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CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES IN ADULT EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING – ANDRAGOGICAL MODEL OF LEARNING

Abstract

Nowadays, adult education and lifelong learning constitutes one of the most significant factors influencing economic growth and social development. Definitions such as 'knowledge society' and 'knowledge-based economy' exist in a great number of the Polish and European Union papers and documents and they are not only the reality, but also the challenge and programme of the future. In the period of various economic challenges and economic crisis there is a necessity to devise the educational strategy of counteraction to crisis. It may be achieved via rebuilding Polish vocational education system, improvement of the standards of teaching and creating a chain of institutions of lifelong education for adults. To obtain the aforementioned aims one ought to implement the andragogical model of learning to the process of vocational lifelong education. Andragogy remains one of the dominant models of adult learning.

Adult education thus becomes more than a right; it is a key to the twenty-first century.
(The Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning)

Introduction

Nowadays, adult education and lifelong learning constitutes one of the most significant factors influencing economic growth and social development. Definitions such as 'knowledge society' and 'knowledge-based society' exist in a great number of the Polish and EU papers and documents and they are not only the reality, but also the challenge and programme of the future.

The fact that Poland has been a member of the European Union since 2004 results in the increase of our interest in the European space of research and education (Bednarczyk, 2009, p. 67). However, it is vital to emphasise that the European dimension of education is not a new educational category brought to life as a consequence of integrational processes of the Old Continent. Education in Europe has had European character for ages – in the past it has never implemented other education than the European one.

In the period of various economic challenges and economic crisis, the necessity to elaborate an educational strategy of counteraction to crisis seems to be very important. It may be achieved via rebuilding Polish vocational education system, improvement of the standards of teaching and creating a chain of institutions of lifelong education for adults.

Andragogists working on adult education and lifelong learning describe modern civilisation as 'knowledge-based', where knowledge is, simultaneously, the autonomic value and social capital. Present lifelong learning strategy, essential for Europe, aims at creation of the European learning society being liable to evolve into the progressive one. The basis of lifelong learning in the European Union is the council resolution of 27 June 2002 on lifelong learning.

According to representatives of Polish andragogy (Aleksander, 2003; Tuross, 2010) the best educational practices are the ones that directly refer to the needs perceived by an individual as significant and the ones that respect maximum control from an individual. When individual needs are consistent with organisational needs, there are no tensions. For these reasons specialists engaged in personnel advancement are to keep balance between practices leading to the most effective learning, as far as adults are concerned, and practises which result in raising the level of organisational effects.

It is necessary to remark that adult education activity lives its revival together with the development and alterations, which occurred in the post-industrial society. Thus, a valid enquiry arises: are adults able to learn effectively and in what way? Positive answer to this question is the basis to create modern systems of vocational education, which is by no means an investment into human capital.

It is beyond any doubts that educated personnel is the most important part of each institution. On the other hand, it is essential to bear in mind that career takes an important part in adult life, especially when it demands higher level of education and qualifications.

Among adults, professional development and career are commonly recognised as positive and desired values. Achievement of social prestige is possible due to the increase of the level of knowledge and gaining new skills. Professional career and success at work constitute values, which are to be gained via education in successful organisations (Błaszczak, 2012, pp. 74-75). Therefore, both employers and employees ought to be interested in developing professional competence and its constant improvement.

The answer to the question concerning effectiveness of lifelong education presents numerous research results in the process of learning regarding people at different ages. The research conducted in the scope of the developmental psychology proved that 'crystallised intelligence' is to be responsible for the processes of adult learning, as it uses gained experience and mental habits, the increase of speech fluency, new strategies of thinking and organisation of knowledge. This type of intelligence, contrary to inborn 'fluid intelligence', may be developed through the entire life of a human being, under the condition that a person will remain mentally active.

Hence, those people for whom life is the continuous process of education achieve better results. As for adults, the best results are achieved when they learn things related to purposeful action, thus, to their work, especially the one that set high requirements to the employee. Such work provides an individual high level in realms, in which a person has been specialising for years. Knowledge and skills create new quality called life wisdom, resulting from mental operations carried out in respect to gained experiences.

