Institute for Pedagogy and Andragogy,
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CONTRIBUTION OF RESEARCH TO IMPROVEMENT OF ADULT EDUCATION QUALITY

Aleksandra Pejatović, Regina Egetenmeyer, Maria Slowey (Eds.)

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CONTENTS

Editors' Introduction 7

Boffo Vanna, Gioli Gaia
Transitions to Work and Higher Education:
Listening to What the Graduates Have to Say 9

Bulajić Aleksandar
Methodological and Conceptual Issues of Correlating Cognitive and Educational Variables: Example of Relation between Working Memory and Adult Illiteracy/ Elementary Education 29

Egetenmeyer Regina
Between the European Qualifications Framework and Professionalism
in Adult Education: Three Examples Concerning a Problematic Relationship..... 43

Federighi Paolo
Training in Organisations 55

Gioli Gaia, Tomei Nicoletta, Terzaroli Carlo
Quality in Higher Education Career Guidance: Procedures and Processes
for the Enhancement of Students' Employability..... 73

Glomazić Hajdana, Fabian Vesna
New Perspectives in Research of Adults' On Line Learning 87

Kleisz Terez
Current Perspectives for Studying Professions..... 97

Knežić Branislava, Savić Maja
Prison Education as Perceived by Recidivists..... 111

Ljujić Bojan
Quality of Adult Education Research Conducted through the Global
Computer Network..... 127

Marušić Milica
Recent Studies of Teachers' Career Development
– from Methodological Perspective 139

Medić Snežana, Milošević Zorica
Search for Differences in Learning and Education during the Aging Process 153

Miljković Jovan, Alibabić Šefika
Diffusion of Adult Education Policies in the European Education Space 167

Mitescu Manea Mihaela
Research Tools and Their Impact on Our Understanding of Learning in Programs of Adult Education? 183

Németh Balázs
Challenges and Opportunities for Innovations in Learning City – Region Developments in Pécs, Hungary.
New Perspectives for Community Development and Co-operative Learning 195

Nikolić Maksić Tamara
How Do We Learn Leisure Meaning? – Leisure Education Research and Models... 213

Orlović Lovren Violeta, Bralić Željko
Participatory Research and Learning in a Community: Two Sides of the Same Process? 223

Ovesni Kristinka, Matović Nataša
Empirical Researches in the Human Resource Development – Quality Improvement of the Field 235

Pejatović Aleksandra
On Adult Learning and Education Via Research into Educational Needs 249

Pekeč Kristina, Mihajlović Dubravka, Kecap Edisa
Lifeline Method in Research of Adult Learning and Career: Towards the Quality 263

Popović Katarina, Maksimović Maja
Critical Discourse Analysis in Adult Education. What We Mean When We Talk about Lifelong Learning? 277

Rajesh
Innovations and Opportunities for Vulnerable Population and Community Learning Centres in India: A Comparative Study 295

Sava Simona, Thöne-Geyer Bettina, Duncan Samantha, Manninen Jyri
Inner Quality of the Teaching – Learning Process – A Learners' Perspective on the Role of the Teacher in the Development of the Wider Benefits of Liberal Adult Education 315

Zarifis K. George, Papadimitriou Achilleas
Building Educational Synergies within Schools: A Revised Approach to Lifelong Learning in Europe 329

About the Authors 345

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

The origins of this collection of papers *The Contribution of Research to the Improvement of Adult Education Quality* lie in many years of cooperation across a large number of associations, universities, faculties, scientific-research centres and other organizations which, in various ways, work in the field of adult education and learning. The cooperation has been considerably strengthened under the auspices of the EU project *European Studies and Research in Adult Learning and Education – ESRALE.*

Most of papers in this collection are based on presentations made at an international conference 'Empirical Research in Adult Learning and Education – Conceptual and Methodological Problems', hosted by the University of Belgrade, 15 September, 2015, in the context of an ESRALE Summer Academy. Other papers were received in response to an invitation to a broader circle of associates working on relevant topics. In total, the collection contains 23 papers, by 38 authors- short biographies of whom are included at the end of the publication.

The overall aim of the papers in this volume is to discuss the role of research in adult education, with a view to expanding the evidence base for the improvement of quality in the field of adult education and learning. policy and practice. Some of the major themes to emerge include: the theoretical-methodological basis of adult learning and education; adult education policies; adult illiteracy; elementary education of adults; vocational adult education; higher education; human resource development; career guidance; on line learning and research; prison education; and the education of vulnerable populations.

Challenges identified include: conceptual and methodological problems in studying adult learning and education; the concept of lifelong learning; aging process and learning; working memory and learning in adulthood; educational needs of adults; adult educational programs; career development; (adult) education and employability; learning in a community; learning cities; organizational learning; co-operative learning; professionalization in adult education; teachers' role in adult education; the role of schools in adult education; educational opportunities for vulnerable populations...

Some of the theoretical issues and empirical research projects are located with a national environment, while others adopt a comparative perspective.

Overall, it is evident that scientific research has much to contribute to the improvement in policy and practice of adult education and adult learning. The papers in this collection clearly demonstrate the readiness of researchers

to contribute, improvement of various aspects of adult education and learning through the topics which they address and the connection they seek to make with policymakers and practitioners.

We hope that this collection, with its papers covering a wide range of practical and conceptual issues, represents an opportunity for exchange between authors, and between authors and readers, with the aim of coming to new understandings, deepening existing collaborations and, in the end, further improving the quality of adult education and learning opportunities.

Editors

TRANSITIONS TO WORK AND HIGHER EDUCATION: LISTENING TO WHAT THE GRADUATES HAVE TO SAY[1]

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Abstract

This article deals with the theme that the transition of young graduates between university and their entry to the labour market is a highly important learning experience with an embedded potential for productive development. To provide a deeper understanding of transition, the path behind and within it is analysed with a focus on employability tools. Findings are presented from qualitative empirical research on the transition experiences of University of Florence graduates (case study). These are then conceptualised through the lenses of theoretical approaches which highlight the importance of active listening as a tool for supported developmental pathways. Particular attention is paid to Beach and Doyle's notions of 'transition'. The article concludes with an outline of the impact that research in the field of Adult Education can have on the advice and guidance measures offered by European Universities.

Key words: Employability, Transition, Active listening, Interview

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1 The paper is the results of a joint work in the common parts of *Introduction and References*. However, paragraphs *Analysis of the Case Study: young graduates in the social economy, The research question and methodology, The interview technique: listening to the graduates, Conclusions* can be attributed to Prof. Vanna Boffo and the paragraphs *Abstract, Introduction, Defining transitions, Listening as a quality assurance tool, Results and interpretation* to Dr. Gaia Gioli.

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> For no reason on which a sensible person could put a finger
> I threw up my job – chucked my berth – left the ship [...].
> However, it's no use trying to put a gloss on what even at the time
> I myself half suspected to be a caprice.
>
> J. Conrad, *The Shadow-Line: A Confession*

Introduction

The main question of the research performed at the University of Florence, within the Adult Education, Continuing Training and Pedagogical Sciences higher order degree course, concerns the topic of the *transitions to work* undertaken by young graduates after completing their degrees. The research sets out to identify, read and understand the many meanings underlying the first transition to the world of education and training professions. At the same time it aims to pinpoint the types of path, transfer models and patterns of conduct for entry to work, also in relation to the transformations in Italian universities over the last five years following the implementation of law no. 240 of 30 December 2010. In order to reach European standards and build competitive and international higher education courses, among many other indications, coherence is needed between study courses and entry to work; indeed, it is one of the specific markers used by ANVUR, the National Assessments Agency, in the assessment of university programmes. The research put together by the University of Florence Department of Education and Psychology goes in this direction, specifically investigating and providing crucial reflection on both transition processes and employability. At the same time, it also provides an interesting survey into which teaching and pedagogical pathways can go to build good transitions. The model that could emerge from this investigation into a central study course for the educational field could also be used as a comparison in other university contexts and similar areas.

The research is prompted by some basic questions which on one hand pertain to building employability in higher education courses, and on the other hand question the enterprises which should hire graduates as highly specialised professionals. Therefore, on one hand, the questions that emerge revolve around which skills/capabilities are offered by the degree courses in education provided by Italian universities, and on the other look into which skills are required by social economy enterprises, the natural professional environment for those graduates who do not go to work in schools. We are dealing with two clear-cut and complementary lines of investigation: on one hand the graduates from the University of Florence joint higher order degree programme, and on the other, the enterprises in the region of Tuscany.

This complex yet specific research deals with some topical subjects in order to cast light on the role and functions of higher education. At present in Italy little or nothing is being done to build curricula which give sufficient support to the dimension of employability; which give students on less vocational degree courses full awareness of the soft skills that they possess; which incorporate transition as a phase of *Bildung* for work alongside the formal university learning programmes; which foster the to-date underrated and underdeveloped aspects of work experience, placements and internships. These days, for those reasons set out above, university study courses have to be, can only be 'thought of' in close harmony with the changes and many different speeds seen in the global labour market.

The research carried out follows a qualitative empirical/naturalistic educational format. The investigation into the higher order degree course in Adult Education, Continuing Training and Pedagogical Sciences is a case study which uses qualitative, semi-structured interviews as the tool/technique to collect the data.

In this essay, the enquiry concentrates on a set of interviews with graduates who were followed/monitored over the span of 18 months from the first interview, immediately after they completed their degree. The goal that we wish to pursue is to understand how listening actively to what the graduates have to say can create a relationship that is open to absorbing information that otherwise could not emerge. We will take into consideration the implicit aspects of the interviews, which will be treated from an educational-formative point of view. In turn, the interview becomes a moment of pedagogical conversation and, in addition to collecting data, the most interesting goal is given by the transformation that emerges from the formative exchange produced during the questions and answers.

1) Analysis of the Case Study: young graduates in the social economy

The method used was developed from the natural setting of the research, that is, the subjects under investigation were surveyed in a social environment that has not been particularly explored at the qualitative level.

From the quantitative point of view, the surveys were devised by the statistical research institutes of the various European countries, a valid example being the Consorzio Alma Laurea for the Italian graduates' entry to work. In the same way, the information was taken from the European Commission documents (Eurostat, 2015) which report the levels of transition of young graduates to the labour market and indicate flows, quantities, directions and employment rates. What is more difficult for us to find out and investigate is the meanings of the paths followed by the young people. What drives a young person to behave

according to particular dynamics? What drives another young graduate to be more effective and take those steps that are considered 'correct'? Above all, why is it necessary to know what drives young adults to follow some routes rather than others?

