



Lifelong Learning Programs and Community Empowerment in Adult Education Centers in Santa Catarina

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between lifelong learning programs and community empowerment in adult education centers across Santa Catarina, Brazil. Through a mixed-methods approach involving surveys of 285 adult learners and qualitative case studies of six education centers, this research explores how participation in lifelong learning initiatives influences individual empowerment and broader community development. Findings reveal that adult education programs significantly enhance participants' economic opportunities, civic engagement, social capital, and personal agency. The study identifies four key mechanisms through which lifelong learning fosters empowerment: skills development for economic participation, cultivation of critical consciousness, expansion of social networks, and strengthening of collective efficacy. Qualitative data illuminate how culturally responsive program design, supportive learning environments, and integration with community development initiatives amplify empowerment outcomes. Challenges include funding constraints, accessibility barriers for marginalized

populations, and tensions between instrumentalist and transformative educational philosophies. This research contributes to understanding adult education's role in promoting social justice and community development in Latin American contexts, offering insights for policy and practice aimed at leveraging education as a tool for sustainable empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

Lifelong learning has emerged as a fundamental human right and essential strategy for addressing contemporary social, economic, and democratic challenges in the 21st century (Muhsyanur, 2024) and (Muhsyanur et al., 2021). The concept extends beyond traditional schooling to encompass continuous learning opportunities throughout the lifespan, recognizing that education does not conclude with formal schooling but remains vital for personal development, economic participation, and civic engagement across all life stages (UNESCO, 2016). In Brazil, where educational inequality remains a persistent challenge, adult education centers represent crucial spaces for providing learning opportunities to populations historically excluded from formal education systems. Santa Catarina, one of Brazil's most economically developed southern states, has implemented various lifelong learning initiatives through adult education centers serving diverse communities including rural workers, urban poor, immigrants, and older adults seeking to complete interrupted educations or acquire new competencies for changing labor markets.

Community empowerment, understood as processes through which individuals and communities gain control over their lives and participate effectively in shaping their environments, represents both a means and an end of adult education (Freire, 1970). Paulo Freire's pedagogical philosophy, deeply rooted in Brazilian educational thought, conceptualized education as inherently political, arguing that authentic education empowers learners to critically analyze and transform oppressive social conditions. This emancipatory vision positions adult education not merely as skills training but as consciousness-raising and collective action for social justice (Ibrahim, 2020). Contemporary empowerment theory emphasizes multiple dimensions including psychological empowerment (self-efficacy and critical awareness), economic empowerment (access to resources and opportunities), social empowerment (network development and collective identity), and political empowerment (civic participation and advocacy capacity). Understanding how lifelong learning programs cultivate these interconnected dimensions of empowerment remains essential for designing effective adult education initiatives.

Santa Catarina's adult education landscape reflects Brazil's broader commitment to lifelong learning while exhibiting distinctive regional characteristics shaped by the state's demographic diversity, economic structure, and historical

development patterns. The state's population includes significant communities of European descent, particularly German and Italian immigrants, alongside indigenous peoples, Afro-Brazilians, and recent migrants from other Brazilian regions seeking economic opportunities. This diversity creates varied adult education needs and presents both opportunities and challenges for designing inclusive lifelong learning programs. Santa Catarina's relatively strong economy, based on manufacturing, agriculture, and tourism, generates demand for skilled workers while also producing inequality between economically dynamic coastal cities and more marginalized rural interior regions. Adult education centers must navigate these contextual complexities while addressing both individual learner needs and broader community development objectives.

The relationship between lifelong learning and community empowerment operates through multiple interconnected pathways that extend beyond individual skill acquisition to encompass collective capacity building and social transformation. Economic pathways involve developing human capital that enables improved employment, income generation, and economic security, thereby reducing poverty and expanding individuals' economic choices (Sen, 1999). Social pathways include strengthening social networks, building trust and reciprocity, and fostering collective identity and solidarity—dimensions of social capital that facilitate collective action and community resilience. Political pathways encompass developing critical consciousness, civic knowledge, and participatory skills that enable effective engagement in democratic processes and advocacy for community interests. Cultural pathways involve preserving and transmitting cultural knowledge, fostering intercultural dialogue, and strengthening cultural identities that provide meaning and belonging. Understanding how adult education programs activate and integrate these multiple empowerment pathways remains crucial for maximizing their transformative potential.