Employer awareness, concerning the benefits from investment in educational development of employees, ought to cause the implementation of the andragogical model of adult vocational education, via creating professional chains of educational institutions for adults, such as centres for lifelong learning.

It is necessary to highlight that modern structural alterations occurring in industry not only in Poland but in the whole world and the necessity to keep up with technical and technological progress coerce the need of permanent adjustment of

qualifications and skills of the employees to market needs and specific expectations coming from the employers.

Taking everything into consideration, there is a well-defined need to create suitable conditions in order to enable the development of lifelong education in relation to employees working in various types of industry. The implementation of employees from various types of industry to vocational education, the andragogical model of adult learning, will contribute to:

- improved exchange of information in the scope of modern solutions and technology,
- development of research and high quality of practices in the area of job market,
- a wide range of counselling and training,
- more complete diagnose of the situation regarding the needs and possibilities of lifelong education for industrial workers.

Technological and andragogical model of adult learning

Lifelong education as a 'contemporary educational model, based on continuous renewal and improvement of knowledge and qualifications both general and vocational, lasting through the whole life of an individual, may be considered in numerous aspects' (Aleksander, 2003, p. 985). Via lifelong education of industrial workers one ought to understand both completing education and permanent instruction of employees of this economy sector.

Modern adult education encompasses varied models of educational work as varied educational needs require different strategies of their fulfilment.

Specific character of adult learning is determined by the rules governing adult conduct in the learning situation. To take the argument further, effective implementation of the process of learning depends on taking individual features of a learner into consideration and being able to find the place in particular elements of the didactic process.

Having this logic accepted constitutes an introduction to create innovative methodology of educational work with adults, which being in harmony with the selected model of teaching guarantees achievement of the chosen aim.

The foundation of teaching methodology is determined by didactic rules: 'The rules in pedagogy signify both standards of conduct acknowledged to be proper to obtain established objective of pedagogic behaviour. They also formulate the grounds on which conduct appropriate for the process of upbringing and education is based' (Pólturzycki, 1991, p. 141).

In educational practice all the rules are to be used creatively and exchangeably in various models of teaching adults. The choice of the model of educational work is determined by a great number of factors, among which one may find:

- aims of instruction,
- culture of educational institution,
- andragogist's preferences,
- characteristic features of the participants of adult education,
- educational surrounding.

Fundamentals and didactic rules of working with adults elaborated by the representatives of Polish, American and German andragogy, with reference to

technological and andragogical model of adult lifelong education, are presented below.

Each of the following models has specific features and differences in the scope of particular criteria:

Technological model – in which the most important assumptions are (Malewski, 2001, p. 284):

- Conveying arranged knowledge is the main task of education;
- Describing the world in which adults live or will live and work without referring to their judgements, opinions, experiences;
- Bearing responsibility by the teacher for the results of teaching.

In the technological model of adult education and lifelong learning the following rules of education are obligatory:

- Induction – gaining knowledge about reality via getting to know things, phenomena and events directly or, visualisation of the process of instruction via images, models, graphs, tables;
- Intelligibility – gradation of difficulty, the necessity of adjustment of contents and method of instruction to the student's development and abilities;
- Regularity – in assimilating and consolidating presented material, and its appropriate order;
- Aware and active participation – active methods, trials to determine the problem, searching for the materials, analysis;
- Formation of the ability to learn – developing the ability to learn, preparation for self-study, using help, registering information;
- Combining theory and practice – indicating similarities to the knowledge and skills already known;
- Using experience of adults – consolidation of positive experiences, explaining negative ones;
- Individualisation and collectivity – individualised process of instruction, group work, guidance, consultations;
- Durability of knowledge – revising the material, referring to experiences and clarity, active involvement of the participants, implementing verification of discovered law, systematic control;
- Lifelong education – constant development, enrichment of personality, stimulating the need of further learning.