In an European labour market with such a high variance in the estimated percentages of employment one year after leaving university, from 75% in places like the Netherlands to 38% in states like Greece (Eurostat, *Youth employment rate, age group 20–29*, 2015), it is significant to specifically understand the subjective dynamics, also of large groups, in order to be able to plan youth work policies. Indeed, the research offers great cues for reflection and future perspectives for the development of policy learning. In addition to this first major goal, the research also strives to:

1) understand young people's tendencies towards work;
2) understand the cultural flows of labour markets;
3) interpret life prospects;
4) map implicit strategies for transitions;
5) observe the possible choices open to young people.

The study of transitions must be supported by the capability to understand their most profound implications in order to best choose which measures to adopt in young people's training centres and university curricula, both in terms of learning and learning methods. This crucially influences not just entry policies, but also training policies, which directly affect the quality markers set for schools, professional courses, university courses and higher education programmes.

We are dealing with at least three theoretical subjects: the first is *transitions*, the second *employability*, the third the market of the *social economy*. Each of these subjects has a complex theoretical history and can easily be observed from a range of perspectives. What is of interest to us in the research is to find a definition so that the concept can be useable and easily included in a pedagogical and educational outlook. Indeed, this is how the data emerging from the interviews with the graduates is read.

The point of reference for the definition of transition is the Transitional Labour Market Approach (TLM) by Berard Gazier and Jérôme Gautie (2011, p. 2), which in an article reads as follows:

In the TLM approach the key word is of course 'transitions'. In German, the term is 'Übergänge', which means footbridge, gangway or link[2] [...]. The first definition of a 'transition' was any departure from the reference point of a full-time, long-term job. The departure may exist inside employment, e.g. short or long

2 This is the term used in initial studies by Schmid and Auer, as well as in subsequent German publications (Schmid 2002).

periods of part-time work, or include various periods of activity or inactivity, such as unemployment or parental or training leave. This definition emphasises not only a dynamic view of career development, but also of career stability in a way which sees beyond the mere availability of 'stable' jobs. However, there is a second definition. It sees a 'transition' as any sequence in a career which leads to a change from one stable middle-term position to another. In an asymptotic view, briefly explored below, one may even conceive of *every* sequence of a personal and occupational career as constituting a 'transition'. The drawback of such an all-encompassing definition is of course that everything in a career trajectory then becomes a 'transition'. The second definition predominates today, but it is complemented by the idea of 'stability cores' [...]. In other words, to be a 'transition', a sequence or change should lead somewhere, and this 'somewhere' should be defined as well.

In the research carried out with the Florentine graduates, the transition takes on a more personal value and is still linked more to the life transition from university as a place of *Bildung* in order to look for a job than to work. Indeed, in the interviews graduation is taken as the first moment in the transition towards the world of work. Attitudes, words, thoughts, memories and desires underline how the first transition towards the world of work is already fully defined when the degree commission pronounces the grade that the student has been awarded. In this way, if transition is every sequence that leads towards a change, there is no doubt that we are already in the presence of a first form of transformation even before leaving university. From the pedagogical point of view, the awareness that graduation effectively represents a watershed is an important detail that could lead to that event being allocated a much more important educational value than it has at present.

The second point of reference is the theoretical subject of *employability.* The definition used is the one tested by Yorke and Knight's work team (2006) and previously used by Yorke (2004). The notion of *employability* is closely connected to the training courses and university curricula, it has an inevitable connection with the teaching process and depends both on the subject's training course and on the educational environment which has surrounded that person since birth. As Yorke asserts, *employability* is:

A set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy. (ESECT based on Yorke 2006)

Another definition can give the concept of *employability* a broader reach:

Employability is not just about getting a job. Conversely, just because a student is on a vocational course does not mean that somehow employability is automatic. Employability is more than about developing attributes, techniques or experience just to enable a student to get a job, or to progress within a current

career. It is about learning and the emphasis is less on 'employ' and more on 'ability'. In essence, the emphasis is on developing critical, reflective abilities, with a view to empowering and enhancing the learner. (Harvey 2003)

Therefore it seems necessary to activate *employability* in order to tackle the labour market, but it cannot be thought of in terms of building transversal skills just before entry to work. The *employability* of every student, first, and graduate, after, must be built throughout their lives, through their everyday learning, through real empirical and didactic activities that are *embedded* in the world of work and the professions.

Lastly, the *social economy* is a varied and complex production sector which deserves special attention owing to its sustained levels of profit and gradual rise in the extent of professionalisation. The world of the social economy features a great deal of care for citizens, from tiny babies to non self-sufficient elderly people. It is a varied world, with many facets and many forms, but it is worthy of study and investigation owing to its capacity to retain and produce work, to its potential to innovate and try out techniques and pedagogical methods, and to the immense number of services that it offers, at this point replacing the state's commitment towards its citizens. Within the *social economy* the graduates that we took into consideration find or will find work thanks to the sector's energy, its many faces, the variety of skills/capabilities required, and the number of highly specialised people it takes on.

2) The research question and methodology

The initial question, therefore, strives to understand which dynamics underlie the initial transitions to work of young adults (aged 23–29) upon leaving higher education. The epistemological context is an ecological-naturalistic one, as already indicated (Bateson, 1976), in which the type of investigation to be carried out is supported by the ontological-relational dimension. The results are necessarily interpreted and analysed in terms of education and training, with a strict critical-phenomenological attitude on the part of the researcher (Stein, 1984; Arendt, 1958).

The enquiry followed a qualitative method. In particular, no set map was followed in grasping the phenomenon under investigation, instead it was constantly adjusted as is the norm when the work perspective fits into a context of pedagogical and educational research with social and anthropological characteristics. The most appropriate context for a suitable research style is provided by Grounded Theory, which is adapted inductively and not deductively (Glaser, 1992). The research strategy is that of the case study, which gives precise indications on the procedures to follow to conduct the investigation process (Mortari, 2007). The case study is carried out in the three directions of the survey and it

gives an in-depth analysis of three samples of young adults: the graduates with higher order degrees, social economy workers and industry workers. The investigation technique, that is, the data collection tool used, is the focus group first of all, followed by an in-depth interview. Both the focus group and the interview are longitudinal. The samples chosen for each of the three directions of the research are followed for its whole duration. The focus group table has some fixed fields to provide information on the research subjects. The semi-structured interview is conducted according to a second table. The protocol is rigorously developed at each step. It was strictly observed that the researchers spent the same amount of time on the job and repeated the actions the same number of times so that the results could be compared.

The research methodology therefore comprised several phases which were strictly followed. Hence, this gave a clear and complex research design within an evidence-based ecological-naturalistic setting which coherently integrated and developed methods, strategies and investigation techniques. The quantitative and qualitative indicators used, and the sociological and pedagogical, psychological and economic slant adopted, produced a wide-ranging methodology useful for a trans– and interdisciplinary, or multi-inter-transdisciplinary approach. The resulting multifaceted investigation can be used for political ends, in the sense that the perspectives of enquiry give a global approach to man.

The research on the education graduates' transition to work was carried out on the basis of the students who graduated from the University of Florence, the University of Padua and the University of Würzburg (Germany) in the various sessions of the academic year. The universities in question are thought to have comparable higher order degree courses in Adult Education and Pedagogy. At least one study course will be mapped out per university. The interviews will take place every six months for the universities of Florence (starting in June 2014) and Würzburg (starting in February 2015). Some graduates will be followed for two years and some for just one.

The focus groups and interviews will aim to enable the researchers to build the meanings of the transitions, namely the pivots around which to draw up *terms, key words* and *basic concepts* for the research purposes. The phase after the survey with the indicated tools consists of the following steps:

1) describing the transition phenomenon/phenomena;
2) making interpretations from the recurrent concepts;
3) drawing out labels (concepts);
4) building categories to interpret the phenomena.

The method used to analyse the data allows the researcher to draw up a map of knowledge on the phenomenon under consideration (knowledge mapping), but also a/the route/s in the transition to work.

The aim of the research will be to make the acquired knowledge into a model, and the ultimate goal of this part of the research will be *to build a model of transitions*.

We know that over the years the social economy has become a production sector of unquestionable interest for the expanding market that it represents (*Social Economy and Social Entrepreneurship*, European Commission, 2013). This market has become increasingly professionalised all over Europe and it provides fertile ground for investing in services to citizens, as well as for transforming care processes for children, adolescence, the disabled, the mentally ill and family support. Other fields of involvement and work are those devoted to migrants and taking care of the many different needs of asylum seekers or ethnic and cultural minorities. Precisely because of the specific nature of a sector open to the economic dimensions of cooperation, in consortia or as self-entrepreneurs, the social economy is an innovative field of study (*Job Creation through the Social Economy and Social Entrepreneurship*, OECD, 2013).

3) The interview technique: listening to the graduates

So, what does studying transitions by listening to young graduates mean?

First of all, placing ourselves symmetrically in a position to converse, in a situation in which, by the law of educational antinomy, equality and symmetry cannot exist. In general, to do interviews is to collect data, process answers, compare them, label them, draw meanings from the comparisons made, and then make the most suitable interpretation for the study context. Instead, in our case, the interviews served above all to listen and to perform educational care (Tronto, 1993).

Second, the posture of the researcher/interviewer: an attentive attitude, addressed to the graduates to grasp the smallest detail, to understand the most subtle interjection, to find a gap in their natural diffidence, so as to listen with the most active sense of one's own and the other's self. And the story told in the interview is not just a tale of intentions, wishes and desires for tomorrow, but it becomes a means to enter, with all respect, the other's world (Rogers, 1980). To listen actively is to make oneself open and welcoming, it is to understand the verbal and non-verbal communication that the body expresses. Rarely do any contradictions come to the fore, because the words are filled by the ethical sense of addressing the other (Tronto, 1993). Through a technique, namely the semi-structured interview, the pedagogical perspective can be found in the ability to transform one's person through the use of storytelling and caring words. In a certain sense, we can state that the interview itself, repeated longitudinally after a period of six months, is a sort of *care of self* through narration of the professional self. And one always implies the other. The human condition of the subject-person is consolidated (Nussbaum, 2011).

The pedagogical dimension lies at the micro-level, but the case study can become a model of transition and be compared with the other cases in the research. Thus, listening becomes a central aspect of the survey. Without listening well, it is not possible to lead the interviewees towards the depths of their inner selves. *Bildung*, *Selbstbildung*, practice of self and technology of self are all educational/formative dimensions that underlie the apparent end of collecting the research data. Perhaps this is what is new in the pedagogical study of transitions, and the phenomenon of employability. Using concepts according to a human and not just a technical perspective so that the relationship between the interviewee and the interviewer can boost the capability to look for work as best fits our wishes and desires.