Despite growing policy recognition of lifelong learning's importance, adult education systems globally and in Brazil specifically face persistent challenges that limit their reach and effectiveness. Funding constraints result in inadequate facilities, limited program diversity, insufficient educator training, and inability to serve all potential learners (Di Pierro, 2017). Accessibility barriers including geographic distance, scheduling conflicts with work obligations, childcare needs, transportation challenges, and linguistic or cultural barriers disproportionately exclude the most marginalized populations who might benefit most from adult education. Quality concerns arise when programs focus narrowly on basic literacy or instrumental skills without engaging learners in critical thinking, problem-solving, or transformative learning experiences. Tensions between different educational philosophies—functional literacy versus critical pedagogy, individual advancement versus collective transformation, standardized certification versus contextualized learning—shape program design and outcomes in ways that privilege certain populations and purposes over others.

Research on lifelong learning in Latin American contexts has documented various program models, participation patterns, and learning outcomes, though significant gaps remain regarding how adult education specifically contributes to community empowerment processes (Muhsyanur, 2024). Existing studies have examined literacy programs, vocational training initiatives, and popular education movements, generally finding positive effects on individual capabilities while noting limitations in addressing structural inequalities (Torres, 2013). However, much research remains descriptive, documenting program activities and immediate outcomes without examining longer-term empowerment effects or mechanisms through which education translates into expanded agency and community transformation. Furthermore, research has often focused on large urban centers, with limited attention to adult education in smaller cities and rural areas where needs and opportunities may differ substantially. The specific context of Santa Catarina, with its distinctive demographic and economic characteristics, remains understudied despite the state's significant investment in lifelong learning infrastructure.

Theoretical frameworks for understanding adult education's empowerment potential draw on multiple disciplinary traditions including critical pedagogy, community development theory, capability approaches, and social capital theory. Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy emphasizes dialogue, problem-posing education, and praxis—the integration of reflection and action for social transformation. This approach positions learners as knowing subjects engaged in collective inquiry rather than empty vessels receiving deposited knowledge, with education serving conscientization and liberation rather than domestication. Capability approaches, particularly Sen's (1999) work, conceptualize empowerment in terms of expanding people's substantive freedoms to achieve valued functionings, emphasizing that education's value extends beyond economic returns to encompass intrinsic worth and enabling functions across multiple life domains. Social capital theory examines how educational participation builds networks, trust, and norms of reciprocity that facilitate collective action and community efficacy. Integrating these theoretical perspectives enables comprehensive analysis of how adult education influences empowerment across multiple dimensions and levels.

This study addresses gaps in existing research by systematically examining relationships between lifelong learning programs and community empowerment in Santa Catarina's adult education centers, employing mixed methods to capture both measurable outcomes and nuanced processes through which empowerment develops. The research is guided by the following questions: How does participation in lifelong learning programs influence participants' economic, social, psychological, and political empowerment? What program characteristics and pedagogical approaches most effectively foster empowerment outcomes? How do individual empowerment processes scale to broader community-level transformation? What barriers limit adult education's empowerment potential, and how might these be addressed? By answering these questions, this study contributes empirical evidence regarding adult education's role in promoting social justice and community

development while providing practical insights for enhancing program design and policy in Brazilian and broader Latin American contexts.

