



<http://www.diva-portal.org>

This is the published version of a paper published in *Adult Education Quarterly*.

Citation for the original published paper (version of record):

Sandberg, F., Fejes, A., Dahlstedt, M., Olson, M. (2016)

Adult education as a heterotopia of deviation: a dwelling for the abnormal citizen.

Adult Education Quarterly, 66(2): 103-119

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0741713615618447>

Access to the published version may require subscription.

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published paper.

Permanent link to this version:

<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:du-20532>

Adult Education as a Heterotopia of Deviation: A Dwelling for the Abnormal Citizen

Adult Education Quarterly
2016, Vol. 66(2) 103–119
© The Author(s) 2015
Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/0741713615618447
aeq.sagepub.com


Fredrik Sandberg¹, Andreas Fejes¹, Magnus Dahlstedt¹,
and Maria Olson^{2,3,4}

Abstract

We argue that municipal adult education (MAE) can be seen as a place for displaced and abnormal citizens to gain temporary stability, enabling their shaping into desirable subjects. Drawing on a poststructural discursive analysis, we analyze policy texts and interviews with teachers and students. Our analysis illustrates how two distinct but interrelated student subjectivities are shaped: the rootless, unmotivated, and irresponsible student; and the responsible, motivated, and goal-oriented student. The difference is that the latter of these subjectivities is positioned as desirable. MAE provides a temporary place in time, a heterotopia of deviation, allowing students to escape precarious employment. The heterotopia places the students in a positive utopian dream of the future. A utopia is not a real place, and what is to become of the students after finishing MAE is not determined; the students themselves should shape it. If they fail, in line with a neoliberal governmentality, it is their own fault.

Keywords

heterotopia of deviation, adult education, Foucault, power, citizenship, precarious employment, poststructuralism

Introduction

Adult education as a space for shaping democratic citizens has been a central topic of policy making in the last few decades (cf. Milana, 2007). This could not least be seen

¹Linköping University, Linköping, Sweden

²Dalarna University, Falun, Sweden

³Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden

⁴University of Skövde, Skövde, Sweden

Corresponding Author:

Andreas Fejes, Department of Behavioural Sciences and Learning, Linköping University, SE-581 83 Linköping, Sweden.

Email: Andreas.fejes@liu.se

at the 1997 CONFINTEA conference held in Hamburg. This conference was dedicated, among other things, to enhancing the commitment to adult learning and nonformal education; a particular focus was placed on adult education as a key factor in planning human development globally (Nesbit & Welton, 2013). The conference focused on adult educators by addressing the significant challenges of “democracy, peace and human rights, respect for diversity, economic and environmental sustainability, and work force development” (Nesbit & Welton, 2013, p. 2). This conference was the source of the Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning and Agenda for the Future (UNESCO, 1997). In this document, it is suggested that adult education should be a major factor in the 21st century for building a better nonviolent world where dialogue is embraced, in a culture focused on peace and justice. In such a world, active citizenship and full participation of all citizens would be declared as urgent goals, focusing on the formation of a learning society faithful to the issues of social justice and wellbeing (UNESCO, 1997).

Similar ambitions can also be seen in policy making on adult education, not least in Sweden, where municipal adult education (MAE) is construed as a place for second chances, that is, for adults who failed in their schooling or who have migrated to Sweden. Here, they receive the opportunity to complete their compulsory and upper secondary school education. The aim of adult education is to provide the knowledge necessary in order to enter and remain in the labor market, as well as to live and manage life as a citizen. In Sweden, participation in adult education is free of charge and students can obtain support via student loans. If a potential student has a job, there is a law regulating the right to take leave in order to study. Adult education is thus, through policy making, shaped as something positive, a place to prepare adults for their lives as citizens, which is construed as beneficial for both individuals and society (cf. Fejes, 2006).

However, as has been pointed out by several adult education researchers, there have been some important discursive shifts during recent decades, which have implications for adult education as a space shaping the ideal citizen (cf. Brunila, 2011; Fejes, 2006, 2010; Field, 2006; Nicoll & Fejes, 2011; Rubenson, 2009). It has been argued that the gradual shift from speaking about lifelong education to starting to speak about lifelong learning was related to a shift from a more humanistic notion of adult education to a more economically driven one, as well as framed within a neoliberal discourse on how governing should operate. Rather than limiting learning to institutions, learning became construed as something occurring everywhere and all the time. Such a shift in language made it possible to start speaking about the adult as someone who is in constant need of learning, and who has to take responsibility herself/himself for such learning (cf. Fejes, 2006; Simons & Masschelein, 2008; Usher & Edwards, 2007). As a result, adult education, including that in Sweden, became primarily conceptualized as a place aimed at fostering an employable workforce; the target groups for adult education were thus those at risk of exclusion, such as the unemployed, migrants, single mothers, and individuals on social benefits, as well as those at risk of losing their jobs and thus in need of retraining (Fejes, 2006).