4) Defining transitions

The concept of transition has been the focus of researchers' attention since the 1980s, especially in the Anglo-Saxon context where a rich variety of research, studies, enquiries and best practices have been developed, many of which are based on empirical data and evidence.

In the Anglo-Saxon sphere, the concept of transition has been subject to in-depth study in the pedagogical and educational field and its importance relates mainly to the association of the term 'transition' with the reflection on human beings, their personal development and their *Bildung*.

As a matter of fact, transitions relate to transformative and developmental aspects of the human condition as well as macro-changes in society, in terms of the skills, knowledge and abilities that can be influenced by education and society.

As said, transitions are considered a shift from one person (subject) or place (object) to another and refer to a dynamic episode that occurs between two static moments in the life course, corresponding to a change in a person's role. Indeed, the change can be inter-role or intra-role, that is, it can be objective or subjective (Louis, 1980) and is associated with the work context and the worker's status, whether the transitions be temporary (change in tasks) or permanent (retirement).

The drawback of such a definition is that transitions have to be focused on 'stability cores' (Auer and Gazier, 2006): a transition has to lead somewhere precise and defined.

However, there is a second definition of 'transitions' that sees them as sequences in careers and personal life and an all-encompassing dynamic flow in life (Gazier and Gautié, 2009, pp. 2–3).

Through this view, transitions are like bridges that connect different episodes of life, for example, employment, short or long periods of part-time work,

various periods of activity or inactivity, unemployment, parental or training leave, etc..

While people transition, they retrieve their background and past lived experiences in order to face the challenge. Adopting this point of view, Schlossberg, Waters and Goodman (1995) consider transitions as a lifelong experience and the results of a mix of many elements:

- more or less predictable events that occur and allow the distinction between 'anticipated transitions', 'non-anticipated transitions' and 'non-event transitions', that is, those transitions that should occur but in the end do not happen;
- relationships between the person and the framework in which the transition occurs (transition context);
- the extent of the transition (length and range).

All these factors impact on the transition and on the person's life. As a consequence, the transformative effects of transitions on individuals should be considered something that we can specifically learn from. It relates to skills, knowledge, abilities, the way adults learn (Kolb, 1984) and the types of learning (Mezirow, 1994, p. 224). It is education that aims to fortify the capabilities to sustain the change and transformation and to know and understand the self (Nussbaum, 2010 in Boffo 2015).

Therefore, we might propose that transformation is implicated in the process of transition and represents the threshold that allows the learner to gain new meaning and new perspectives. It can be interpreted as a 'learning jump' when 'life conditions change, for the individual and society'. Transition requires individuals to 'adjust themselves radically in order to keep up and ... be able to transcend the adaptation that was appropriate to the earlier conditions' (Illeris, 2002, p. 163) and to take appropriate actions within unfamiliar and changing circumstances so that they, through their capabilities, may look ahead and act accordingly.

Transitions can be seen as a learning process or as a 'consequential transition' back and forth between different activities that include actions and situations, structures and systems in a continuity and a transformative becoming someone or something new (Beach, 1997, p. 102).

Young people going through transitions are experiencing a 'potentially productive developmental learning experience' and they should not be left alone or without assistance or support as they move between different learning environments, such as family, school, university and the labour market. Support during transitions will help young people to understand and adapt to the labour market's needs for a flexible and mobile workforce, that is, to become comfortable with, and aim to take advantage – from an educational point of view – of academic modes of learning.

One perspective on educational transitions tends to draw together and compare the management of transition in order to create clusters. Following Doyle, we assume that individuals can receive four types of support:

- Unsupportive experiences: young *hikikomori* left alone with work demands, without social relationships outside their own family (Cote and Hallard, 1994, p. 74)
- Supportive experiences: 'Hang in there!' – sustained, successful employment
- A supportive environment in 'precarious, individualised transitions'
- Support from social communities to strengthen identity and 'agency' (direction and independence).

According to the support received during the transition in order to ease management of the experience, Doyle (2013) identifies four models of transition:

- Unsupported learning transitions (without support);
- Damaging transitions (unorganised transition);
- Serendipitous transitions (accepting what comes without a clear professional path in mind);
- Supported transitions (with support).

Researchers have identified two main supporting assets that young people can benefit from during transitions.

On one hand, Crawford asserts that community is very important, as transitions need to be based on the context of human lives, as intended by Nussbaum (2011, p. XI), or on educational systems that ensure that nobody is marginalised.

On the other hand, support can be internal. As a matter of fact, human beings are proficient at transforming themselves and developing in a consequential transfer in order to be flexible and adaptive to changes. Within this approach, human beings transform their skills, knowledge and learning with a view to 'portability' (Beach, 1997). Beach's transfer concept suggests that when people have successfully fulfilled a prior learning-based experience (previous experiences), they will be able to apply the learning to a new task according to the possible choices they can make, being highly influenced by the former, in a 'transfer approach'. In this path 'agency' is fundamental (Côté and Levine, 2002).

Indeed, the resources and assets that a young person needs for 'adaptive challenges' (Becker et al., 2009) are both internal and external. However, in order to succeed within educational settings, access to nearly all of them is connected in some way to the support of the community from which they come. The external context plays a role because individuals cannot be considered outside their natural context. As a consequence, they are dependent on society or, as affirmed by Beach (1999, p.102), 'changing individuals are not ontologically independent of one another'. At the same time, their role is not external to the changing social context but closely linked to it.

Transfer is difficult to intentionally facilitate, though Furlong and Cartmel (1997) have suggested that it is highly structured and reproduces itself, because the institutions, and economic and social assets also tend to reproduce themselves in time.

Yet we cannot omit that transitions involve emotions, cognitive and social changes and that especially young people transitioning have to cope with confusion, disenchantment, disorientation and alienation (Doyle, 2012, p. 395). Indeed, studies of learners moving across institutions demonstrate that the accompanying constructs can foster the success of the continuous transition from one institution to another. The transfer concept is in a certain way a generalisation of the transition process between school and work, family and school, and school and community.

In response to high youth unemployment rates all over the world, researchers have tried to identify adequate and appropriate external support tools which can help young people to succeed. Indeed, although internal assets are fundamental for successful transitions, not all young people can rely only on their own strengths and resources in the path from university to work (Goddard, 2005).

Drawing and Erikson (1975) assert that a supportive environment, namely career and guidance services, is helpful for young people who have to develop their personal and professional identity, especially with the aim of providing them with the instruments to adapt to new, unpredictable situations and develop an adaptable stability in their lives as they move from studies to work.

Alternatively, 2011 Barnes et al. (2011) suggested the construction of a virtual career service consisting of phone and online web support. In making this observation, Barnes et al. could have considered that transitions tend to be linked to cultural dimensions and technological sensibility and that according to the 2010 National Youth Agency report, although the usage of websites and phone lines is very common among young people, 'ultimately most of the young people in the study said that they would prefer to access counselling and individual guidance services face-to-face rather than over the internet or email'. The report also found that 'young people want access to information, advice and guidance from a trusted adult'.

When studying transitions, we must be able to understand their deepest implications. These have a strong influence on placement and training policies, and on the measures adopted within university curricula and in youth training centres because the strategies, will and agency of young graduates impact on the success or failure of their transition into work. As a consequence, they affect the quality indicators for University courses and higher education curricula, that is, the University's third mission (Boffo, Federighi and Torlone, 2015).

5) Listening as a quality assurance tool

The support and all the artefacts that work together to influence transitions change individuals and make them become something new, according to

Dewey's (1916) idea of the development of becoming. Insomuch, the experience of looking for a job that occurs after leaving university and ends with entering the workplace is life-transforming because it changes the self. In the same way, the 'encompassing transition' that happens though participation in career guidance or counselling services during and immediately after a university degree also enables graduates to experience a developmental learning that allows the acquisition of some specific knowledge for job seeking. It is oriented towards the transformation of individuals since it asks them to shift from theory to practice and to create a bridge between the two different activities through the support of teachers, tutors, career guides and supporting professionals (the so-called 'encompassing transition of developmental learning' by Beach, 1999).

In this sense, the individual interview can be very effective in understanding the life-transforming impact that transitions have on people.

As a guidance instrument, it can be used as a meaningful tool of individual analysis to help young people to understand the elements conditioning transition; to become strong and competitive self-entrepreneurs; to enhance their own personal agency; and to understand the strategies, channels and skills needed to manage the experiential, cultural and economic assets required for a successful transition phase. The in-depth interview can help the graduates' self-reflexivity and production of new knowledge. Thus, it fosters an innovation process that increases the graduates' ability to adapt. This is what makes graduates more attractive for the labour market since they are well aware of their skills, their abilities and their professional profile. Such learning is not transmitted, but graduates are in the condition to learn and innovate, as they realize that they can access new strategies and channels or suggest new services.

As a research tool, interviews can help to collect data on the educational needs of young graduates. Data can provide support in the choice of measures to adopt in university curricula or point learning, learning methods and career services that already exist within the university in the best direction. This means that the range on offer could be renewed in order to meet demand through the construction of highly personalised services, rather than set pathways that are not influenced or driven by the supply needs (Belanger and Federighi, 2000, p. 11; Federighi, 2006, pp. 23–52; Federighi, 2013, p. 25).

By following this approach, university will become the place where learning for life takes effect and individuals learn how to plan their life projects, move between the different learning environments and learning processes, and go through transitions 'developmentally', that is, with transformative assistance. The support system would then understand the students and graduates' exact position in their transition and be able to support them through a dynamic analysis of the students' current state and help their transition path/practice from their previous university experiences.

6) Results and interpretation

When researchers want to study the self, qualitative face-to-face interviews appear to be the more suitable tool for capturing graduates' in-depth perceptions and experiences. The investigation was carried out on around 32 graduates at the University of Florence and 3 interviewers took care of the interviews.

Because of the nature of the study, graduates were informed through the focus group about the interviews' goals and had the opportunity to reflect on whether or not they wanted to be involved in the research and to prepare themselves for the interview. As mentioned in the previous paragraphs, graduates were asked to discuss their personal volitions, skills, channels and expectations.

With reference to "desires", researchers investigated the graduate's will to go into a particular career, to identify themselves in a professional profile. "Skills" refers to the self-perception with regard to the acquisition of communication, self-guidance and transversal capabilities. "Channels" regards to the ways, services and tools used to look for a job while "Expectations" to the vision of the future path. These results can be used to gain an even deeper understanding of the transition from one state to another in young person's lives, in the very important passage from University to work. The research can be read and interpreted in a lot of different ways, but what we are interested at most is to understand how the active listening can be used as a formation tool.