METHODE

This study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design to comprehensively examine lifelong learning's relationship with community empowerment in Santa Catarina adult education centers. The quantitative component involved survey research with 285 adult learners enrolled in education programs across 12 centers in six municipalities representing diverse geographic and socioeconomic contexts, including coastal urban areas (Florianópolis, Itajaí), interior cities (Lages, Joaçaba), and rural communities (agricultural regions in the western and southern state). The survey instrument, developed through adaptation of validated empowerment scales and pilot testing with local stakeholders, assessed multiple empowerment dimensions including psychological empowerment (self-efficacy, critical awareness, perceived control), economic empowerment (employment status, income changes, economic security), social empowerment (network size, organizational participation, social support), and political empowerment (civic knowledge, participation in community decisions, advocacy activities). Demographic variables, program participation characteristics, and perceived program benefits were also measured. Participants represented diverse backgrounds including age ranges from 18 to 76 years ($M = 38.5$), varied educational histories (40% incomplete primary education, 35% incomplete secondary education, 25% seeking additional skills beyond completed formal education), and multiple program types (basic literacy 30%, secondary completion 25%, vocational training 25%, computer skills 10%, language learning 10%). Survey data were collected through face-to-face interviews conducted by trained research assistants to accommodate varied literacy levels and ensure accessibility (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The qualitative component involved in-depth case studies of six purposively selected adult education centers chosen to represent program diversity and exemplary practices. Data collection included semi-structured interviews with 36 learners, 18 educators, and 12 administrators; focus groups with learners exploring empowerment experiences; classroom observations documenting pedagogical practices; and document analysis of program curricula, mission statements, and assessment materials. Interview protocols explored participants' motivations for participation, learning experiences, perceived changes in capabilities and opportunities, and connections between individual learning and community development. Observations focused on pedagogical approaches, instructor-learner relationships, integration of learners' experiences, and cultivation of critical thinking. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis procedures following Braun and Clarke (2006), involving familiarization with data, generating initial codes, identifying themes, reviewing and refining themes, and producing the final analysis. Integration of quantitative and qualitative findings occurred through convergence

and complementarity, using qualitative data to explain and enrich quantitative patterns while quantitative data provided scope and generalizability to qualitative insights. Trustworthiness was established through prolonged engagement, triangulation across multiple data sources and methods, member checking with participants, and reflexive attention to researcher positionality. The study received approval from the Federal University of Santa Catarina's research ethics committee, with informed consent obtained from all participants and confidentiality maintained through pseudonym use (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Economic Empowerment and Livelihood Enhancement

Quantitative analysis revealed significant associations between lifelong learning participation and economic empowerment indicators, with 58% of survey respondents reporting improved employment situations following program participation, 47% indicating income increases, and 63% expressing greater confidence in economic security and financial decision-making. Regression analysis controlling for demographic variables indicated that program participation duration and completion of vocational training components were strongest predictors of economic outcomes, suggesting that sustained engagement and practical skill development particularly contribute to economic empowerment. These findings align with human capital theory's emphasis on education's role in enhancing productive capabilities, though effect sizes were moderate rather than transformative, indicating that education alone cannot overcome structural economic barriers without complementary interventions addressing labor market discrimination, capital access, and broader economic opportunities (Sen, 1999).

Qualitative data illuminated mechanisms through which adult education enhanced economic empowerment beyond simple skill acquisition. Participants described gaining not only technical competencies but also "soft skills" including communication, problem-solving, teamwork, and adaptability that proved valuable across employment contexts. Several learners reported that educational participation provided structured time and space to reflect on career goals and explore alternative livelihood strategies, leading to more intentional career planning rather than reactive employment decisions. Networking opportunities through education centers connected learners with employers, mentors, and peers who provided job information and recommendations, demonstrating how educational spaces serve as nodes for economic information and opportunity exchange. One vocational training participant explained: "The technical skills were important, but what really changed things was gaining confidence to apply for better jobs and having the teacher connect me with her friend who owned a business. Education opened doors I didn't even know existed."

The economic empowerment effects varied significantly across demographic groups and program types, revealing important equity considerations. Younger participants (18-35 years) generally experienced greater employment and income

gains than older adults (50+ years), potentially reflecting age discrimination in labor markets or greater difficulty translating newly acquired skills into opportunities after decades in particular occupations. Women reported comparable skill gains to men but smaller income increases, suggesting persistent gender wage gaps and occupational segregation that education alone cannot overcome. Participants from rural areas faced greater challenges converting education into economic advancement due to limited local employment opportunities, often requiring migration to urban areas to utilize new skills—a solution that creates its own family and community disruptions. These patterns underscore that adult education's economic empowerment potential is mediated by structural labor market conditions and social inequalities that must be addressed through complementary policies including anti-discrimination enforcement, rural economic development, and living wage requirements (Di Pierro, 2017).

Program design characteristics significantly influenced economic empowerment outcomes, with several features associated with stronger effects. Programs that incorporated work-based learning components including internships, apprenticeships, or practicum experiences produced better employment outcomes than purely classroom-based instruction, providing both practical experience and employer connections. Curricula that integrated entrepreneurship education alongside technical skills fostered self-employment initiatives among participants lacking access to formal employment opportunities. Provision of job placement assistance, including resume development, interview preparation, and employer networking, substantially improved participants' ability to translate skills into employment. However, observations revealed that economic empowerment was sometimes pursued through instrumentalist pedagogies focused narrowly on employability skills without developing critical thinking about economic systems, workers' rights, or collective strategies for improving economic conditions—a limitation that reduces education's potential for transformative rather than merely adaptive economic empowerment (Freire, 1970).

