019; ES, 2019; Statistical Service of Cyprus, 2018).

The four countries lacked substantial data on the participation of migrants in adult education programs. At the policy level, a review of *Scotland's new Scots: Refugee integration strategy 2018 to 2022* (The Scottish Government, 2018) testified to that country's commitment to overcoming barriers to migrants' participation in adult learning. At the time of writing, *Adult learning in Scotland—Statement of ambition on adult learning* (The Scottish Government, 2014) identified LCE as one of its core principles: "The educational process must build around the interests and motives of the learner and seek to fulfil the purposes and goals he or she sees as relevant and important" (p. 6). This framework sets a solid ground for adult learning in Scotland; however, it is important to note that since this statement was written in 2014, there has been no new policy on adult learning.

Malta's National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020 (Ministry of Education and Employment [MEDE], 2016) considered increased participation of migrants and provision of special programs targeting migrants among its aims. Toward the end of this study, Malta started implementing the *Integration=belonging: Migrant integration strategy & action plan (Vision 2020)* (Human Rights & Integration Directorate, 2017) to frame integration programs designed and implemented by the Integration Unit in collaboration with recognized or licensed institutions and organizations that consider the diversity of the candidates' population.

At the time of the study, Cyprus and Estonia lacked targeted policy to address the issues of adult-migrant learners. In Estonia, policy was directed by social, economic, and political change in the EU and focused on creating the preconditions for adults to acquire quality formal and non-formal education and vocational training, as detailed in *The Estonian lifelong learning strategy 2020* (Ministry of Education and Research, n.d.). Jõgi (2012) identified low motivation to participate in adult education among those with lower levels of education, older adults, and non-Estonian speaking nationalities; they also identified unequal learning opportunities due to regional, social, and economic factors.

The Cypriot cartography illuminated a monocultural, ethnocentric approach, despite the growing presence and growing heterogeneity of a non-native adult population. Fleeting references to the adoption of an intercultural model of education did not bridge the "striking gap between policy rhetoric and adult educational practice" (Gravani et al., 2021a, p. 14). Contradictory decisions and reforms, delays, as well as lack of data, information, and policy coordination impacted negatively on the diverse educational needs of adult-migrant learners (Gravani et al., 2021a).

In sum, at the time of the study, none of the countries excluded immigrants from education provision. However, clear differences were apparent: Malta and Scotland had more specialized citizenship, language, and cultural integration programs, whereas this was not the case in the Republic of Cyprus and Estonia.

Selection of the case studies

Case selection is the most critical challenge in cross-national comparative research (Ebbinghaus, 2005). An evaluation of cross-case comparability, issues of access to the adult education programs and their participants, and time limitations informed the selection of a specific language program for adult-migrant learners in each of the four countries.

In Scotland, the research team focused on English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs for migrants organized by a housing association in a densely populated area of Glasgow, one of the most ethnically diverse cities in Scotland.

In Malta, the case study involved two language programs formulated, managed, and provided by the state's Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Innovation

(DRLLLI): English as a Foreign Language Level 1 (of 2) (EFL1) and Maltese as a Foreign Language Level 1 (of 2) (MFL1).

In Estonia, the research team focused on the module Language Training, which is part of the Welcoming Program for migrants provided by the nongovernmental organization Expat Relocation Estonia OÜ since 2014. The program targets adult new immigrants from third countries who have lived in Estonia for less than three years.

'Greek Language for Foreigners', a program that was open to all non-native Greek speakers, including Europeans who work in Cyprus, and mainly attended by migrants, featured in the Cypriot case study. The fieldwork was carried out in the context of one 'Greek Language for Foreigners' course that was organized by the State and offered at Larnaca's Adult Education Center.

Sample, data collection, and analysis

Between May and June 2017, the research team carried out four classroom observations, one in each of the four countries, with the aim of investigating the four elements constituting LCE practice—techniques, relationships, motivation, and epistemology (Schweisfurth, 2013b). Data collection also included a total of 21 semi-structured interviews with 12 adult-migrant students, five adult educators/language teachers, and four policy-makers/policy executives working for state or nongovernmental institutions (Table 1).