Listening actively to what the graduates have to say helps the researchers to identify at least two models of job placement pathways of young graduates in Adult education. The relationship with the interviewer which is open to absorb and express information that otherwise could not emerge because they are implicit to the speakers (the graduate) is very important and will be treated from an educational-formative point of view. As a consequence, we consider the interview as a moment of pedagogical conversation and a transforming tool that causes a formative exchange between interviewer and interviewee.

These job placement pathways have been analysed according to the labels of:

- Construction of a professional identity: that can be described through ability to identify oneself in a professional figure and to explain it in terms of tasks; passion and motivation; ability to explain the professional path;
- Sense of agency and self-awareness during the transition that can be described through: work-oriented attitude; channels; ethics.

The results bring the researchers to identify:

- Transition Model No. 1: Shooting star
- Transition Model No. 2: Hotspot

Model No. 1 features the presence of an initial risk of the graduate to be not in employment nor in education, due to the apparent lack of motivation, agency and growth perspectives. As time goes by, i.e. in the 2nd and 3rd interview, the risk

declines as the graduate comes across important events or figures that more or less consciously guide, support, condition the graduate's path. According to label the Model No. 1, as time passes by, researchers can identify a:

- Growing openness to dialogue;
- Increasing passion and motivation;
- Increasing knowledge of formal channels;
- Increasing knowledge of formal networks;
- Increasing self-confidence and capacity to identify him/herself in a professional figure.

In Model No. 2, we can find a remarkable importance of the work experiences before the discussion of the Master thesis that correspond to the basis of the working career, especially when the work is coherent with the study course. The work experience, carried out in a family business or an association or in other forms (work abroad) is exploited to the full as a device for the formation to the first real job. Indeed in the analysis the relevance of the activities performed constitutes an additional element to the construction of the professional identity and helps the development and acquisition of new knowledge and the improvement of the levels of professionalism. This experience, and the skills, abilities and knowledge acquired through this can be transferred afterwards to other work contexts (organizations, fields, sectors). A very important element that can be observed in relation to this model is the sense of self-awareness, agency and self-entrepreneurship that are recurring elements in all interviews. This element does not necessarily correspond to the creation of an enterprise, but with the ability of the interviewee to analysis the labour market, potentiality and possibilities of the transition, the professional path (Table No. 2).

According to label the Model No. 2, the interviewee is characterized by:

- Strong professional identity from the first interview;
- Deep knowledge of the formal, non-formal and informal channels for the search of the job;
- Deep and informal knowledge of formal, non-formal and informal networks that can help the identification of the career pathway;
- Work experiences in the medium and long term during and in coherence with the study course;
- High level of passion and motivation in the job search.

In both models, the individual in-depth interview and the figure of the interviewer as a mentor are very important because they help the researchers to study and understand the metamorphosis that happen within the individuals during the range of 12 months. Graduates experience an inner development, a change of professional identity (sometimes) or job orientation. Through the interview they can face

discrepancy between the inner self and the labour market needs and the institutional expectations of family, University etc. and within that context they can feel eventually disoriented in a limbo situation of having lost one's old world view and pertinent categories and not having found a new one and the pertinent categories yet.

In the transition process between University and the labour market there is a very important figure: the interviewer and his/her relationship with the graduates. A fair and benign interviewer can become a very good guide in the learning process of transition and if he/she is able to engage on a more personal level with the respondent he/she can improve the quality of the communication, of the relationship and of the data collection. The ethical dimension of the interviewer would be then the basis of the relationship of trust that arise and would serve as a pivotal element for the transformation and transition process. As a matter of fact, looking at the following interview segments relating to the label of *Construction of the professional identity* we can observe the fundamental role of guidance of the interviewer, in which, on one hand renders the turning point of the first transition to the labour market, and, on the other, highlights the importance of a deep knowledge of the professional profiles and career paths that can be undertaken. In a certain way the interviewer helps the interviewee to understand which are the professional figures that can be coherent with the study course, which could be the results of the job search and which are the job possibilities for the interviewee (See. Table No. 1 for the "Shooting star" Model and Table No. 2 for the "Hotspot" Model).

Table No. 1 – Construction of the professional identity in the "Shooting star" Model

Construction of a professional identity **Shooting star: Growing identitication in a professional profile** **1st interview** Q: And your areas of improvement … we have already identified one… But are there other areas that you think that could be improved, that could help you in the field where you want to work […] A: Well … With reference to the professional field that I have chosen, I should improve my project design competences. For LLP projects. I have good ideas, but I need to build them and put them into practice, develop a clear plan […] Q: Well ... What you are telling me ... I would separate it into two different perspectives. Please correct me if I am wrong. On one hand, […] the development of a training action in a training agency or a small enterprise, as you mentioned before. Maybe you could be the manager of a training plan or you could create the didactic units of the training plan, and ... create a training plan in coherence with the workers needs […]. On the other side, LLP projects […] that are linked with the lifelong learning and the management of projects under the umbrella of the GRUNDVIG, LEONARDO programs. These are two completely different aspects. Do you agree? 2nd interview Q: […] What about that European project you were writing with … Did you write it? Does it still exist? Did you change your mind? A: No, not yet… we are still designing it. It is still a idea we have in mind … 3nd interview A: I am working in two projects of cultural integration […] a project of European integration, which is primarily focused on the integration of Roma and Sinti […] and then there is the second project, that is called "Comparing Generations" that mainly deals with relations between the elderly and various age groups […].

Table No. 2 – Construction of the professional identity in the "Hotspot" Model

Construction of the professional identity **Hotspot: Strong professional identity since the first interview** **1st interview** Q: Which are your plans for the next months […]? A: My aim is simply that of finding a job […]. I could enter in the provisional list of the support teachers.[…] or find another structure where I could work in the support to addicts or any other issue related to the adulthood. Formation remains my principal area of interest […]. My desire is to be able to continue this little thing (i.e. the association) that we founded a year ago during my master degreee course […] that deals with the person in all its various forms […]. September 20 and 21, we are organizing a course for counselors […]. **2nd interview** A: I got some results … at least with the Alice and Pane e Rose cooperatives that work together, I succeeded in the interviews Q: And what did they offered you? A: I was asked to do the formation […] to ADB and OSS…[…] to home operators Q: […] Design, build and deliver formation paths. It is correct? A: Yes, yes **3rd interview** A: I work now in the field of formation and education […] The work is highly qualified […] After one year from my graduation, I can say that I have found a job that is coherent with my studies. Q: In your opinion, in the last 6 months, did your professional identity consolidate? […] Do you feel like you are more stable with your profile in the education sector? […] A: Yes, yes. During the second interview is was not so sure about it.

Conclusions

It is worth noting that this paper represents only the beginning of the analysis and interpretation of the data we are collecting, and we can say that the study on the Transitions has indicated a multiplicity of paths we would never have expected.

For us, the study of Transitions means to approach young adults in the most crucial period for the construction of a mature identity and enter into the domains of informal learning that are actually guided by processes so much hidden as distant in time.

Transitions tell us what these young women and men are and represent a watershed between the period of the higher education studies, and its serenity, and the time of a vital realism given by the acknowledgment of what society and the labour market offer.

What we discovered is just the flow of life that is focused through the experience. In brief, we can affirm that the pedagogical work emerges in all its amplitude. We observe the process of education/formation that unfolds throughout the strength of the unexpected. In the folds of the interviews, in the sentences analysed, in the interactions accounted for, there are hope and delusion, tenacious reinforcements and sudden abandonment of roads and paths up at that

time considered inevitable. Within the research we find the sense of studying the human beings and the forms of their education, we find the way in which it is possible to grow forming themselves, taking care of themselves even facing the nightmare of unemployment.

The pedagogical work is also this, listen to the depth of the human being and make sure that tracks good of one become the paths of many. We thought that approach the study of a period of the life of young people with the pedagogical exercise of the attention to the other one was the best way to act formation.

The results confirm that the road taken is the right one. This is also the meaning of scientific research: we can keep trying and our graduates will continue to give us a way to understand how to improve paths, skills, tools, ability to work in the future.

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METHODOLOGICAL AND CONCEPTUAL ISSUES OF CORRELATING COGNITIVE AND EDUCATIONAL VARIABLES: EXAMPLE OF RELATION BETWEEN WORKING MEMORY AND ADULT ILLITERACY/ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

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Abstract

In last two decades there has been a vast interest exploring the ways in which fruitful field of working memory studies and findings could be in applied in the area of education. Although, much of this interest was related to early schooling and was founded on developmental psychology paradigms, there were also lots of studies conducted with a special focus on relating working memory and adult learning, dominantly in the area of second language learning. This paper addresses methodological and conceptual issues in actual and potential studies investigating working memory and adult illiteracy, aiming to highlight problems of using the working memory construct to predict success in adult literacy programs. One of the main methodological and conceptual issues in this context seem to be related to the intertwinement of working memory functions with automatization of language related processes and language/literacy acquisition occurring in the process of early schooling, as well as with socio-economic and cultural background of an individual.

Key words: working memory, adult literacy, adult education, correlation, learning.

Introduction

Which qualities of an individual learner and his or hers surrounding make him or her potentially and effectively a successful learner? Review of the relevant literature from the field of adult education and learning leads one to a conclusion that those are mainly variables related to: socio-economic status (Anderson & Darkenwald, 1979), primary family (Scarr & Weinberg, 1978), the type and level

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of motivation (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2014), presence/absence of barriers for participation in adult education and learning (Cross, 1981), personal traits and self-regulation (Abraham, Richardson, & Bond, 2012), lack of stress and mental health (Schaie & Willis, 2010) and belonging to social groups and technology (Jarvis, 2012). Besides the stated, one can ask him/herself how does the quality and the capacity of cognition reflect on individual learning success in adults, having in mind that cognitive ability is the domain which every attempt to adjust, solve problems, comprehend the reality, induce and deduce, abstract, create and evaluate is built upon in humans. There had been not enough research that would primarily focus on the addressed issue. This type of studies so far have mainly dealt with cognitive aspects of learning in developmental period and aging. Similar can be stated for developmental psychology. According to some experts in this field (Brković, 2011), psychology of adulthood is the least developed branch of the field, "even less developed than gerontopsychology" (p. 329).