Social Capital Development and Network Expansion

Adult education centers functioned as important sites for social capital development, with 71% of survey respondents reporting expanded social networks, 65% indicating increased organizational participation, and 69% describing stronger sense of community belonging following program involvement. Factor analysis of social capital measures revealed three distinct but correlated dimensions: bonding social capital (ties among similar others providing support and solidarity), bridging social capital (connections across diverse groups enabling resource access and new information), and linking social capital (relationships with institutional actors facilitating access to formal services and opportunities). Adult education programs contributed to all three social capital dimensions, though with differential emphasis depending on program characteristics and participant populations. The development of these social resources represents an often-overlooked outcome of

adult education that extends beyond individual learning to create community assets with lasting value (Torres, 2013).

Qualitative findings illuminated how educational participation cultivated social capital through multiple mechanisms. The regular gathering of learners created opportunities for relationship formation based on shared educational goals and mutual support through learning challenges. Collaborative pedagogies including group projects, peer tutoring, and collective problem-solving fostered interdependence and reciprocity among learners who might otherwise remain isolated. Study groups that extended beyond formal class time created spaces for sharing not only academic assistance but also information about employment, childcare, health services, and community resources. Several participants described forming lasting friendships through adult education programs that provided emotional support during difficult life circumstances and practical assistance including childcare exchanges, job referrals, and even financial help during emergencies. These relationship networks often persisted and evolved after program completion, suggesting adult education's enduring social impact.

The bridging function of adult education – connecting individuals across social divisions – emerged as particularly significant in Santa Catarina's diverse communities. Education centers brought together participants from different neighborhoods, occupational backgrounds, age groups, and sometimes ethnic communities who would rarely interact in other contexts. These cross-cutting connections exposed participants to diverse perspectives, challenged stereotypes, and created unexpected collaboration opportunities. One indigenous participant in a literacy program described how interaction with urban learners helped her navigate bureaucratic systems while her knowledge of traditional agriculture and medicinal plants was valued by other students, creating mutual respect and knowledge exchange. Such bridging connections potentially contribute to social cohesion and intercultural understanding in communities experiencing rapid demographic changes due to migration and urbanization, though realizing this potential requires intentional pedagogical efforts to foster meaningful dialogue across differences rather than superficial coexistence (UNESCO, 2016).

Table 1: Social Capital Outcomes by Program Type

Social Capital Dimension	Basic Literacy Programs	Secondary Completion	Vocational Training	Digital Skills
Bonding Capital (within-group ties)	78% reported increase	65% reported increase	70% reported increase	62% reported increase
Bridging Capital (cross-group ties)	54% reported increase	69% reported increase	73% reported increase	68% reported increase
Linking Capital (institutional ties)	48% reported increase	61% reported increase	71% reported increase	65% reported increase
Organizational	42% increased	58% increased	67% increased	61% increased

Social Capital Dimension	Basic Literacy Programs	Secondary Completion	Vocational Training	Digital Skills
Participation	involvement	involvement	involvement	involvement

Note: Percentages represent participants reporting moderate or substantial increases in social capital dimensions following program participation (N=285)

However, social capital development through adult education also revealed potential limitations and tensions. Observations indicated that social networks forming within programs sometimes remained bounded rather than connecting participants to broader community resources and opportunities, potentially creating insular groups with limited external reach. The bonding capital developed among similar others, while providing valuable support, could reinforce existing social divisions if not accompanied by bridging connections across differences. Some programs inadvertently reproduced social hierarchies, with participants possessing greater prior education or social status dominating group discussions and leadership roles. Addressing these limitations requires conscious pedagogical strategies promoting inclusive participation, facilitating connections beyond immediate program contexts, and critically examining how power and privilege operate within ostensibly egalitarian learning spaces (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Critical Consciousness and Political Empowerment