Informed by a hermeneutical approach (Creswell et al., 2007), content and thematic data analysis methods (Miles & Huberman, 1994) informed the analysis of motivation, epistemology, techniques, and relationships. The cross-case analysis queried the extent to which LCE is used in adult-migrant education across the different contexts and investigated the efficacy of LCE as a pedagogical approach with the capacity for emancipatory social change.

Findings

This section details our findings with regard to the four elements constituting LCE practice—techniques, relationships, motivation, and epistemology.

Table 1 Data collection

Data Collection	Cyprus (Larnaca)	Estonia (Tallinn)	Malta (Msida)	Scotland (Glasgow)
Classroom observations (4)	1	1	1	1
Interviews with adult-migrant learners (12)	3	3	3	3
Interviews with adult educators (5)	1	1	1	2
Interviews with policy-makers / administrators / executives (4)	1	1	1	1

Motivation

The level of motivation of adult migrants to participate in the learning programs varied. It was strong in Scotland and Estonia, relatively strong in Malta, and almost nonexistent in Cyprus. A lack of sufficient engagement by learners and teachers in Cyprus impacted negatively on the extent of learner control over the content and process of learning and barred the possibility of pedagogical experimentation with new and appropriate teaching methods (Gravani et al., 2021b).

Motivation was directly affected by how other participants (e.g., peers, adult educators, volunteers) interacted with the educational process and experience. For instance, in Estonia, the language teacher's enthusiasm and openness, her positive interactions with students, and her ability to create an atmosphere of openness and trust in the classroom enabled learners to enjoy the classroom experience and make small progress with regard to learning tasks and active participation (Jõgi & Karu, 2021).

Similarly, volunteers in the ESOL programs in Glasgow who joined the classes and offered one-on-one support for the less able learners strengthened the intrinsic motivation of migrant adult learners (Slade & Dickson, 2021).

Economic, social and political dynamics shaping the identities and lives of specific cohorts of adult-migrant learners impacted their motivation to participate in educational practices. In Cyprus, the precarity of migrants' lives constitutes a more extreme deterrent to their free and purposeful engagement in adult educational settings. This is evident in the following extract:

The Labor Office send you to work and . . . there is no real job waiting for you. . . . You call the number that the Labor Office gives you and he [the employer] responds "Why do you call me? There is no job for you here". And when there is a small job for you to do, your boss will make you suffer. He has no money for you. To get out of this problem, I go to school for 6 months . . . then I don't need to work. (Learner 2, Cyprus)

Conversely, the potentially precarious living conditions of migrants in Glasgow motivated adult migrants' attendance at the ESOL café, where a free meal was offered after each class and informal learning and sociality took place (Slade & Dickson, 2021). The café exemplifies how educators can use informal spaces to build trust and safety. Sociality also featured among motivations identified in the Maltese case study; One participant noted that the inability to communicate in a specific language impacts one's self-esteem:

I couldn't speak English. I couldn't. I ashamed outside [sic] for shopping but now I can go outside. I have a friend, Korean friend. Very happy. . . . It's very important for communicate [sic]. (EFL1 Learner, Malta)

Epistemology

Curricular relevance and the extent to which courses were built on migrants' knowledge and skills (Schweisfurth, 2013b) varied with the type of adult education provider. When nongovernmental organizations (e.g., Expat Relocation Estonia and the housing association in Glasgow) administered the provision, participants assessed the curricula as meeting migrants' needs and interests. For instance, in Glasgow, there was no fixed curriculum in

the ESOL classes. The staff adopted a responsive and flexible approach, depending on the identified needs of participants:

No, no, no! We don't have any choice. No choice. We follow what she tell us, put this here, we'll put this here. Take this here, we take this here. Only. This is white, we follow white . . . Just she give us the lesson. Just she prepare the lesson, she give us, we read. . . . Only that. No, no. She already planned what she wants to give us and she brings it and we do it. (Learner 2, Cyprus)

Notably, the study also found that the lack of formal, centralized, and standardized policies produced a vacuum that increased the flexibility and scope of the curriculum and triggered experimentation in course planning, organization, and the educational activities included in the program. A policy expert in Malta said the following:

We're not specialist in all of this but what we do is we work with NGOs . . . and this is where we find the specialisation and these are the people who know their audiences more, and their learners more . . . because they know the specific needs, including, for example, what timings work for particular groups. . . . From here it's very centralised—this is the Ministry—so because we have . . . 400+ courses . . . management-wise, it's . . . huge . . . centrally you're . . . making sure the machine works. . . . But, of course, adult learning is not about the numbers. . . . It's about the individuals, and this is where we have Coordinators and also NGOs who then are working more one-to-one with the specific learner groups. (Policy executive, Malta)

Opportunities for space and flexibility might or might not be utilized, as not all adult educators were sufficiently self-driven, skilled, or trained to perform this role. In Malta, there was evidence of ad hoc self-developed teacher practices that allowed for small-scale learner-centeredness:

I could talk about myself, my family, my work, the reasons why I like Malta, what I like in Malta . . . the first lesson was basically to know about us--about the students, about the teacher, about the place, here, and also a bit about the curriculum, whatever we'll work on . . . So, basically we had to say, obviously in English--some things about us--where are we from . . . (MFL1 Learner, Malta).

Space for cooperation, tailor-made curricula, methods, and content in Glasgow and Tallinn produced different results in relation to migrant learners' roles in co-deciding what knowledge was relevant to them. In Glasgow, one educator reported:

Obviously, there are things . . . important, like health, making appointments. Telling date of birth, which some people don't know because it's never been recorded. If you've never been to school you may know but can't say. We have to deliver a session to help the National Health System to help them get people to communicate the date of birth. So, we focus on this, to get it into their heads it's very important to know. We have also had transport, useful in life topics. Also, talking about yourself, that is very important. I start saying about me, as people interested in their teacher. Talking about themselves. So that it helps them but also the others in the community. This is important. Shopping. And if there are occasions like Eid, Ramadan, any party is very interactive--we make decorations and we talk and sing, we learn through the activities. People come with their children and so it's for the families. I always do quizzes. For example, we did St. Andrew's and Romanian day together . . . (Educator, Scotland)

In Cyprus, the educator determined curricular aspects, yet there was no evidence that the language course and the development of learning activities factored in migrants' present and future lives:

I usually like to try to have . . . how to say it . . . a material I want to cover. Of course, I never manage to cover it, due to the lack of hours . . . learners are not involved in deciding about the content of the course. Maybe they play a role to the extent to which I can develop a topic, because something that I may consider necessary, to them it might be very necessary and the opposite (Educator, Cyprus).

Techniques

In Malta and Cyprus, the teaching and learning featured traditional techniques such as rote learning, counting, comparing marks of listening comprehension, and the use of lecturing for the transmission of pre-established course content.

Conversely, the Tallinn language program fostered open dialogue and two-way communication between the educator and the migrant learners or between the learners themselves. Examples included social/interactive/dialogue-based interactions such as group discussion, group work, pair work, and asking and answering questions; emotional/activating interactions (e.g., games, jokes, sociometrics), and situational interactions (e.g., enhanced lectures, case studies, role plays, practical exercises).

Usually the teacher uses videos, poetry, songs, and writing emails. Information and technological resources, course materials, and tasks are used also. . . . When the lesson was new, dialogues were started by the teacher. If the subject wasn't new, she usually asked the students to start the dialogue. (Learner 2, Estonia)

The Glasgow case study yielded evidence of language-learning through music and song, role play, and group work that integrated the migrants' backgrounds; in addition, it showed how these activities positively impacted the achievement of learning outcomes as well as broader social processes of social capital, integration, and cohesion:

I've learnt songs for my Romanians, I know some phrases, it's a great icebreaker. I also know some Slovak which is close to Russian and to Polish, so . . . And Arabic helps very much for people also from Afghanistan, they speak Farsi but there are one or two words which are the same. Sometimes if I have one or two learners and one is lost and is asking the other one, I can understand and say in Arabic "Yes". This also gives some assurance to them. Especially if I know for example, the meaning of their names. They like this! "Ah you are called a flower". You know? That's kind of nice. (Educator, Scotland)

Findings of the four case studies identified the (potential) contribution of technology-based teaching methods and online resources to enhancing learner-centeredness. In all language programs, the integration of digital technologies and tools strengthened the degree of responsibility adult-migrant learners took for learning.