In many recent research it is often claimed that working memory (aspect of cognitive system responsible for simultaneous storing and manipulating of information during a short period of time) is a cognitive domain crucial for educational achievement (Bull & Scerif, 2001; Gathercole & Pickering, 2000; Geary, Hoard, & Hamson, 1999; Rohde & Thompson, 2007). In fact, it is often stated that working memory (WM) capacity is a better predictor of learning success than intelligence i.e. IQ (Alloway & Alloway, 2010). However, upon analyses of previous studies dealing with the relation of WM capacity and adult learning, we came to know that this relation is confluent to some extent and requires special methodological and conceptual concern. For example, if WM is believed to influence academic attainment but is also under its influence to some extent, namely during early schooling, how to interpret directions of WM and learning success correlational studies that are conducted in the context of adult learning/literacy programmes?

To some extent a derivate of an old, nature versus nurture dilemma is to be examined and described in the context of the question – what are the current problems of the conceptualizations used in interpretation of WM correlations with literacy and education in recent relevant research of the topic? Some important recent studies are going to be consulted in that effort, with a general purpose of highlighting the need to improve methodological practice of correlational research in the area of the topic. The question in focus (conceptual research issues) is to be investigated through several subcategories previously mentioned:

- Whether WM capacity predicts learning success better then intelligence?
- What does this prediction mean? More precisely, if the WM capacity and efficacy in under significant influence of learning, whether the studies that propagate this positive correlation actually correlate effects of prior learning with a later learning success?
- How mentioned issues reflect on research methodology?

Concept of Working Memory

Working memory is a "dynamic mental work space" (Buha & Gligorović, 2014, p. 22) in which information, perceived from the outside world and/or activated from the long-term memory, are simultaneously and temporarily stored, and actively manipulated (Bulajić & Maksimović, 2014). This dual function can be described as distribution of the total available cognitive resources or the total WM capacity to the retention and processing activities. The two functions operate in the capacity constant but structurally variable manner. WM is involved in person's everyday activities such as: problem solving, reading and writing, speaking or calculating.

> If we, for instance, ask someone to help us reach a specific location in an unfamiliar town we would typically receive an information that will engage our WM. The direction we might receive could appear in the form similar to the following example: "First you need to turn left and then walk for hundred meters more, then take a turn to the right and continue until you reach a big white shopping mall with a lot of advertising posters displayed. Then you need to cross the street and proceed in direction right of the mall for about hundred meters more." The verbal instruction in the example would present a real life WM task as it would require us to retain information of "where", "what" and "how" and simultaneously manipulate the data received in order to structure them and bring them into the logical time and space order (Bulajić & Maksimović, 2014, p. 35).

The most famous WM model is the one constructed by Baddeley and Hitch (1974), also known by the name of modal model. The basic 1974 model describes complex structure of WM which recognizes components that encompass relatively dependent but specialized functions (Figure 1).

The central executive (CE) represents the most important construct of the system. This domain is responsible for several mental activities such as: attention focusing, redirecting attention during the execution of several relatively synchronized tasks, planning of successive actions, coordination of other model components, retention of the material in the model sub-components, retention of material temporarily activated from long-term memory, attention-based regulation of mutually conflicted activities by an intervention of *the supervisory attentional system* (see Norman & Shallice, 1986).

In contrast to the more general role of central executive which covers a large number of cognitive functions, *the phonological loop* and *the visuo-spatial sketchpad*, are characterized by highly specialized functions. Structure and function of the phonological loop are represented by *the phonological short-term storage* responsible for the storing of phonological and phonologically coded material, and by articulatory rehearsal mechanism, which renews and maintains phonological traces held in phonological short-term storage (Bulajić, 2013).

The visuo-spatial sketchpad can be described as a component with a function of maintaining visual and spatial qualities of an object for a short period of time. Previous research did not definitively manage to determine if visuo-spatial sketchpad is a unique capacity that stores visual and spatial characteristics of objects or its architecture is actually built of two different but closely linked storages – namely, of visual and spatial one (Bulajić, 2013).

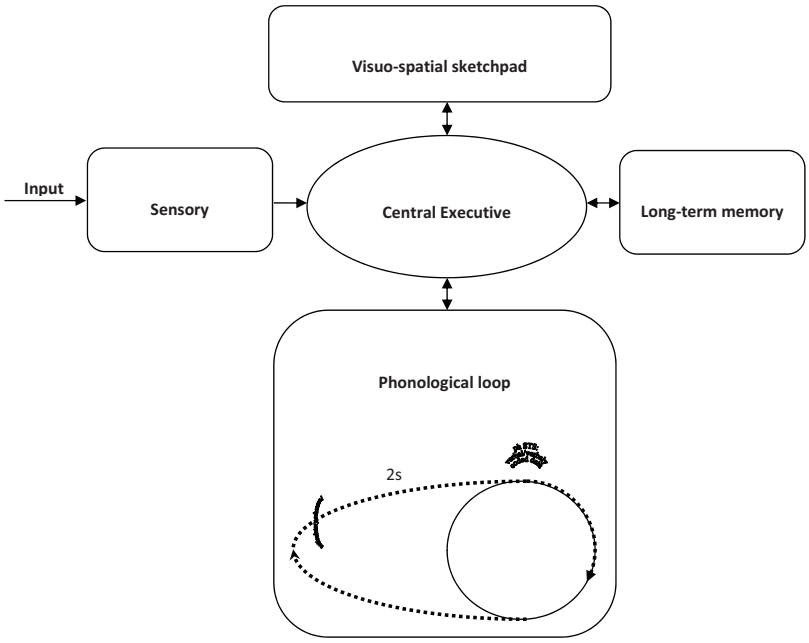


Figure 1 –Image representation of working memory
based on the Baddeley's and Hitch's model (1974)

Working memory, intelligence and academic attainment

Since it was conceptualized, the concept of WM had become one of the most used notions in cognitive psychology and other related disciplines. For example, until the year 2010, there had been more than 10 000 studies published on the topic of WM (Baars & Gage, 2010). It had become the solid basis for conducting different correlational research in fundamental and applied sciences. When it comes to learning, WM and its subcomponents, were found to significantly correlate with learning success, especially language and mathematical skills in young and adult learners.

On the other hand, tests of intelligence constructed in France by Alfred Binet and Theodore Simon more than 100 years ago, with a mission to identify poor individual learners (Alloway & Gregory, 2013), are considerably transformed today and encompass the concepts that go far beyond classical measuring of fluid and crystalized intelligence (see Flanagan, McGrew, & Ortiz, 2000). However, recent wide meta-analytical study of psychological correlates of academic performance in university students that encompassed 400 studies conducted in past 13 years, offered several interesting and important insights (Abraham et al., 2012). According to the meta-analyses, average correlation coefficient of general intelligence typically measured with Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale – Revised (WAIS®-R) and with Ravens advanced progressive matrices, and student's GPA (grade point average) is quite low (r^+= .20). Among 41 constructs significantly correlated to GPA, *performance self-efficacy* (ability to "[...] draw upon past experiences to formulate expectations about specific performances.", p. 11), showed to be the highest correlate (r= .59).

So, while it may be concluded that WM came to be very useful predictor of school success (Gathercole, Pickering, Knight, & Stegmann, 2004), it can also be stated that it is, according developmental psychologist, much better predictor than IQ. For example, longitudinal correlational study conducted on a sample of preschool children who were tested for IQ and WM capacity just before enrolment in school, as well as 6 year later, found moderate correlation between verbal WM and their literacy and numeracy skills (literacy, r= .51; numeracy, r= .61), while correlation between IQ and the same dependent variables was found to be quite lower (literacy, r= .35; numeracy, r= .52) (Alloway & Alloway, 2010). In addition, WM not an IQ, accounted for the greatest amount of statistical variance when it comes to literacy. Also, significant contribution of WM to later education and learning research come from the findings of cross-sectional studies which indicate that the explicability of associations between working memory and attainment persist even after statistically controlling for IQ differences in children with learning difficulties (Alloway, 2006).

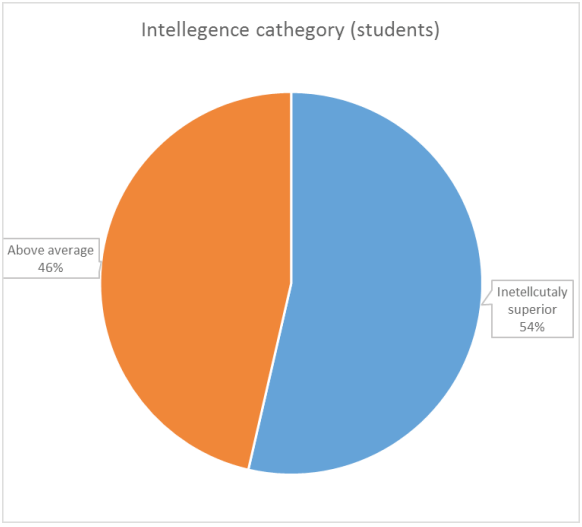
All of this findings lead to important implication education experts and teachers would need to consider (Alloway & Alloway, 2010):

> In the classroom, students frequently need to rely on working memory to perform a range of activities. Poor working memory leads to failures in simple tasks such as remembering classroom instructions to more complex activities that involve storing and processing information and keeping track of progress in difficult tasks. (p. 27)

Current ongoing PhD study conducted by author of the article and Miomir Despotović from the Faculty of Philosophy at University of Belgrade investigating WM and intelligence of literate adults (university students) and functionally illiterate adults (early school dropouts) currently enrolled in functional elementary education for adults 4 year programme in Serbia ("Second Chance"

programme), gave interesting results. Namely, functionally illiterate adults (19 to 25 years of age, the same age range as the age of compared university students group) underperformed on nonverbal intelligence test (Raven's Advanced Progressive Matrices) with significantly lower scores in comparison university students (Figure 2).