Against the aforementioned background, and drawing on Foucault’s (Foucault & Miscowiec, 1986) notion of heterotopia of deviation, we argue that adult education

can be seen as a place for displaced and abnormal citizens to gain temporary stability, enabling their shaping and molding into desirable subjects. We illustrate how regularities of such discourse emerge in policy texts and in interviews with students as well as teachers. Such analysis contributes to the existing literature on the shaping of student subjectivity and the ideal citizen in adult education, as such research has previously mainly focused on policy texts (cf. Brunila, 2011; Fejes, 2005, 2006; Simons & Masschelein, 2008; Usher & Edwards, 2007).

Municipal Adult Education in Sweden

Sweden has a long history of state-supported as well as institutionalized adult education, dating back to the mid-1800s. However, Swedish formal adult education (MAE; as compared with the nonformal adult education that is carried out, e.g., in folk high schools and in study circles) was not created until 1968, and had its basis in two discourses at the time: a discourse on the need to increase the supply of labor and a discourse on the reserve of talent (Fejes, 2006). The former discourse had its basis in Sweden having a fully functioning industry after the Second World War, and there was thus a huge need to supply industry with competent workers. The second discourse was connected to research carried out on behalf of the government (Härnqvist, 1958; Husén, 1956), looking at the intelligence of conscripts and relating this to their school grades. Such research illustrated how the intelligence of the population was higher compared with the level of school qualifications attained among the population. Thus, a reserve of talent was identified. Husén (1956), a professor of education, entered this debate arguing that there were many adults who never got the chance to study at upper secondary level but who had the intelligence to do so. Thus, education opportunities for them needed to be created.

Related to these two discourses, the government first, in 1953, created possibilities for adults to participate in evening courses, and then take the exams for a school qualification. This was followed, in 1968, by the institutionalization of formal adult education in the shape of MAE. MAE was a place for adults to study in order to get a qualification at compulsory and upper secondary school level. At the beginning it was evening classes, with students who were part of the “reserve of talent,” highly motivated, and with an aptitude for study (Fejes, 2006). But in 1971, due to political pressure from the Swedish trade union confederation, MAE came to be directed first toward those who were furthest away from the labor market as well as those with the lowest level of education. Further reforms in the 1970s made it a legal right to take leave from work in order to study, and opportunities for study loans were introduced. This made it possible to organize MAE as daytime studies, and MAE came to take a form very similar to upper secondary school in how it was designed.

The 1980s did not see any major adult education reforms, but the 1990s was a decade of many education reforms closely connected to discourses on new public management and marketization. Three influential reforms need mentioning. *First*, on the initiative of the social democratic government in 1991, there was a shift, from the state as the funder of education, to the municipalities. Management by objectives was introduced, where

each municipality was responsible for funding schools as well as MAE, and for reaching the objectives set up by the state in legislation and the curriculum. Through a national agency, the state then made follow-ups to make sure each municipality delivered what was required. *Second*, the charter school reform introduced by the conservative government in 1992 turned the entire compulsory and upper secondary school system in Sweden into a quasi-market, where each student had (and still has) the opportunity to choose which school to attend (either a school run by the municipality, or an independent school), and the municipality has to send a voucher to the school at which the student is enrolled (Lundahl, Arreman, Holm, & Lundström, 2014).

Third, instead of the voucher system, a procurement system was introduced in MAE in the mid-1990s, further supported through the Adult Education Initiative between the years 1997 and 2002. With this initiative, introduced by the social democratic government, the state funded 100,000 study places per year in MAE for 5 years, targeting those who had the lowest level of education. The aim was to halve the unemployment rate by raising the level of education in the supply side of the workforce. The initiative brought 15% of the labor force into adult education and new providers were encouraged to offer adult education, as the idea was that competition between many providers would lead to new pedagogical approaches as well as higher quality of adult education and a reduction in costs (Fejes, 2006; Lumsden Wass, 2004). A variety of providers should cater for better adaptation to the individual needs of the students. Today, MAE in most Swedish municipalities is organized as franchises for the public sector. The transactions are regulated by a transnational law, the Purchase Act, which is used to establish procurement processes. At the beginning of the initiative in 1997, 14.4% of all students participated in courses delivered by a nonpublic provider, and in 2014 the proportion had increased to 45.7% (Fejes & Nordvall, 2014).

Summing up, MAE is a national formal adult education system, following the same curriculum as compulsory and upper secondary school. Municipals are responsible to finance and organize MAE but could chose to do so through procurement processes. Each citizen who do not have complete degrees from compulsory and/or upper secondary school have the right to participate free of charge, with a right to take a leave from work, as well as get a student loan. MAE is controlled by the State school inspection, focusing on municipalities doing what they should according to the national school law and the national curriculum.

Theorization and Analysis of Heterotopias

In this article, we draw on a poststructural theorization inspired by the work of Michel Foucault (Foucault, 2007; Foucault & Miskowiec, 1986) and education scholars who have developed and mobilized such a perspective (e.g., Fejes, 2006, 2010; Nicoll, Fejes, Olson, Dahlstedt, & Biesta, 2013; Olson, Fejes, Dahlstedt, & Nicoll, 2014; Simons & Masschelein, 2008). We specifically draw on the concept of heterotopia inspired by Foucault (Foucault & Miskowiec, 1986).