I tried to teach them skills, such as how to use Google--for finding, for checking spelling, for vocabulary, for pronunciation, for how to access video clips which they need, how to access online exercises which they can check. So, I try to teach them the skills that they need to know if they are working on their own, you know. (EFL1 Educator, Malta)

The Malta case study also flagged the use of non-specialized digital resources, such as WhatsApp discussion groups, in which students practiced their language skills in communication beyond the classroom.

Yes, yes, I friend, eh, all the people, yes. . . . Always in class speaking or with WhatsApp speaking . . . (EFL1 Learner, Malta)

This stood out as a key moment of empowerment for migrant learners in taking control over their learning.

Relationships

The Tallinn program valued open communication, cooperation, and close contact between the educator and the migrant students. The course environment was friendly; there was an atmosphere of trust that supported a positive, dialogue-based culture among all participants. During the language courses, migrant learners felt safe and respected since issues and topics that could lead to conflicts were consciously avoided:

Learning atmosphere was friendly, it was fun . . . we were able to share our experiences and thoughts, we had common coffee breaks and we talked to everyone. . . . Everybody felt free, you could say anything. (Learner 1, Estonia)

In the case of Glasgow and Malta, participants identified the relationships nurtured by the staff as a key strength, responsible for helping to build a culture of mutual respect and equality among the migrant learners and between them and the educators.

It's very friendly, supporting, it's accepting . . . I have this man from Nigeria, who has been here for ten years, and his family is here, and he was telling me that this was the first class where, the first time where he did not have any racial comments . . . He said, "Wherever I've been, there has always been a feeling of people not wanting me". (EFL1 Educator, Malta)

In Glasgow, one educator expressed that the relationship was critical to the learning environment but difficult:

It can be a problem. . . . The young ones . . . 17–20, they want to be loved. I had one saying she loved me and sometimes called me her mum and I said, "Don't call me your mum, I'm your teacher". . . . she was trying to get my attention . . . she was a child with nothing and so she would be noisy, shouting. Many of the learners have additional problems, loneliness, not being accepted . . . their families don't support them . . . (Educator, Scotland)

In contrast, the Cypriot case study brought to light instances where the cultures of tolerance and respect served to reproduce rather than challenge boundaries and hierarchies between native and migrant cultures. On the one hand, there seemed to be harmonious relationships between learners and between them and the educators, without tension or friction. Yet, this frictionless learning environment occurred because of participants keeping distance rather than engaging, maintaining boundaries rather than challenging them:

We are not friends outside, not friends by the internet. In the class, why? Because I want to learn. In the class I don't say what I feel . . . not at all. Everyone has his point of view, he has the right to say everything, whatever he wants in a framework

of respect and mutual understanding and dignity. We will not hurt anyone, we keep a safe distance amongst us. (Learner 3, Cyprus)

Discussion

The cross-case analysis revealed differences in (a) adult-migrant learners' motivations for participating in adult education; (b) the relevance of the curriculum; (c) the extent to which the courses were built on migrant learners' knowledge and skills; (d) teaching techniques and methods; (e) relationships; (d) the degree of control that migrant learners do or do not have over their learning; and (e) the extent to which learner-centered measures are utilized as a motor for social change.

While the potential for learner-centeredness was evident in all the sites to varying degrees, questions arose: Were these manifestations of learner-centeredness contributing substantially to the level of learner emancipation needed for participants to become productive members of a community rather than peripheral survivors? Were the spaces and opportunities offered within them truly liberatory?

The analysis revealed the often-perceived need by the state to integrate (read assimilate) migrants into society. Out of the emergency arose the need for quick-fix programs meant primarily, albeit not exclusively, to initiate migrants into the dominant society, with clear instructions by the supplier state of what knowledge and basic skills are needed to survive in the recipient country (Borg, 2021). In this context, LCE, at its best, becomes an on-site, practical response to cohort situations which are heterogeneous as far as their cultural, social and economic capital, self- and social location, and years of experience in mobility outside their home country are concerned (Borg, 2021). Given the short-term nature of the programs, what can generally be achieved beyond first-response goals is limited. This was confirmed by two interviewees in the Cyprus case study, who claimed that the program they attended would not be enough for them to achieve integration. Similarly, the linguistic goals of the Estonian program—ranging from the use of everyday expressions and simple phrases to introducing oneself and others to asking simple questions—suggest that this limitation may be a common denominator of the courses under study.