Literates – University students



Functionally illiterate – "Second Chance" students

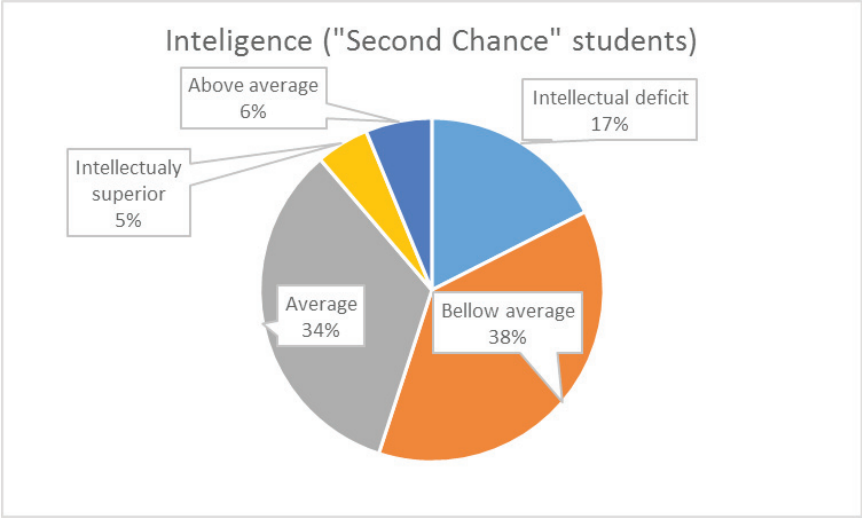


Figure 2 – Performance of Raven's Advance Progressive Matrices in University and "Second Chance" Students

As the study is still ongoing one, there is a need to explore these results more in depth. Functionally illiterate adults are not used and habituated when it comes to intelligence testing, which may explain their very low performance on Ravens test. Further on, because of lack of formal schooling, they are not accustomed to solving abstract tasks which involve formal correlates and relations without any concrete meaning, such as Raven's matrices tasks. The mentioned study still investigates different tasks with an aim to measure WM capacity of both groups of participants, so it will be interesting to see whether results of WM capacity in university and "Second Chance" students will differ as much results gained from intelligence testing do. Accepted outcome, according to a hypothesis set, might potentially show that in contrast to intelligence, WM capacity measurement should be more culture fair, as in some sense, the psychometric measures of intelligence, also show the level of modernity – the quality "Second Chance" students lack in, often coming from poor and marginalised social stratums.

Working memory and literacy

In the attempt to find an alternative cognitive variable that would have more power than intelligence to predict academic attainment, many researchers turned their attention to WM concept. One of the main research aims of relating WM capacity and success in education is to link a variable that is fundamental, congenital and to a somewhat independent of cultural and economic influences (presumably WM capacity), and correlating it to another, that is more contextual (namely, academic attainment), so researchers and practitioners could operate with relatively stable and consistent phenomenon capable of predicting future learning and leading to more efficient ways of educational intervention. However, significant individual differences in WM capacity are lately considered to be under significant potential the influence of socio-economic context. For example, Siwach and Kaur (2009) found that income, education, caste and occupation of a father as well as school environment show a significant relation with a learner's immediate memory span, a concept closely related to WM capacity. Moreover, relating WM capacity to individual success in adult literacy programs, for example, might imply that this correlation could be even more problematic as illiterate adults mainly occupy marginal socio-economic spaces of society, thus having lower individual/family income, level of education and presumably occupation that is low in level of creativity and potentials for the further development of knowledge and skills.

So, while it can be concluded that success in education and learning activities of children and adults always correlate with prior knowledge and experience, social status and (sub)culture, it can also be stated that it is not limited and determined by those only. Educational attainment is also dependent of and limited by basic cognitive capacities important for learning (Gathercole et al., 2004). For

example, individuals who share similar socio-cultural context and possess similar level of prior knowledge and skills, can have quite different learning results, due to differences of their cognitive capacities. Moreover, fluid cognitive capacities such as short-term memory and WM are involved in many complex learning situations (Gathercole et al., 2004), especially when it comes to learning of new contents, where prior experience of adults can have not so much to offer, or can even be a limitation. Having this in mind, determination of the cognitive variable (possibly WM) that would be more culture fair and less dependent of prior knowledge as possible, would have many benefits such as: methodological application in cross cultural studies, prediction of learning success of individuals from relatively homogenous groups and designing learning intervention for improvement of efficacy and self-regulation of existing cognitive resources in individuals (Gathercole, Dunning, & Holmes, 2012; Holmes & Gathercole, 2014).

Indeed, it seems that the significance of the relation between WM and learning, especially between WM and language competence, literacy, mathematical competence and numeracy in general, is well established. Since 1980's, it was found that children as well as adults who experience difficulties in reading and comprehension of the written material possess relatively low WM capacity (Daneman & Carpenter, 1980). Later studies (Siegel, 1994) showed that reading as well as reading comprehension are related to processual WM capacity in all age groups (children, adolescent and adults). However, it is significant to mention that the findings of the Siegel's study indicate that adults over 19 and 20 years of age do not experience a decline in short-term memory, whilst it is not the case with WM. In general, adults tend to experience difficulties when handling tasks which require for cognitive capacity to be split into several activities, what is often the case with the performance of WM. Similar results and conclusions regrading language to WM relation were found to apply to second language or foreign language learning in adulthood as well (Miyake & Friedman, according to Bulajić & Maksimović, 2014). It may be that the relation of WM to language abilities lies in the phonological component of WM – phonological loop. While some studies suggested that the phonological loop is one of the key factors in acquisition of the novel word in second language (Papagno & G. Vallar, 2007), some other suggest that this applies for every aspect of second language learning in general, not just for new terms (Service & Kohonen, 1995).

Going back to the literacy issues, it is important to mention researches dealing with relation of WM and native language acquisition. This applies for lexis as well as for syntax (according to Elis & Sinclair, 1996) in both children and adults (Caplan & Waters, 2003). Other research suggest caution regarding such general conclusion as their results imply that while general WM predicts success in acquisition of lexis and syntax of native and foreign languages in children and adults, the phonologic loop capacity is more important when learning novel foreign words, but novel native language words learning, more relies on the in-

fluence of semantical long-term memory (Papagno, Valentine, & Baddeley, 1991, according to Bulajić & Maksimović, 2014).

Additional issue in relating established correlation of WM capacity and success in adult literacy programs would be that WM and literacy share some common or interdependent spaces in human cognitive architecture. Phonological processing is believed to be enhanced by literacy while the phonological loop is responsible for storing and maintaining phonologically codable information for a brief periods of time (Baddeley, Chincotta, Stafford, & Turk, 2007). Phonological processing is crucial for functional literacy as it is closely linked to comprehension, especially when it comes to reading. Reading rate, crucial for reading comprehension, is commonly determined with words per minute measurement (wpm). For example, if one would read text in 25 wpm rate, little of the simple text could be understood. Individual reading in 90 wpm rate would not be able to read and comprehend volumes of material, which is a requirement of modern job tasks. Only 150 wpm or more may satisfy this criteria (Abadzi, 2012). Having this in mind, it is no wonder that individual differences in performance in WM tasks among literates and illiterates can be attributed to literacy itself (Kosmidis, Zafiri, & Politmou, 2011).

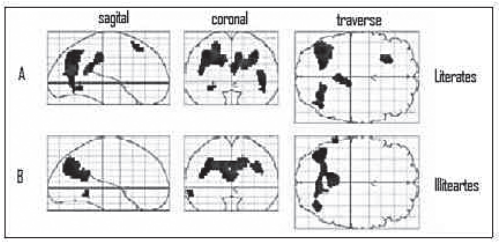
Although vast majority of research suggest that there is enough evidence to support the claim that WM plays a significant role during development, it is unclear whether the same can be stated for adulthood as in this period of life reading and retrieval process become automatized. According to Alloway and Gregory, WM is contributing to a range of literacy skills in adulthood, but at the same time there is a relatively modest contribution of Working Memory to word reading and comprehension which "[...] suggests that these processes could be largely automatized by adulthood and are mostly dependent on existing knowledge structures" (Alloway & Gregory, 2013, p. 55). It is very important to note that these conclusions only apply to literate adults, as the automatization of verbal coding and decoding, thus exchange between WM and semantical part of long term memory, is exactly what illiterates often lack in, to large extent.

These and similar findings and interpretations imply that in terms of methodology of research, WM phonologically based tasks should be avoided or carefully controlled (for wpm and similar measures) when attempting to relate it other variables attributed to illiterate adults. Further on, it could turn over the direction of WM and educational success predictive correlation and raise a question: what actually predicts what and to what extent these predictions are meaningful in adulthood? According to some recent studies (Alloway & Gregory, 2013):

> There are key reasons why the relationship between cognitive skills, such as IQ and Working Memory, and literacy may change from childhood to adulthood. Research has suggested that brain maturation does not reach its peak during adolescence, but continues to develop during adulthood [...] This pattern of growth is consistent with reported changes in cognitive skills, such as Working Memory and IQ, as performance continues to improve in adulthood. (p. 52)

Illiterate and/or unschooled individuals possessing no cognitive deficits, often exhibit lack of neuronal connections that are not normally present in humans unless they are created in a process of learning to read and write, or resolving logical problems – "training" the formal reasoning through education (Abadzi, 2005). All of these are highly related to memory, attention and decision making. It may be that attention and memory span are, in some respect, "stretched" in the process of schooling (Abadzi, 2005). The study that utilized the positron emission tomography (PET) scanning of illiterate and literate adults who performed various task encompassing repetition of words and pseudowords, showed that brain activity of illiterate individuals is not just more localized, but also localized differently in comparison to those who are literate (Picture 1), (see Castro-Caldas, Petersson, Reis, Stone-elander, & Ingvar, 1998).

Picture 1 – The PET scan showing/measuring cerebral blood flow in literate and illiterate subjects repeating actual words or pseudowords.



Castro-Caldas et al., 1998, adapted by Abadzi, 2005

As results of neuropsychological as well as other, behavioural studies, imply that the cognitive architecture of illiterates is different than the one of literates, it can be noted that the statistical correlations between cognitive and educational variables found to significant in studies conducted on educated and literate sample of adults is biased. They seems to be applicable to a context and cultural space of modernity. In many respects this brings us back to Vygotskian perspective which emphasizes that culture, literacy and education are the constitutive elements and building processes that structure the cognitive apparatus of modern human. Again, one could raise a broader conceptual dilemma: in a process of education, are we educating our cognition or cognizing the educational content, and if both are true, in which manner are they intertwined?

Conclusion

Going back to questions raised at the beginning of the review, it seems that recent research findings show that adult education success is better predicted with the cognitive concept of WM than with classical psychometric measure of intelli-

gence. However, caution is needed when interpreting such general claim. We have to distinguish WM relation to learning success of literate adults and those who are attending literacy programmes at the first place. In general, educated, illiterate adults, have functionally and organizationally WM well set. The exchanges taking place in their cognitive apparatus are automatized to some extent, and "stretched" in the process of schooling. This allows researchers to use WM capacity measured by visual as well as word items based tasks when investigation potential education success, but only in the cases where previous education level, socio-economic status and cultural background is controlled, as it is shown that these factors might influence development of WM in formative years.

When it comes to illiterate adults, the issue becomes even more shady and unknown, and additional methodological questions can be raised. As illiterates did not have the benefit of early schooling influencing their cognitive system, one cannot know what sorts and kinds of individual differences are measured by simple applying of WM tasks. For example, they can possess different levels of automatization of verbal and phonological coding, so WM verbally based tasks could easily be affected by the processing speed in WM not just by fluid WM storing capacity. It seems that, if this is the case, future studies should focus more on visual WM tasks, overriding the language and literacy issues, or carefully control for the aforementioned variables.