In contrast to a utopia, which is a nonexistent place, a heterotopia is an actual place (like the mirror or the graveyard for instance). All “real” places are not heterotopias

though and there are different forms of heterotopias, some positive and some negative (Foucault & Miskowiec, 1986). In this article, we specifically draw on the notion of heterotopia of deviation, one of several forms of heterotopias mentioned by Foucault. Such notion is seldom considered by scholars in the field of education. This notion directs attention to certain spaces and their functions. A heterotopia of deviation is a “real” place “where individuals whose behavior is deviant in relation to the norm go or are forced to go. Ex: rest homes, psychiatric hospitals, prisons, retirement homes” (Foucault & Miskowiec, 1986, p. 25). Such heterotopias are places that hold what has been displaced while serving as sites of stability for the displaced (Rushbrook, 2002). In other words, these places are sites for the shaping, molding and correction of those who do not fall within what is discursively construed as desirable in a specific historical and cultural practice.

An important aspect of the shaping of adult education as a heterotopia of deviation is the operation of a neoliberal mode of governing (Foucault, 2007). Within such a mode, this heterotopia is shaped in specific ways. Rather than ignoring or questioning the way adult education is conceived as inherently good and as a practice for adults to become empowered (in policy as well as research), such a mode of governing draws on exactly these kinds of assumptions. For example, the assumption that adult education empowers people draws on a notion that people are already active, at the same time as adult education prompts people to become active. Freedom of the individual becomes both the starting point and the effect of the governing practice (Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2014). Analyzing adult education as a heterotopia of deviation thus directs interest toward how notions of adult education as inherently good are discursively mobilized in the production of the heterotopia.

In order to analyze how adult education is shaped as a heterotopia of deviation, this article draws on data within a larger project on citizenship education within and beyond adult education (Nicoll et al., 2013; Olson et al., 2014; Rahm & Fejes, 2015). Students, teachers, as well as policy documents are all part in shaping discourses on adult education. It is in the regularities of statements in which discourses emerge, take hold, and have “effects” (Foucault, 2007). We have thus focused our analysis on two recent policy documents on adult education in Sweden as well as interviews with students and teachers, and how regularities of statement emerge in these. The selected policy documents are the two most recent green papers concerned with MAE in Sweden (Ministry of Education, 2013a, 2013b), thus providing a basis to identify the current discourse on adult education in Sweden.

Furthermore, interviews were conducted with 37 students and 4 teachers in 2013-2014 in a school for MAE in a large city in Sweden. The school was chosen due to its size, providing a range of courses with potential data access, as well as a site where access was granted. One of the authors followed two teachers in social sciences in their work, focusing on three classes of students. These classes were selected as they are classes in which citizenship education is most visible in the curriculum. Students in these classes were interviewed about their participation in adult education, their notions of what it means to be a citizen, and how and what citizenship activities emerge within as well as beyond practices of education. Students were selected based on a

convenience sample, where those willing to participate were engaged in interviews. The two teachers, as well as two of their colleagues, were also interviewed about their views on adult education, the student population, and how adult education has changed during their careers. The first two teachers were selected based on them granting access to their classes, and the two other teachers were selected based on snowball sampling, that is, they were recommended by the two initial teachers. All interviews were transcribed verbatim.

In order to identify in what ways MAE is constructed as a heterotopia of deviation, we conducted a discursive analysis framed within a poststructural theorization inspired by the work of Michel Foucault. A discourse “can be defined as the group of statements that belong to a single system of formation” (Foucault, 1972, p. 107). An analysis of discourse in this sense focuses on identifying regularities of statements in the material being analyzed (Fejes & Nicoll, 2008). Interview transcripts from interviews with students and teachers as well as in the green papers are here treated equally, that is, they all provide statements about the object of which it speaks. With an interest directed at MAE as an heterotopia of deviation, our analysis has more concretely focused on identifying regularities of statements in terms of how the student population, and their reasons for and possible effects of participating, are described in the interview transcripts and green papers. In the following, we outline our analysis of the policy texts, followed by our analysis of the interviews. The article ends with a discussion and some concluding remarks.

Municipal Adult Education Shaping an Employable Workforce

Municipal adult education in Sweden could be argued to have three functions: compensatory, democratic, and labor market oriented. In the school law, it is stated,

The aim of municipal adult education is to support and stimulate adults in their learning. They should be provided with the opportunities to develop knowledge, and their competence in order to strengthen their position in work and social life, and to encourage their personal development. The starting point for MAE should be the needs and prerequisites of the individual. Those with the lowest level of education should be prioritized. (SFS, 2010)

First, adult education should help students who previously failed in their schooling and/or who do not have qualifications from compulsory and/or upper secondary school. This could include migrants and those who have previously partaken in the Swedish educational system. Second, adult education should foster individuals who can partake in life as active democratic citizens, and third, adult education has a function of preparing students for the labor market. However, there has been a shift in emphasis among these three functions and the relationships between them since the creation of MAE in 1968 (cf. Rubenson, Tuijnman, & Wahlgren, 1999). In the past decade, the focus has become aimed at the labor market function and the shaping of an

employable workforce (Fejes, 2010). Such a shift is supported when analyzing the two latest green papers on adult education in Sweden (Ministry of Education, 2013a, 2013b), in which a discussion of the democratic function of adult education is lacking. When searching for words like citizenship, citizenship education, and personal development, these words are lacking in these two papers. The only time they are mentioned is when referring to the school law. Rather, focus is on issues of cost efficiency and flexibility in terms of organization as well as in terms of educational delivery. The outcome of MAE is construed as the construction of an employable workforce.