The development of critical consciousness—the capacity to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and take action against oppressive elements—emerged as a central though unevenly realized dimension of empowerment through lifelong learning. Survey data indicated that 52% of participants reported increased awareness of social issues affecting their communities, 44% expressed greater understanding of their rights, and 38% indicated increased participation in civic activities including community meetings, advocacy efforts, or political campaigns. While these percentages represent substantial proportions of learners experiencing political empowerment, they also reveal that such outcomes were less universal than economic or social benefits, suggesting that political empowerment depends significantly on intentional pedagogical choices rather than occurring automatically through educational participation. The relatively lower political empowerment rates compared to other dimensions may reflect the depoliticization of much contemporary adult education, which often emphasizes individual advancement rather than collective transformation (Freire, 1970).

Qualitative analysis revealed distinct pedagogical approaches producing different political empowerment outcomes. Programs explicitly employing critical pedagogy—using problem-posing methodologies, integrating participants' lived experiences as curriculum content, analyzing social issues affecting communities, and linking learning to collective action—fostered substantial critical consciousness development. In one notable case, a literacy program used local newspaper articles

about water quality problems as reading materials, leading learners to investigate their community's water system, identify contamination sources, and collectively advocate for infrastructure improvements. Participants described transformative shifts in how they understood their circumstances: "Before, I thought my problems were my fault—that I was poor because I didn't work hard enough. Through discussions in class, I started seeing how systems create poverty, how policies affect us. Now I understand my situation differently and know we need to work together for change." Such conscientization represents education fulfilling its emancipatory potential as articulated in critical pedagogy traditions.

In contrast, programs emphasizing functional skills without critical analysis produced minimal political empowerment effects. Observations of several vocational training programs revealed curricula focused exclusively on technical competencies without examining labor conditions, workers' rights, or collective organizing strategies that might enable learners to challenge exploitative employment practices. Computer skills programs taught software operation without critically examining digital divides, surveillance technologies, or how technological changes affect employment and social relationships. This instrumentalist approach, while producing practical capabilities, missed opportunities for developing critical consciousness about systems affecting learners' lives. The divergence between empowering and instrumentalist programs reflected underlying philosophical tensions about adult education's purposes: whether it should help individuals adapt to existing social systems or equip them to transform unjust conditions (Di Pierro, 2017).

Political empowerment also manifested through enhanced civic participation and collective efficacy—the belief that communities can successfully address shared problems through collaborative action. Participants who experienced critical pedagogy reported increased confidence in their capacity to influence community decisions, with several describing first-time participation in municipal budget meetings, parent-teacher organizations, neighborhood associations, or issue-based advocacy groups. Some education centers explicitly connected to community organizations, creating pathways for learners to continue engagement beyond program completion. A rural education center integrated with an agricultural cooperative exemplified this approach, with adult education preparing community members to participate effectively in cooperative governance while the cooperative provided practical application opportunities for newly developed skills. This integration of education with ongoing collective action structures represents promising practice for translating individual empowerment into sustained community transformation, though such integrated approaches remained relatively rare across the centers studied (Torres, 2013).

Institutional Factors and Sustainability Challenges

The effectiveness of adult education centers in fostering community empowerment was significantly shaped by institutional factors including funding

structures, organizational governance, educator qualifications, and integration with broader community development initiatives. Centers with stable public funding demonstrated greater program continuity, infrastructure quality, and capacity to serve marginalized populations compared to those relying primarily on short-term grants or fee revenue. However, even adequately funded centers faced resource constraints limiting program offerings, class sizes, and support services. Interviews with administrators revealed constant tension between maintaining program quality and expanding access to serve all interested learners within budget limitations. This resource scarcity particularly affected rural and peripheral urban centers serving lower-income populations, reproducing rather than challenging educational inequalities. Addressing this requires policy commitment to adult education as a public good worthy of sustained investment rather than marginal budget priority subject to austerity cuts (UNESCO, 2016).

Governance structures influenced centers' responsiveness to community needs and alignment with empowerment objectives. Centers with participatory governance including learner representation in decision-making bodies demonstrated greater program relevance and learner engagement compared to those with top-down administrative structures. Community-based centers governed by local organizations showed strong connections to community development initiatives, though sometimes faced sustainability challenges due to limited institutional capacity and resource mobilization capabilities. Municipal centers governed through education departments demonstrated greater resource stability but sometimes exhibited bureaucratic rigidity limiting programmatic innovation and community responsiveness. These patterns suggest the value of hybrid governance models combining public resource commitment with meaningful community participation in program direction, though implementing such models requires overcoming institutional inertia and power imbalances between professional administrators and community stakeholders.