So, when conducting research that are concerned with these two types of variables (especially in illiterates), special and additional caution have to be considered in order to carefully equate all the intervening variables, as many correlations previously established in studies focusing on *average literate adult*, are often taking for granted. New types of instruments, i.e. culture or even literacy fair tests and tasks may have to be designed in order to conduct relevant studies. Both approaches, additional methodological control and new instruments, would create significant research design complexity difficult to handle, but would open the potential for having more precise and comparable manner of dealing with aforementioned issues when attempting to understand two crucial aspects of human ontological practice – cognitive and learning processes.

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BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK AND PROFESSIONALISM IN ADULT EDUCATION: THREE EXAMPLES CONCERNING A PROBLEMATIC RELATIONSHIP[1]

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Abstract

The new approaches towards the professionalization of adult educators in Europe are situated between two fundamentally opposed concepts: the EQF and traditional concepts of professionalism in adult education. This article investigates the question of what influence the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) has on the professionalisation of adult education in Europe. Firstly, paradigms of the European Qualifications Framework are explained so that the question of professionalism in adult education can be dealt with. Following this, selected European approaches to professionalisation are analysed with regard to their problematic relationship to EQF and professionalism: the core curriculum adult education/continuing education in Germany that makes courses of study comparable to each other; the study of key competences by the Dutch institute Research voor Beleid conducted throughout all of Europe with group discussions and questionnaires; the Austrian Academy of Continuing Education (Weiterbildungsakademie in German), a modular model for certifying and recognising adult education trainers. At the end of the article, the opportunities and problems of the EQF are summarised using these examples.

Key words: the professionalization of adult educators, European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning, European approaches to professionalisation

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From the Bologna Process to the European Qualifications Framework

In Europe, there are several different pathways to become an adult educator (see Research voor Beleid/Plato, 2008). In addition to academic professionalization, we find non-academic qualification pathways in the form of non-formal continuing education opportunities. Furthermore, informal learning pathways are frequently encountered in practice. In other words, training and professionalization in adult education occur in academic as well as non-academic contexts.

Considered against the backdrop of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF), the professionalization of adult educators can be understood as a development that builds on the Bologna Process. The Bologna Process is designed to

- make European academic degrees more comparable and transferable
- promote the mobility of students and graduates of European higher education institutions
- increase the attractiveness of the European higher education area
- ensure high-quality learning and teaching in the European higher education area.

To achieve these objectives, the ministers of education of the participating countries agreed to

- establish three-cycle degree systems (in Germany, the three cycles are mostly referred to as bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees)
- introduce a credit point system (ECTS) that enables students to transfer the credits they have earned at a higher education institution in one country to another higher education institution
- create opportunities for lifelong learning
- design curricula in all three cycles of the Bologna framework based on personal and academic demands as well as those of the labour market.

The Bologna framework defines the so-called 'learning outcomes' to be achieved in the three-cycle degree system, with one cycle building on the outcomes of the previous cycle (see European Ministers of Education 1999; European Ministers in Charge of Higher Education 2001, 2003, 2005 and 2007).

The European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF), adopted by the European Commission in 2008 (see European Commission 2008), continues the process established by Bologna. At the core of the EQF, there are eight levels that build on one another, defining the knowledge, skills and competences acquired as learning outcomes at each level. In this scheme, the three cycles of the Bologna process (bachelor's, master's and doctorate) represent levels

six to eight of the European Qualifications Framework. Echoing the objectives of the Bologna process, the EQF is also intended to create a frame of reference to increase the comparability and transferability of European qualifications, to promote mobility, and to help improve quality in the European education area. Furthermore, the EQF takes account of informal and non-formal learning at all eight levels (see Dehnbostel/Neß/Overwien 2009).

Both the Bologna Process and the European Qualifications Framework establish new priorities for educational programmes. In the German education area, this means nothing less than a reversal of previous approaches. First, the EQF implies a shift away from a focus on content to one on learning outcomes. A focus on content means that the contents and topics that students learn during their education are what matters most. A focus on learning outcomes, by contrast, primarily looks at a person's knowledge and skills, regardless of where these were acquired. This shift makes the actual place where the knowledge, skills and competences defined by the EQF are acquired much less important, implying the possibility of more privatization in the education sector and less public involvement. Australia, for example, has seen stronger privatization in the education sector since the qualifications framework was introduced in the 1980s (see Flowers 2009).[2]

Second, the EQF makes informally acquired knowledge, skills and competences equivalent to diplomas and certificates earned in formal education programmes. This is because qualifications—that is, evidence of completed education programmes—are considered equivalent to observable behaviour and demonstrable skills, provided these were validated and certified at some point.

And third, compared to the diverse, multi-track education systems that have so far been prevalent in the German-speaking world, the EQF proposes a single-track system of eight rigorously sequenced levels. What is more, according to the Bologna Process, it is not only the levels that are designed as a rigorous sequence but also the modules offered at each level.

Professionalism in adult education

These developments are problematic because they run counter to the concept of professionalism promoted in German university programmes in education, including those in adult and continuing education. These programmes are more heuristic in nature and designed to educate the whole person, guided primarily by the greater goal of developing professionalism, a process that may occur via diverse learning paths.

According to Hans Tietgens, professionalism in adult education means 'in a nutshell, to be able to use one's ability to appropriately apply broad-based, scientifically informed and hence abstract knowledge in concrete situations. Or,

2 An overview of the various international qualification frameworks is available in Bohlinger (2011).

viewed from the opposite direction: to identify the elements in one's pool of knowledge that might be relevant in precisely such situations' (Tietgens 1988, pp. 37–38, translation RE). Building on this approach and taking account of various empirical studies, Wiltrud Giesecke defines professionalism as 'the situation-specific handling of research findings from the discipline and interdisciplinary knowledge for the interpretation of situations that require action in a certain field of practice' (Gieseke 2010, p. 386, translation RE).

Hence the interpretations that adult educators have to come up with in each individual situation (based on scientific evidence) are the decisive mark of professionalism. These interpretations are necessary because adult educators have to show their professionalism in situations characterized by contradictions. They must act in such situations, even if they sometimes lack applicable knowledge or if the necessary information is incomplete (see Dewe 1988; Nittel 2000). Accordingly, professionalism becomes evident through adequate action and has to be established anew in each situation. What matters most is not demonstrable behaviour; rather, this behaviour has to be supplemented by a rationale for action based on interpretations.

According to Ulrich Oevermann, university degree programmes are only the first step towards professionalization. In the sense of a dual need for professionalization in teaching, supplementary training in practical contexts is required as a second step (see Oevermann 1996). This heuristic approach is opposed to the linear sequence proposed by the EQF.[3]

Against this backdrop, the new approaches towards the professionalization of adult educators in Europe are situated between two fundamentally opposed concepts: the EQF and traditional concepts of professionalization. Below, I will consider three of these recent approaches[4] to see whether, and if so how, they contain the paradigms of the EQF or an understanding of professionalism in adult education.

Focus on content: The core curriculum in adult and continuing education

The core curriculum in adult education (*Kerncurriculum Erwachsenenbildung*) was created by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Erziehungswissenschaft in the context of discussions in the society's section on adult and continuing education (see DGfE 2008). It pursues the idea of 'a common core of curricular

3 Likewise, professionalism is especially opposed to traditional concepts of quality management, which are embedded in the EQR to some extent. The problems that arise if a quality management concept is used to inform professionalization concepts in adult and continuing education are described elsewhere, using the example of the Key Competence study commissioned by the European Commission (see Egetenmeyer/Käpplinger 2011).

4 For information on other professionalization systems and strategies in Europe, see Schüßler/Mai (2008).

contents' in adult and continuing education in Germany and can be understood as a substitute for the basic regulations for conducting examinations (*Rahmenprüfungsordnung*) that existed for *Diplom* degree programmes in education in Germany (see KMK 1989). Embedding this common core into the various core curricula in education is expected to make degree programmes more comparable, to facilitate communication in the various career fields, and to promote the mobility of students within Germany (cf. DGfE 2008, p. 49).

The core curriculum defines a set of so-called 'study units' for bachelor's and master's programmes in adult education, respectively, and also provides more detailed contents for each of these units.[5] Furthermore, each study unit is connected to tasks that may be understood as objectives. Given this structure, the core curriculum in adult and continuing education is clearly guided by a focus on content and hence by an understanding of professionalism in adult education: It defines the topics and contents for the professionalization of adult educators while providing only a vague outline of concrete learning outcomes that may emerge from the defined tasks, such as an 'overview of the theoretical, historical, political and societal foundations of adult and continuing education' (ibid.). Furthermore, the core curriculum is more heuristic in nature, meaning it provides various contents for students to explore. Aside from the bachelor/master sequence, the authors were mostly careful to avoid prescribing a linear sequence of study units that build on one another. Likewise, the core curriculum does not contain any approaches to validate competences acquired informally or in a non-university context. Thus the core curriculum implies a rationale according to which qualification means successfully completing a formal training programme.

Focus on learning outcomes: The Key Competence study

The goal of the Key Competence study, commissioned by the European Union in 2008 (see Research voor Beleid 2010), was to define a framework of competences for professionals working in adult education. As part of this one-year study, the responsible Dutch research institute produced scientific and education policy documents, job descriptions and announcements, skills profiles, and learning outcomes of training programmes, as well as workshops with experts.

5 The study units at the bachelor's level are '(1) Foundations of education; (2) Societal, political and legal conditions of education and training in schools and non-school institutions, including international aspects; (3) Introduction to fields of study in education; (4) Theoretical and historical foundations of early childhood education; (5) Professional action competences and occupational fields in adult and continuing education – Basic' (DGfE 2008, pp. 49-50, translation RE). At the master's level, the following study units are defined: '(6) Education research and basic research methods; (7) Theory, research and general conditions of adult and continuing education; (8) Professional action competences in adult and continuing education – Advanced; (9) Project on teaching research' (ibid).

Building on the study *Qualifying adult learning professionals in Europe* (see Nuissl/Lattke 2008), the researchers then summarized the activities of adult educators. From that summary, they derived an additive frame of competences defining so-called 'generic competences' that all persons working in adult education should have (Research voor Beleid 2010, p. 12):

- A1 Personal competence: being a fully autonomous lifelong learner
- A2 Interpersonal competence: being a communicator and team player
- A3 Professional competence: being responsible for the further development of adult learning
- A4 Expertise (theoretical/practical knowledge)
- A5 Didactical competence
- A6 Competence in empowering adult learners
- A7 Competence in dealing with diversity and groups

These competences are supplemented by 'specific competences: directly involved in the learning process' (B1–B6) and 'specific competences: supportive for the learning process' (B7–B12) (ibid.).