In the following, we will focus on the ways in which the students and the student population are shaped through such policies. How are the students who enter adult education construed through policy statements?

Students at Risk of Exclusion

In the two recent green papers (Ministry of Education, 2013a, 2013b), an individual who enters adult education is construed as a person with a lack of knowledge, who needs to study in order to participate in social as well as work life. It is argued that such individuals are a heterogeneous group, originating from different countries and speaking different languages. Focusing on the participants in basic courses in MAE, one green paper argues,

Nine out of ten [participants] are born abroad. One-third have previous experience of education at upper secondary level while the others are illiterate or have a very short experience of participation in education. The majority are females, and the average age is above 32 years. . . . A problem with MAE at a basic level is that 24 percent of participants drop out of their courses. (Ministry of Education, 2013a, p. 18)

This group of students is on the one hand here construed as heterogeneous in terms of nationality, and also partly in terms of previous academic performance. Among the one third of participants with previous experience of upper secondary schooling, there are also migrants with academic degrees (Ministry of Education, 2013a). On the other hand, the group is partly construed as homogeneous in that the vast majority were not born in Sweden, and the majority lack any major previous experience of education. Many of the students are defined as illiterate, and seen as being in need of extra support in order to compensate for their lack of schooling. The student population is further homogenized when the green paper argues that “for many [students], especially in the basic level courses, different forms of social welfare benefits made up the major part of students’ incomes, especially since more than half of the participants lacked other means of income” (Ministry of Education, 2013a, p. 19). The student population is thus designated as being in need of support and encouragement in terms of performing further study.

The solution put forward in the green papers, in relation to the problem they construct through their statements about the students, is to find ways to personalize/individualize adult education in order to adapt to each and every individual’s traits,

prerequisites, and needs. Even though it is argued that the individualization of education is good for everyone, certain groups are pointed out for whom individualization is claimed to be particularly beneficial, namely, “students with disabilities and Roma students who have not completed compulsory schooling . . . [and] students born abroad with an academic degree from their previous country of residence” (Ministry of Education, 2013a, p. 20). These groups are thus positioned as being at risk of marginalization, unless education is individualized to match their specific needs.

Thus, the student population is construed in a specific way, which is dependent on knowledge currently available and deemed important to mobilize. Particularly important here is the statistical data drawn upon in the texts, as these objectify participants in terms of unemployment, immigration, social benefits, incomes, disabilities, and so on. Specific groups such as immigrants with low as well as high levels of education, people with low or no income, unemployed people, and especially females are, through discourse, positioned as being at risk of exclusion. Adult education thus becomes a place where the students, who are, construed as not yet fully citizens (and thus deviants; Olson, 2012), can be corrected and shaped into successful citizens who will be able to partake in the labor market.

Policy statements thus here positions MAE as a heterotopia of deviation, where some groups are construed as in risk and as lacking something, and where MAE is positioned as the place where such lack should be corrected. In order to elaborate further on this discourse on adult education, and the way subjectivities of students are shaped, we will now turn to an analysis of interviews with students and teachers.

Mobilizing Discourses

Regularities of statements emerge when analyzing the transcripts of the interviews with students and teachers. The following questions guide this analysis: In what way do the students pick up and mobilize policy discourses? What student subjectivities are shaped and fostered? Two distinctive student subjectivities are identified: *the rootless, unmotivated, and irresponsible student*; and *the responsible, goal-oriented, and motivated student*.

The Rootless, Unmotivated, and Irresponsible Student

Statements from the teachers as well as the students position the latter group as failures, being unmotivated, irresponsible, and rootless. Such constructions, through regularities of statements, mainly emerge in two ways within the interviews with the teachers: through descriptions of current student populations, and through descriptions of and comparisons with previous student populations.

Alex, a teacher in social sciences within MAE, describes that students are participating in MAE because there is no alternative, as they have failed to get a job. However, when students find an alternative (e.g., a job), they immediately drop out. He goes on to say,

The big difference of teaching in adult education in comparison with teaching at upper secondary school is that . . . how should one put it . . . many students have much more experience of life and all students must take a greater responsibility and many students are not great at doing that. There is, as we in the teaching profession put it, a reason for why one attends adult education. In many cases the reason is that one has not been able to succeed at upper secondary school and then one tries once more and it does not work this time either.