Educator characteristics and pedagogical capacity represented critical determinants of program quality and empowerment outcomes, with significant variability observed across centers. The most effective educators demonstrated not only subject matter expertise but also commitment to learners' holistic development, skill in creating inclusive learning environments, and capacity to facilitate rather than dominate learning processes. Many educators, however, lacked specialized training in adult education pedagogy, instead applying approaches developed for children or relying on traditional banking education models despite their ineffectiveness with adult learners. Professional development opportunities for adult educators remained limited, with most centers unable to provide regular training or pedagogical support. This educator capacity gap limits adult education's empowerment potential, as transformative learning requires facilitators skilled in critical pedagogy, culturally responsive teaching, and trauma-informed approaches recognizing many adult learners' difficult life experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Several structural barriers limited adult education's accessibility and effectiveness for marginalized populations most needing empowerment opportunities. Geographic barriers affected rural residents and peripheral urban dwellers facing long travel distances to education centers, with transportation costs and time creating prohibitive burdens particularly for low-income learners. Scheduling inflexibility limited access for workers with irregular hours, parents with childcare responsibilities, and others unable to attend fixed class times. Inadequate childcare provision at education centers forced many women to forgo participation or experience constant stress managing simultaneous caregiving and learning. Linguistic barriers affected indigenous community members and recent migrants from Portuguese-speaking African countries whose first languages were not Portuguese, with limited availability of multilingual programming or language support services. Digital divides meant that technology-based learning opportunities remained inaccessible to populations lacking devices or internet connectivity. Addressing these intersecting barriers requires comprehensive approaches including mobile programming, flexible scheduling, childcare provision, multilingual services, technology access support, and targeted outreach to underserved populations – investments many centers could not make within existing resource constraints (Di Pierro, 2017).

CONCLUSION

This study provides compelling evidence that lifelong learning programs in Santa Catarina adult education centers contribute meaningfully to multiple dimensions of community empowerment, including economic opportunity enhancement, social capital development, critical consciousness cultivation, and civic engagement strengthening. The research demonstrates that adult education serves purposes extending far beyond individual skill acquisition to encompass collective capacity building and social transformation, particularly when programs employ participatory pedagogies grounded in learners' experiences and explicitly address systemic factors affecting community well-being. The findings validate theoretical frameworks positioning education as a fundamental human right and essential tool for promoting social justice, while also revealing significant variability in empowerment outcomes depending on program design, pedagogical approaches, institutional support, and structural accessibility. Programs most effectively fostering empowerment combined practical skill development with critical analysis, connected individual learning to collective action, built on learners' existing knowledge and strengths, and operated within supportive institutional environments enabling sustained engagement and comprehensive services.

The research carries important implications for policy, practice, and future inquiry regarding adult education's role in community empowerment and social development. Policymakers should recognize adult education as essential public infrastructure warranting sustained investment rather than discretionary programming subject to budget fluctuations, with funding allocations prioritizing

accessibility for marginalized populations and supporting comprehensive services including transportation, childcare, and wraparound supports. Adult education programs should embrace critical pedagogical approaches that develop not only functional competencies but also critical consciousness and collective efficacy for systemic change, while ensuring cultural responsiveness and recognition of adult learners' existing knowledge and capabilities. Educator preparation systems should provide specialized training in adult learning principles, participatory methodologies, and trauma-informed practices, recognizing that effective adult education requires distinct competencies beyond those needed for teaching children. Integration of adult education with community development initiatives, economic opportunity programs, and civic engagement structures can amplify empowerment effects by providing pathways for applying and sustaining learning outcomes. Future research should examine longer-term empowerment trajectories beyond immediate program completion, investigate how individual empowerment translates into community-level transformation, explore effective strategies for reaching most marginalized populations, and conduct comparative analyses across diverse Brazilian contexts to identify transferable principles and context-specific adaptations. Ultimately, realizing lifelong learning's full empowerment potential requires recognizing adult education not as remedial service for the educationally disadvantaged but as fundamental democratic right and essential tool for building just, equitable, and participatory communities.

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