Women, emancipation and empowerment:
An insight into adult education in India

Dr. Stefanie Kröner
Julius-Maximilian University Würzburg

DAAD Workshop*: Is there still room for emancipatory adult education and learning?*
Discussing a promising idea facing several challenges

28 October 2020

DAAD

Agenda

1. Theoretical perspectives

2. Adult education in India

3. Empowerment as significant concept in Indian adult education

4. Challenges and opportunities

© Professorship for Adult and Continuing Education, University of Würzburg

1 *Theoretical perspectives: Emancipation and empowerment*

	Empowerment	Emancipation
Definition	• Acting within societal structures and gaining more power within those structures	• Thinking and acting apart from societal structures (that one understands)
Requirements	• No requirements	• Understanding of those societal structures
Use in social movements & function of the concept within a society	• Negotiation of social participation • Strengthening of persons in individualisation processes in which the paradigm lifelong learning gains relevance	• Personal reflection • Individual learning processes • Resistance e.g. against economic rationales or against a social division of a society (e.g. differentiation between privileged and underprivileged social groups)

(cf. Inglis, 1997, pp. 4ff., Kröner, 2020, p. 83)

1 Theoretical perspectives: Humanistic and economic rationales to empowerment and emancipation

	Humanistic rationales	Economic rationales
Empowerment of underprivileged persons	Equality and social participation	Economic growth, social participation
Emancipation	Equality, resistance against an unequal society	Stronger competition within a more competitive society
Lifelong learning	Own learning interest, *Bildung*, critical reflection	Employability, human capital
Political actors	UNESCO	European Union, OECD
Common target	Self-control and social negotiation processes in an increasing individualized society (*new educational governance*) (e.g. Klingovsky, 2017)	

(cf. Kröner, 2020, p. 226)
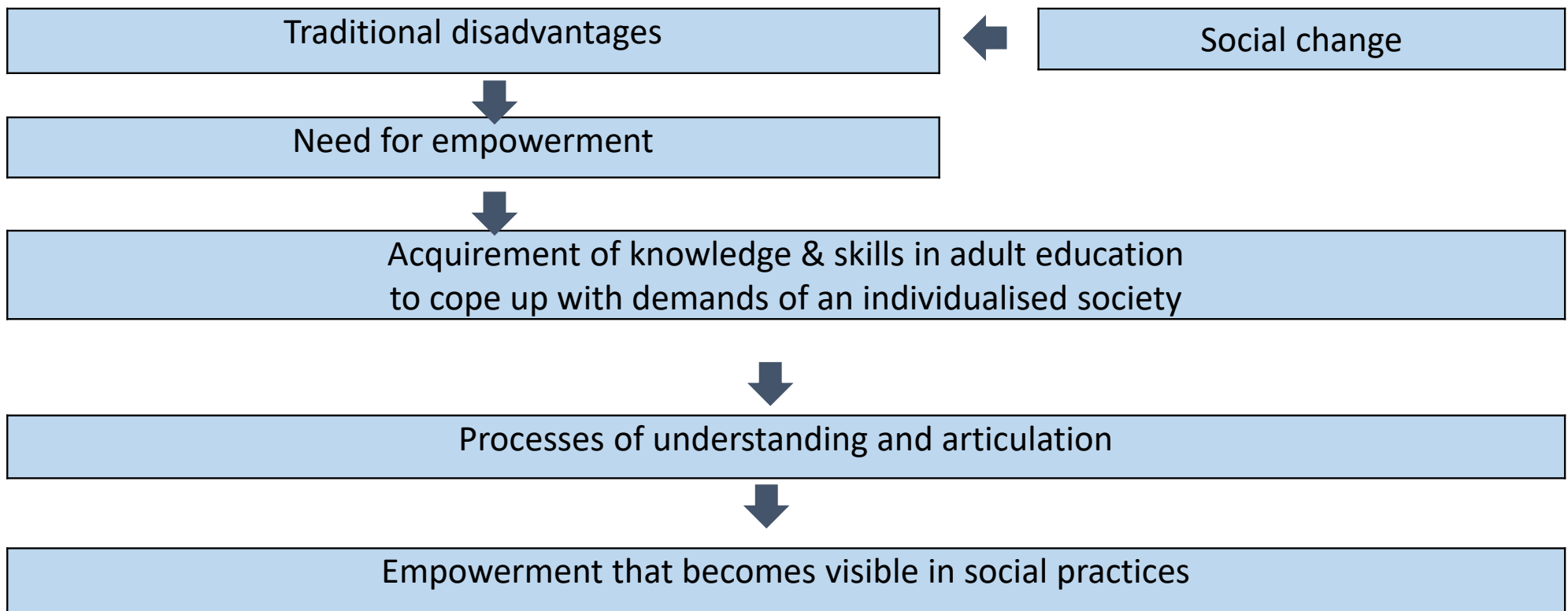
2   Adult education in India

- **Diversity** of languages and cultures in India (Skoda for bpb.de, 2012; Srinivas, 1995)

- **Literacy** as a focus of educational policies (Indian Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2016)
  → Low literacy in rural areas and in underprivileged social groups

- **Decrease of differences** between women and men

- **Women from underprivileged social groups**: Low literacy, less rights in their family, difficult working conditions, low political impact
  (Ahmad, 2009; Ghose, 2009; Kaul & Dale, 2012)

Cf. Kröner, 2020, pp. 127ff.