Students are here described as failures, as those who have not managed to complete upper secondary school, and who will probably fail once more. Furthermore, they are construed as those who are not very responsible, even though they are expected to be so in their capacities as adult students. In the above description, there is also a comparison made between teaching in MAE and at upper secondary school. This is further elaborated in a statement where Peter, a teacher with 20 years of teaching experience, compares his current students with students in the 1990s. According to Peter, students are now younger, often with a non-Swedish ethnic background. Numerous students are described as having little experience of being active in society, for instance, through employment, and many of them are said to be “rootless.” Peter draws the following picture:

The group that attends today thus has a tendency to be younger and more students have dropped out from education instead of starting to work. So there are more individuals who have not had any real relationship with Swedish society. Instead you have either arrived in Sweden or you have dropped out of some kind of education and then fluttered around a bit and then you end up in adult education. Very few today [students] have anchorage in family, work . . . own apartment. Earlier, it was people [students] who were a part of society; now, it is more individuals who are . . . a bit more, yes, rootless.

Subjectivities of students are here construed as fluid rather than stable. Students are spoken about as “younger,” as newly arrived in Sweden, “rootless,” and as “fluttering around,” rather than having a job or being engaged in family life. MAE nowadays is here construed as a kind of heterotopia of deviation, a space where these kinds of students should be purged of their lack of responsibility and given the ability to be part of society. Through development of a “real relationship with Swedish society,” they should be shaped into successful citizens who can gain employment and thus support themselves in terms of having their own apartment and starting a family. They are thus positioned as currently being outside society, and in need of stability in terms of belonging to something bigger (being part of “society”), compared with only belonging to themselves (being just “individuals”).

Regularities of statements emerge concerning the shaping of students when we turn to the comments from an interview with another teacher. Bruce also reflects on the changes in adult education in the past couple of decades:

In 1994, I started [working] in adult education and at that time it was still very obvious that it concerned these [students] that took the national scholastic aptitude test. There was a clear and vivid aim with the studies: you were on the way towards university studies.

You knew what you wanted and where you were heading. Since then it has slowly, yet clearly, changed. Now we get, in my experience, younger and younger students. And, there is not really a specific goal for studying—the goal is to finish, that is that you have failures in previous studies in upper secondary school. Then, you simply have to complete and finish it. But there is really no thought on studying at university level. And students have not had any time spent between upper secondary school and adult education. There are those individuals who just go across the schoolyard from one unit [upper secondary school] to the other [adult education].

Students are here positioned as young and as failures, in terms of their previous studies. They are further construed as being without any specific goals and without ambition, compared with students in the 1990s. The focus of students seems to be “to finish,” rather than to finish in order to do something specific, such as further study or getting a specific job. Together, these statements and others from the interviews with the teachers label the students in MAE as failures, being irresponsible, rootless, and lacking in ambition, as not yet being a “real” part of society, and thus not really being good-enough citizens. Either the students have not yet had a job (as they have directly moved from upper secondary school to MAE), or they are quite newly arrived in Sweden as migrants. MAE as a heterotopia of deviation suggests that this is a place for adults who have failed and who now get a chance (temporary stability) to become corrected and molded into citizens who are part of society.

Turning to the interviews with the students, similar ways of constructing student subjectivity emerge. Students position themselves as failures in terms of previous schooling and in terms of the labor market, which is illustrated by statements from the students Marilyn and Thomas.

I missed getting the 400 points needed to be able to apply to study at university level, so that's why [I'm studying adult education]. Hmm, but I was 17, so young, when I graduated, so I thought, but fuck school . . . (Marilyn)

It did not go very well for me in upper secondary school; now, I have the possibility to fix that. (Thomas)

Failure is here construed in terms of being young and unmotivated when studying in upper secondary school. Adult education becomes a second chance, a place to “fix” previous failings and behavior in school and thus to get back on the right track. Another way in which failure is construed relates to the labor market, which is exemplified by statements from the students Joni and Rodney:

My family bought a video store where I worked for almost three years until we went bankrupt, so that didn't work. After that, I came back to municipal adult education. I had to do something with my life because my life also went bankrupt, so to speak. (Joni)

And then I worked for one year. After that, I moved away from home, and then I was unemployed for a year, and lived on money I'd saved. Then, I enrolled in adult education . . . that was like 2½ years ago. (Rodney)

Joni worked for a few years in her parents' business, but when they had to close it down, there were few alternatives. Joni had previously participated in adult education, and when her parents' business, as well as she herself, went into "bankruptcy," adult education became an option potentially providing new opportunities for her in the labor market. Rodney also argues that failure in the labor market is a reason for entering adult education.

So far, we have illustrated how there are regularities of statements shaping a discourse where MAE students are defined as rootless and irresponsible failures. Such failure refers both to previous schooling and to getting or keeping a job. Adult education here becomes a space, a heterotopia, for those who are not yet citizens in terms of having the knowledge needed in order to get or keep a job, and be included in society. However, as we will illustrate in the next section, it is not only a place for the unmotivated. Even though nearly all students before entering MAE had failed in upper secondary school or in the job market, adult education is also considered as a place for motivated students who have ambitions and are responsible—students who see MAE as something positive, which can help them to correct previous misfortunes and problems.