Andragogical model – it is a processual model in contrast to the above-mentioned technological model, which is, in other words, content model, applied by most traditional adult educators. The difference between these two models is not based on the fact that one concentrates on content and the other one does not, but a crucial difference is that the content model concerns information and skills conveyance, whereas the andragogical model focuses on procedures and resources aiding a learner in assimilating information and skills (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2009, p. 107).

In traditional system of education the teacher decides in advance on the manner in which knowledge and skills are to be conveyed, puts the material in the logical entirety, chooses the most effective means of conveyance and then he/she prepares the plan of presentation. The teacher (facilitator) using the andragogical model prepares in advance a set of procedures that involve adult learners into the process based on the following elements (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2009, p. 107):

1. Learner preparation;
2. Creating amiable atmosphere that facilitates learning;
3. Initiating mechanisms enabling mutual planning;
4. Diagnosing educational needs;
5. Formulating aims that can fulfil the above-mentioned needs (curriculum content);
6. Designing the pattern of educational experiences;
7. Managing these experiences using suitable means and techniques;
8. Teaching assessment and repeated diagnosis of educational needs.

As for the andragogical model, the main task of education is to improve the quality of adult life:

- Education is perceived as the way to better and subjective existing in the world;
- Knowledge is a symbol of everyday life experience;
- Searching for knowledge belongs to a learner;
- Dialogue is an effective method of teaching.

In this model the following rules are obligatory:

- *Target group orientation* – organising the didactic process according to expectations and possibilities of specific groups of participants;
- *Participant orientation* – individualisation of the process of instruction, becoming familiar with needs and experiences of an individual;
- *Work on interpretation patterns* – exchanging opinions referring to the ways of perceiving the world, reinforcement of interpretation patterns;
- *Adjusting the language of instruction to the recipients* – adjusting the language to the cognitive possibilities of a learner;
- *Joint perspective of a teacher and a learner* – striving to reach an agreement through showing respect of individual differences and indicating similarities;
- *Learning aims orientation* – possibility of establishment of the instructional aims;
- *Confronting with curriculum content* – appropriate choice and analysis of curriculum content;
- *Self-education* – reflective learning;
- *Integration of general and professional education* – integration of various fields of knowledge and life;
- *Influence of emotions on the teaching-learning process* – teaching-learning culture causing positive reactions;
- *Action-orientation* – combining theory with practice, using experiences;
- *Aestheticisation* – aesthetic sensations causing psychological comfort (images, music, classroom interior, teacher appearance);
- *Time economics* – good planning of time budget;
- *Mistake probability* – creating conditions facilitating the process of learning, arousing reflections, differentiating methods of teaching;
- *Using humour* – using humour during classes to intensify the effects of teaching.

Summary

In the field of economy and society development and in adult education the central category for both theory and practice is the process of adult learning. In

modern culture of adult education and lifelong learning one may find various models of educational work as varied educational needs of adults require different strategies of their fulfilment. Nevertheless, from the andragogical point of view, in the process of adult education and lifelong learning the most effective is the andragogical model of learning. Andragogy remains one of the dominant models of adult learning. Although a lot of obstacles and limits exist, andragogy has numerous possibilities in the scope of research and practice. To take the issue further, the more we are knowledgeable about cognitive development, the better we can adjust adult learning to their specific needs and possibilities.

The development of the Polish society and economy depends on the activity of market mechanism and acceleration of the process of modernisation of economy structure, which is closely related to adult participation in the process of lifelong education. Specialists emphasise the necessity to increase the number of people who work towards completing their education in Poland during one year from 8-10% to 20-25% from all employed, thus, to the level obtained in other countries from the EU.

The above-mentioned actions are an obligation of the whole society, national, institutional and religious education system, associations and foundations. Human capital is the basic factor of development and wealth of the nation. The society will be able to fulfil these requirements if it is open-minded, innovative, understand the rules of contemporary competition and organises effective system of education and lifelong learning. Polish lifelong education may and should be a valuable tool used for forming our country in its spiritual and material shape.

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