In contrast to the short-term approach of most of the programs under review, the findings elaborated by Schweisfurth's (2013b) "emancipation narrative"—in which learners' questioning of their own realities is key to learning—confirm the urgent need for inductive ELCE programs. These would be human-rights driven and feature a pedagogical ecology, in which education—conceived as a social act—engages with the student as an independent and autonomous learner.

ELCE challenges "the student as consumer" model (Newson, 2004, as cited in Borg, 2021) and resists compulsive individuality. ELCE seeks to transform education spaces into possibilitarian sites of liberatory practice, where individual needs become communal needs, marginalized voices become centered voices in all aspects of the curricular experience, and education for survival is transformed into education for active engagement with the world (Borg, 2021).

ELCE responds to the need for transforming top-down, educator-learner relationships into opportunities for genuine collaboration. For this to happen, the process of knowledge production needs to be revisited; the almost exclusive legitimacy given to mainstreamed, "official" knowledge at the expense of other forms of knowledge production must be challenged. We must question why "official knowledge"—perceived by authorities as indispensable for purposeful living in a culturally-different society—does not regard the daily

experiences, intuitions, and cultural expressions of migrant adults as worthwhile or valid ways of knowing.

ELCE community-based, adult education projects aim at addressing the immediate needs of migrants and other adults while engaging in consciousness-raising, confidence-building, networking, and transformative action. ELCE initiatives are rooted in participatory democracy rather than abstract rhetoric and revolve around the pedagogy of authentic dialogue (Borg, 2021). While focusing on the immediate practical needs of learners, ELCE-driven programs challenge perceptions of migrants and migration and the view that the expert is the only source of knowing; they problematize assumptions about learning in the context of migration and generate empathy with all migrants, but especially those who are struggling as a result of social injustices, by building confidence in the possibility that human injustices can be reversed through collective engagement with the world (Borg, 2021).

ELCE programs call for long-term, collaborative, programmatic commitments—from inception to delivery—that serve the ethical and pedagogical need for educators to familiarize themselves with the challenges and realities that define migration and understand how the receiving context intersects with the past and present lived realities of migrants.

In summary, ELCE is an ideologically informed and pedagogical approach that goes beyond course adaptations to address learners' needs. ELCE welds the collective reading of the world with ongoing communal action for personal and social change. ELCE's vision is overt and clear: It foregrounds the notion that migrants and educators must act in communion as both are protagonists in a process of mutual and reciprocal transformation (Borg, 2021).

Conclusions

The comparative cross-case research discussed in this article queried the extent to which LCE is used in adult-migrant education as a tool for social change across four country/city contexts. It also scrutinized the capacity of LCE as a pedagogical tool yielding emancipatory social change.

The study confirmed that opportunities for co-creation and tailor-made curricula, content, and practices translate into mutual respect between teachers and learners, cooperation, establishment of contacts, and trust for learning (Schweisfurth, 2013b). Guided or spontaneous use of in/formal ICT tools stood out as key moments of empowerment for migrant learners to take control over their learning. Relationships emerged as sources of enrichment in the adult-migrant learners' educational and life journeys—though they may be taxing for educators when coupled with other psycho-social issues, such as poverty, social exclusion, trauma, or racism.

The cross-national collaboration informed the researchers' self-reflection concerning their assumptions about LCE as a pedagogical approach and field of research, migration as a social process, and migrant adult students as co-creators of educational programs.

Remarkably, the findings of comparative cross-case research enabled the researchers to elaborate Schweisfurth's (2013b) "emancipation narrative" into an empirically founded advocacy for inductive ELCE programs in adult (migrant) education. It is hoped that this paper will contribute critically to enhancing the equitable provision of quality and relevant education, particularly for adult migrants, with the view that provision will not only assimilate these adult learners into a global and increasingly mobile

economy but can help individual adults to engage collectively with a world that remains stubbornly asymmetrical in the distribution of wealth and power.

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