The Responsible, Motivated, and Goal-Oriented Student

The teachers' and students statements establish two somewhat different student subjectivities. These subjectivities are positioned as each other's opposites and in the interviews with teachers mostly as very dualistic. Matthew, a teacher, who on the one hand defines students as irresponsible failures, also states that some students go to MAE in order to get a "decent job" or to study at "university level":

Some of the students want to study at university level, others just want a decent job. . . . Some of them are tired of their jobs, some have worked in the restaurant sector and are tired of the working conditions . . . it is quite mixed, yes . . . many young students have problems with not getting anywhere because of poor grades from upper secondary school. So, adult education has become a prolongation of upper secondary school.

In this statement, the students are not construed as rootless or unmotivated; rather, they are those who previously failed in their studies but are now aiming for something specific, such as university studies or getting a new job. Alex expresses similar notion of students by comparing the motivated and unmotivated groups.

Here, it is everything from the totally unmotivated to the totally motivated. At the same time, the difference in knowledge is tremendous. You can have one student who used to be a shepherd in Somalia who has been in Sweden for two years, to individuals from some sort of priest family who fled from religious persecution, but who have previously studied theology at university level. These individuals then have to find a common level. . . . It is very evident—it is like a great ravine between students. One group is here because of societal measures. They don't want to be here, but they have to. This contrasts to the group that [by their own volition] enroll in MAE because they actually want to achieve something. These two groups are overwhelmingly different.

Alex here mobilizes a dualistic notion of the student population. Either the students are motivated to undertake studies or they are not. Either they are studying by their own volition, or they are not. He goes as far as to say that, within the group of unmotivated students, there is a group that is “detained” and forced to attend classes, although he admits that this group is rather small. Nonetheless, the broader group of unmotivated seems to be considered as quite sizeable.

Even though the same regularities emerge in the shaping of student subjectivity in interviews with teachers and students, the students tend to provide a more positive and complex impression of the student population than the teachers do. The students to a greater extent than the teachers position themselves as responsible, in contrast to the teachers’ views of them being quite unmotivated and irresponsible. And student statements are not as dualistic as the teachers. In the following statement, Marcus, one of the students, depicts adult education as a place to deal with problems, as well as a place that provides opportunities for success.

Adult education does not have anything to do with citizenship because this is where people go when they have failed in upper secondary school . . . if you interpret it that way. But to study actually has something to do with being a citizen. Because you have to be educated before you start working. . . . Here, we find those who failed [in upper secondary school] but who want to succeed . . . people are a bit more serious here . . . they want to overcome their problems . . .

Marcus mobilizes discourses of success and failure, as well as of responsibility. Education is positioned as an entry ticket to getting a job, and getting a job is a sign of success. The logic here is that the students have problems, and by taking responsibility to enter and successfully complete adult education, they will eventually get a job, and thus overcome their problems. Marcus here describes the students as responsible, in contrast to how they were labelled by the teachers. Furthermore, the statement illustrates the complex relationships between the two student subjectivities. On the one hand, MAE is constructed as a place for the failed ones who are not responsible; on the other hand, it is a place to take responsibility, correct failure and to achieve something specific, namely, to overcome their problems. The construction of students as responsible individuals is further illustrated by a statement from an interview with the student Jonas:

It is not that great, I have never enjoyed school, but it is something that has to be done. When you have always had such tough times with work, you feel that if you are supposed to work full time, which hardly exists anymore, but if not that then at least get a better job, with more pay, even though I have always been paid minimum wage, education is needed and then I have to do something about it. Now it was perfect conditions for me to deal with that. I was unemployed for six months before I started here, so it has become more of an issue with money. You have to deal with this.

A complex relationship between student subjectivities here emerge, where Jonas construe himself as a failure, at the same time as he construe himself as responsible. Jonas,

who has been unemployed and who dislikes school, positions the choice of entering adult education as a necessity, as well as an individual responsibility. In order to get a better job, education is needed. Furthermore, Jonas sees participation as a necessity as it provides student benefits and the opportunities to support himself (e.g., through student loans) after a longer period of unemployment. Thus, participation is here partly construed as being “forced” on the student. However, at the same time, the student positions himself as being responsible as he chooses “to deal with this.”

The idea of participating in adult education as a way of taking responsibility by making an active individual choice is further elaborated by another student, Marilyn:

Then, I think it is great that they have this because some [students] had lost their motivation when they were younger, when they attended upper secondary school. They did not manage then, but then found motivation again . . . somehow, there is more motivation here, it is more of an individual and conscious choice. Upper secondary school was, in some sense, compulsory. You sort of had to attend it, but here you made the choice all by yourself to choose to study here. Upper secondary school is more of a requirement, you know, and here you go to do your thing because you think about yourself and your future.

Marilyn states that entry into adult education is not coerced because it is an active conscious choice made by the individuals who enroll in it. Students are here construed as being more motivated because they think about themselves and the future they are about to build. Adult education is on the one hand something that you need to have, and on the other hand, it is important to emphasize that the individual makes the choice to study.