© Professorship for Adult and Continuing Education, University of Würzburg

3 Empowerment as a significant concept in Indian adult education

Traditional disadvantages	←	Social change

↓

Need for empowerment

↓

Acquirement of knowledge & skills in adult education
to cope up with demands of an individualised society

↓

Processes of understanding and articulation

↓

Empowerment that becomes visible in social practices

Cf. Kröner, 2020, p. 202

3   *Empowerment as a significant concept in Indian adult education*

- Empowerment is a process that enables persons to **negotiate their own social participation**

- Adult education can **strengthen participants**, who feel insecure due to the loss of traditions and feel overtaxed with the demands of a individualised society
  → Balance of reflection and activation

- **Empowerment**: Everyone   vs.   **Emancipation**: Persons who already have acquired knowledge and skills to negotiate their own social participation

- Empowerment is an **interim-step towards** the paradigm **lifelong learning**
  → To enable underprivileged persons to negotiate their social participation

4 Challenges and opportunities of adult education following the concept empowerment

Challenges

- Neo-liberal instrumentalization of empowerment within economic rationales
  → Empowerment to increase the employability rate

Opportunities

- Knowledge about low-threshold and target group oriented adult education offers addressing persons from underprivileged social groups

- Societal opportunity to strengthen persons from underprivileged social groups and to contribute towards a societal participation of all

References I

Ahmad, N. (2009). Sati Tradition - Widow Burning in India: A Socio-legal Examination. *Web JCLI*. Accessed: 22.12.2018 from http://webjcli.ncl.ac.uk/2009/issue2/ahmad2.html

Archibald, T. & Wilson, A. L. (2011). Rethinking empowerment: Theories of power and the potential for emancipatory praxis. http://newprairiepress.org/aerc/2011/papers/3. Accessed: 19.07.2019.

Ghose, M. (2009). Investing in Adult Womens' Literacy and Learning: Reflections from an Indian Context. *Adult Education and Development, 72*. Accessed: 29.09.2018 from https://www.dvv-international.de/en/adult-education-and-development/editions/aed-722009/perspectives/investing-in-adult-womensrsquo-literacy-and-learning-reflections-from-an-indian-context/

Holzer, D. (2009). Kritisch-emanzipatorische Erwachsenenbildung: totgesagt und doch lebendig? *Magazin erwachsenenbildung.at. Das Fachmedium für Forschung, Praxis und Diskurs*, 7/8. urn:nbn:de:0111-opus-76560

Indian Ministry of Human Resource Development (2016). *Directorate of Adult Education*. Department of School Education & Literacy. Ministry of Human Resource Development. Government of India. Accessed: 24. Mai 2018 from http://mhrd.gov.in/dae

Inglis, T. (1997). Empowerment and Emancipation. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 48, 3-17. doi:10.1177/074171369704800102

References II

Kaul, N. & Dale, P. (2012). Participatory Strategies for Adult Education and Social Inclusion. *Adult Education and Development, 78*. Accessed: 21. September 2018 from https://www.dvv-international.de/adult-education-and-development/editions/aed-782012/benefits-of-adult-learning-and-social-inclusion/participatory-strategies-for-adult-education-and-social-inclusion/

Klingovsky, U. (2017). Das Paradigma Lebenslangen Lernens revisited – Zur Strukturlogik der New Educational Governance in der Wissensgesellschaft. In A. Bolder, H. Bremer H. & R. Epping (Hrsg.), Bildung für Arbeit unter neuer Steuerung. Bildung und Arbeit (S. 27-44). Wiesbaden: Springer VS. doi:10.1007/978-3-658-15412-7_2

Kröner, S. (2020). *Empowerment und Erwachsenenbildung. Eine Studie zu Frauen aus benachteiligten sozialen Gruppen in Indien*. Dissertation. Würzburg: Würzburg University Press. doi:10.25972/WUP-978-3-95826-119-8

Skoda für bpb.de, U. (2014). *Kaste und Kastensystem in Indien. Eine Einführung*. Accessed: 26.05.2018 from http://www.bpb.de/internationales/asien/indien/44414/kastenwesen

Srinivas, M.N. (1995). *Social Change in Modern India*. (13. Aufl.). Hyderabad: Orient Longman.

Stromquist, N. P. (2014). Freire, literacy and emancipatory gender learning. *International Review of Education*, 60(4), 545-558. doi:10.1007/s11159-014-9424-2

Wildemeersch, D. & Salling Olesen, H. (2012). Editorial: The effects of policies for the education and learning of adults – from 'adult education' to 'lifelong learning', from 'emancipation' to Empowerment'. *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults*, 3(2), 97-101. doi:10.3384/rela.2000-7426.relae5