Discussion

As argued in this article, both teachers and students pick up and mobilize policy discourses and position students as subjects of deviation. Both the students’ and the teachers’ statements construe students as not-yet-desirable citizens—be it in relation to themselves, society, their studies, or the job market. The students are either positioned as failures in terms of lacking proper education because of a failure to finish upper secondary school or because of a failure in the job market. Through such statements, adult education is shaped as a heterotopia of deviation, a place of citizen formation, where citizens are molded and corrected into becoming what is considered desirable. However, as our analysis of the interviews illustrates, two distinct but interrelated student subjectivities are established: *the rootless, unmotivated and irresponsible student* and *the responsible, motivated and goal-oriented one*. What these subjectivities have in common is that they are both assigned to students who are construed as deviants, that is, in need of correction in order to become desirable citizens. At the same time, they are construed as potential candidates for success (according to their own measures). The main difference is that the latter one of these subjectivities is positioned as that which is desirable, which raises some questions.

First, we argue that this is an example of how positive notions of adult education and the ambition to help empower people are mobilized within a certain rationality of governing. The logic goes that the failed citizen, or the not-yet citizen, needs to be shaped, molded, and corrected within adult education in order to become responsible, motivated, and goal-oriented in life. More specifically, the adult student should be able to get a job, an apartment, and to support himself/herself. One way to view this logic could be to see students' choice as circumscribed; they have chosen adult education as the only possible way to solve their current problematic situation, as a failure either on the labor market or in school, or alternatively the status of being a migrant. In this regard, adult education as a heterotopia of deviation becomes a place that serves as a site of stability for their displacement; that is, they are more or less forced to end up in such a place. One might thus argue that there is no freedom, or rather that the freedom of the students is circumscribed. However, at the same time, the students themselves talk about adult education as an active choice that they have made in order to be responsible citizens; in other words, they are already what adult education should shape them into. This relates closely to the way students' statements position students in a less dualistic and more complex way than the teacher's statements about students. For students, they are not either/or, but rather a mixture of both student subjectivities. This may seem a bit contradictory, but drawing on what Foucault (2007) called a neoliberal governmentality, the freedom of the individual could be seen as both the starting point and the effect of governing. This draws on the positive notion of adult education and reshapes it into a disciplinary practice where only certain adult student subjectivities are allowed to emerge. Students as well as teachers in MAE are thus made part of the way that such governing operates, although slightly differently.

Second, the heterotopia directs attention toward the future, that is, a utopia. Adult education becomes a stable place limited in time that allows students to construct themselves as desirable future citizens. Interviewees construct a future ideal self, a self that in the future either works or studies at university; specifically, a self who has become a responsible citizen. MAE provides a temporary place in time, a heterotopia, which allows the students to leave a "reality" of unemployment or precarious employment. Such a heterotopia of deviation places the students in a positive dream of the future—a utopian future. Nonetheless, a utopia is not and cannot be a "real" place, and what is to become of the students after finishing MAE might well be a nightmare. Their future is not determined. Rather, the future should be fostered, elicited, and shaped by the students themselves. If they fail in building their future, in line with a neoliberal governmental rationality, it is their own fault.

Concluding Remarks

Our analysis points to the importance of analyzing the way discourses are picked up, shaped, and made productive through the statements of those who are the target of policy measures (in contrast to those who only focus on policy discourse; e.g., Fejes, 2006; Brunila, 2011; Simons & Masschelein, 2008). In doing so, it becomes possible to illustrate how policy discourse has discursive "effects" in the local in terms of being picked up and mobilized by teachers and students themselves, that is, how there are

regularities of statements. At the same time, it also becomes possible to illustrate how there is no linearity between statements emerging in policy and in interviews with those who are its target. Discourses are messy, and in order to make visible such messiness, we cannot limit ourselves to conducting policy analyses. Furthermore, our analysis points to the importance of analyzing adult education as a site, a heterotopia of deviation, for the production of desirable and ideal citizens as part of a neoliberal governmentality. As we illustrated in the introduction, the normative stance on adult education as a route toward active citizenship, social justice, and well-being, however positive it might sound, is, through current discourses, is made an important part of how governing operates, where those who are the target of intervention become engaged in governing themselves. As such, students construe themselves as failures, and in need of participation in adult education as a site where the promise is the uncertainty of a utopia.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

References

- Brunila, K. (2011). The projectisation, marketisation and therapisation of education. *European Educational Research Journal*, 3, 421-432.
- Fejes, A. (2005). New wine in old skins: Changing patterns in the governing of the adult learner in Sweden. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 24(1), 71-86.
- Fejes, A. (2006) The planetspeak discourse of lifelong learning in Sweden: What is an educable adult? *Journal of Education Policy*, 21, 697-716.
- Fejes, A. (2010). Discourses on employability: Constituting the responsible citizen. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 32(2), 89-102.
- Fejes, A., & Dahlstedt, M. (2014). *The confessing society: Foucault, confession and practices of lifelong learning*. London, England: Routledge.
- Fejes, A., & Nicoll, K. (2008). *Foucault and lifelong learning: Governing the subject*. London: Routledge.
- Fejes, A., & Nordvall, H. (2014). Folkbildning och vuxenutbildning i skuggan av skolkrisen. In L. Stenberg (Ed.), *Skolan ut ur krisen: En forskarantologi om framtidens utbildningspolitik* (pp. 93-105) [Popular education and adult education in the outskirts of the school crisis]. Stockholm, Sweden: Tankesmedjan Tiden.
- Field, J. (2006). *Lifelong learning and the new educational order* (2nd rev. ed.). Stoke-on-Trent, England: Trentham.
- Foucault, M. (1972). *The archaeology of knowledge*. New York, NY: Harper.
- Foucault, M. (2007). *Security, territory, population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978*. Houndmills, England: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Foucault, M., & Miskowicz, J. (1986). Of other spaces. *Diacritics*, 16, 22-27.

- Härnqvist, K. (1958). *Reserverna för högre utbildning: Beräkningar och metoddiskussion, SOU 1958:11* [The reserves for higher education: Calculations and a discussion on method]. Stockholm, Sweden: Ecklesiastikdepartementet.
- Husén, T. (1956). En försummad begåvningsreserv [A neglected reserve of talent]. *Tiden*, 5.
- Lumsden Wass, K. (2004). *Vuxenutbildning i omvandling. Kunskapslyftet som ett sätt att organisera förnyelse* [Adult education in change: An adult education initiative as a means to organize renewal]. Göteborg, Sweden: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis.
- Lundahl, L., Arreman, I. E., Holm, A.-S., & Lundström, U. (2013). Educational marketization the Swedish way. *Educational Inquiry*, 4, 497-517.
- Milana, M. (2007). *Adult education for democratic citizenship: A review of the research literature in 9 European countries: Synthesis report*. Copenhagen, Denmark: Danmarks Pædagogiske Universitets Forlag.
- Ministry of Education. (2013a). *SOU 2013:20, Kommunal vuxenutbildning på grundläggande nivå: En översyn för ökad individanpassning och effektivitet* [Basic level municipal adult education: A review aimed at increased personalization and efficiency]. Stockholm, Sweden: Utbildningsdepartementet.
- Ministry of Education. (2013b). *SOU 2013:76, Svenska för invandrare: Valfrihet, flexibilitet och individanpassning* [Swedish for immigrants: Freedom of choice, flexibility and personalization]. Stockholm, Swedish: Utbildningsdepartementet.
- Nesbit, T., & Welton, M. (Eds.). (2013). *Adult education and learning in a precarious age: The Hamburg Declaration revisited* (New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, Vol. 138). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Nicoll, K., & Fejes, A. (2011). Lifelong learning: A pacification of “know how.” *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 30, 403-417.
- Nicoll, K., Fejes, A., Olson, M., Dahlstedt, M., & Biesta, G. (2013). Opening discourses of citizenship education: A theorization with Foucault. *Journal of Education Policy*, 28, 828-846. doi:10.1080/02680939.2013.823519
- Olson, M. (2012). The European “we”: From citizenship policy to the role of education. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 31(1), 77-89.
- Olson, M., Fejes, A., Dahlstedt, M., & Nicoll, K. (2014). Citizenship discourses: Production and curriculum. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1080/01425692.2014.883917
- Rahm, L., & Fejes, A. (2015). Ubiquitous computing, digital failures and citizenship learning in Swedish popular education. *Citizenship Teaching & Learning*, 10(2), 127-141.
- Rubenson, K. (2009). Lifelong learning in an era of transnational governance. In R. Desjardins & K. Rubenson (Eds.), *Research of vs research for education policy* (pp. 147-169). Saarbrücken, Germany: VDM Verlag.
- Rubenson, K., Tuijnman, A., & Wahlgren, B. (1999). *Från Kunskapslyftet till en strategi för livslångt lärande. SOU 1999:141* [From an adult education initiative to a strategy for lifelong learning]. Stockholm, Sweden: Utbildningsdepartementet.
- Rushbrook, D. (2002). Cities, queer space, and the cosmopolitan tourist. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 8, 183-206.
- Simons, M., & Masschelein, J. (2008). The governmentalization of learning and the assemblage of a learning apparatus. *Educational Theory*, 58, 391-415.
- SFS. (2010). *Svensk författningssamling. Skollagen* [Swedish law. The school law]. Stockholm, Sweden: Utbildningsdepartementet.

- UNESCO. (1997). *The Hamburg Declaration: The Agenda for the Future. Fifth International Conference on Adult Education 14-18 July*. Hamburg, Germany: UNESCO Institute for Education.
- Usher, R., & Edwards, R. (2007). *Lifelong learning: Sings, discourses, practices*. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.

Author Biographies

Fredrik Sandberg is a senior lecturer in education at Linköping University, Sweden. His current research interests concern adult education, with a specific focus on citizenship education, as well as issues of recognition.

Andreas Fejes is a professor and chair of adult education research at Linköping University, Sweden. His current research interests concern citizenship education, marketization of adult education, and adult education as a research field. He is one of the founding editors of the *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults*.

Magnus Dahlstedt is a professor of social work at Linköping University, Sweden. With a background in political science, his primary research interests are the politics of inclusion/exclusion, citizenship, democracy, education policy, and multiculturalism.

Maria Olson is a professor of educational work at Dalarna University, Sweden, and associate professor in education at the Centre for Teaching and Learning in the Humanities, Stockholm University, Sweden. Her main research field are educational theory and educational philosophy and her areas of specialization include the way in which education, democracy, and citizenship relate to each other.