- B1 Being capable of assessment of adult learners' learning needs
- B2 Being capable of designing the learning process
- B3 Being a facilitator of the learning process
- B4 Being an evaluator of the learning process
- B5 Being an advisor/counsellor
- B6 Being a programme developer
- B7 Being financially responsible
- B8 Being a people manager
- B9 Being a general manager
- B10 Dealing with PR and marketing
- B11 Being supportive in administrative issues
- B12 Being an ICT-facilitator

The Key Competence study has a focus on learning outcomes. The competences defined in the study are understood as an accumulation of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are supposed to produce professionalism. Nothing is said about the concrete academic contents and topics that adult educators are to explore. To some extent, professionalism is shifted away from the personal to the organizational level, following a rationale of quality management rather than one of professionalism (see Egetenmeyer/Käpplinger 2010). The focus is on validating competences, regardless of where these competences were acquired. As a result, informally acquired competences weigh more heavily in the equation.

The synthesis: The Austrian Academy of Continuing Education

The Austrian Academy of Continuing Education (*Weiterbildungsakademie Österreich*, wba) is a modular certification and recognition model geared towards adult educators with work experience (see Heilinger 2008). In a first step, based on a status-quo evaluation, practitioners can earn the wba certificate 'Zertifizierter Erwachsenenbildner/in' (certified adult educator) consisting of 30 credit points.[6] Each module is structured in a way to define the competences that participants have to demonstrate, the goals they have to achieve (in the form of learning outcomes), the contents they are required to explore, and the possibilities of submitting evidence to prove their qualification.[7] The certificate gives participants the opportunity to create an area of specialization consisting of seven credit points. There are various ways in which individual competences may be demonstrated: as formally acquired competences in the context of secondary schooling, vocational training or higher education; as non-formally acquired competences (courses, seminars, professional development programmes, conferences, lectures) or as informally acquired competences (papers, publications, competence statements from employers or clients, projects, procedures for the recognition of informally acquired competences, closed training groups, supervision, coaching, examinations, and other types of evidence)[8]. If needed, participants can use accredited programmes to compensate for missing evidence of their competences. In a second step, which builds on the first one, participants can obtain a wba diploma as 'Diplomierte/r Erwachsenenbildner/in', for which they can choose from four areas of specialization. After receiving that diploma, they are eligible for admission to a master's programme at the University of Klagenfurt. Thus the Austrian Academy of Continuing Education provides a successful synthesis of the impulses and requirements of the European Qualifications Framework and a traditional understanding of professionalism in adult education.

The model developed here is one that connects continuing education opportunities in a modular fashion, thereby creating transitions between individual continuing education programmes in Austria as well as transitions into higher education.

By defining both learning contents and learning outcomes, the curriculum is guided by both the EQF and a traditional understanding of professionalism in

6 Participants must provide evidence of the following competences: status-quo evaluation (1 ECTS); educational theory skills (3-6 ECTS); didactic skills (1.5-4 ECTS); management skills (1.5-4 ECTS); counselling skills (1.5-4 ECTS); librarianship and information management skills (1.5-4 ECTS); social skills (2-5 ECTS); personal skills (2-5 ECTS) (cf. Weiterbildungsakademie Österreich 2011, pp. 1-2).

7 These possibilities are described in the curriculum of the wba certificate.

8 An overview of the various possibilities to prove one's competences is available on the wba web page.

adult education. One example of this combination is the fact that 'basic education theory' is defined as a competence of its own. Informally acquired competences can be validated; at the same time, participants can obtain additional credit points by completing continuing education programmes. This scheme facilitates individual learning and training pathways. The competence areas are meant to be understood as a framework providing concentrations to help adult educators enhance their professionalism in an individualized manner. As a result, the scheme provides guidance in a series of modules that systematically build on each other while also enabling heuristic pathways of professionalization. As a certification option for practitioners in adult and continuing education, the wba also has to reconsider the relationship between theory and practice with respect to the theory of professionalization. Professionalism is understood as a search process that builds on participants' practical experiences.[9]

Opportunities and problems

What are the opportunities and what are the problems arising from the European Qualifications Framework with regard to the professionalization of adult education?

The sequence of qualification pathways building on each other presents the challenge and the opportunity to create smaller-sized training programmes while at the same time creating transitions between different educational programmes. This will enable teachers who only sporadically take on adult education assignments to make use of other professional development opportunities than, say, a programme planner or manager at an adult education institution. Problems may arise from the sequencing insofar as it implies a linear learning path, that is, a rigorous sequence of consecutive components that doesn't allow for much deviation. Moreover, the EQF focus on 'individual parts' is opposed to an academic understanding of professionalism in the sense that the EQF conceptualizes the whole only as the sum of its parts, neglecting both heuristic and hermeneutic learning paths.

The challenge, then, is to design educational programmes in such a way that they allow for heuristic learning paths and encourage hermeneutic learning

9 Note from the editors: A closer analysis and more detailed descriptions of the Austrian Academy of Continuing Education are available in Anneliese Heilinger's article in Vol. 4 of *Magazin erwachsenenbildung.at* and in Giselheid Wagner and Karin Reisinger's contribution in the present issue. In her paper, Heilinger discusses supra-institutional qualification concepts for adult educators, supplemented by a service section on the Academy of Continuing Education compiled by Anita Eichinger and Karin Reisinger (see http://www.erwachsenenbildung.at/magazin/08-4/meb08-4_05_heisinger.pdf). Giselheid Wagner and Karin Reisinger describe the revision of wba curricula into curricula focused on learning outcomes (see http://www.erwachsenenbildung.at/magazin/11-14/meb11-14_12_wagner_reisinger.pdf).

paths. It may be helpful to distinguish between professionalization for practitioners and academic professionalization, similar to the Austrian Academy of Continuing Education model. This makes it possible to serve the continuing education needs of practitioners while also creating transitions to academic professionalization pathways.

The EQF focus on learning outcomes offers the opportunity to recognize informal competences regardless of where they were acquired. This is particularly necessary in the field of adult education, in which practitioners often acquire adult teaching skills primarily through informal pathways. At the same time, a focus on learning outcomes comes at the expense of a focus on content, which can be understood as the foundation of an academic education. Again, professionalism cannot be determined through observable behaviour. Rather, professionalism is action guided by reasons. These reasons must be based on academic knowledge and skills. With respect to the European education area, everybody agrees that it is much easier to create transparency and comparability at the level of learning outcomes than it is at the level of learning contents. This is especially true of highly culture-specific disciplines such as adult and continuing education. As a 'translation tool', the EQF has the potential to increase transparency in training arrangements and to promote the mobility of adult educators in Europe. Training programmes will become more accessible to colleagues from other countries; transitions into the education systems and labour markets of other countries will probably become easier. This is an advantage not to be underestimated. Yet it also involves the problem of restricting the existing diversity in training structures, which are oriented towards the individual needs of adult educators. Doing justice to both aspects will be a challenging task.

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TRAINING IN ORGANISATIONS

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Abstract

The organisations are systems of people and goods aimed at the production of services and the creation of value. Here knowledge lets you know which service to produce, how to produce it, who to distribute it to and how to distribute it. This is what enables organisations to work.

The wealth of knowledge an organisation has is not the sum of the wealth of each individual who is part of it. Not all the knowledge individuals possess has a use value for an organisation and, therefore, not all of it enters or will ever enter to be part of its cognitive system. It can be considered a person whose own knowledge is different from the individuals who are part of it.

This means that each of the elements that compose the "containers" of knowledge" generates learning activities not as an object of teaching, but because it contains knowledge and because the mere fact of entering into a relationship with it generates learning processes through educational actions of a different nature and form. The issue faced in the paper is which kind of learning is connected to that.

Key words: Learning organisation, sense-making, embedded learning

1. Organisations as a cognitive system

1.1. Organisations and Knowledge

If we believe that the answer to the growth of people in organisations was constituted merely by increasing the transfer of knowledge and its quality we would direct our attention to the methodology and didactics of training.

The solution of increasing "courses, seminars, etc." is not entirely unfounded. It was the only offer managed intelligently and, probably, also effective in

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organisational contexts in which there is simply the dissemination of encoded information and in which the productive factors at the source of growth were and are mainly from financial and productive tools, where the human factor has marginal importance. It is this reality that legitimised, until the second half of the twentieth century, recourse to training primarily as a tool for the transfer of predefined knowledge. It was and is used to perform functions essentially of adaptation and compensation of the knowledge gaps. It is a vision and a type of use in line with the exogenous theories of the growth of organisations, where growth is the result of knowledge and technology transfers from the outside.

But training has another function.

The organisations are systems of people and goods aimed at the production of services and the creation of value. Here knowledge lets you know which service to produce, how to produce it, who to distribute it to and how to distribute it. This is what enables organisations to work. They "are nothing more than a cognitive system capable of giving a value to the knowledge of which they avail, that is capable of transforming knowledge into value through its own actions" (Vicari, 2008: 49 and 53).

The prosperity of an organisation is based on its ability to use the knowledge that creates value (Vicari, 2008: 44) whether these are generated inside it or are to be absorbed by external actors.

1.2. Personal growth is the result of the stock of knowledge present in organisations

The wealth of knowledge an organisation has is not the sum of the wealth of each individual who is part of it. Not all the knowledge individuals possess has a use value for an organisation and, therefore, not all of it enters or will ever enter to be part of its cognitive system. It can be considered "a person whose own knowledge is different from the individuals who are part of it" (Vicari 51–52). It is generated by the contribution of the individuals who are part of it and it is deposited, i.e. it is manifested and regenerates through the contents of knowledge in the "containers of knowledge" of a company: "physical capital, organisational structures, routines, individuals, and, as far as trust is concerned, in the type of relations it enjoys" (Vicari, 2008: 57). The wealth of knowledge of a business is incorporated in the different types of instruments that guarantee its operation, as well as in the individuals and the groups that comprise it (Horvath, J.A., 2007).

Table 1: The "Containers" of knowledge

Physical Capital	Organisational Structures	Routine	Individuals	Relations
Machines	Organisational Architecture	Management Methods	Individual Skills	Horizontal, within the organisation
Equipment	Work Organisation	Decision-making Methods	Personal Experiences	Vertical, with customers, suppliers, financers
Materials	Incentive Systems and Evaluation	Managerial Practices	Managerial Knowledge	Laterals, with partners and competitors
Information Systems	Control and Reporting Systems	Operating Procedures	Knowledge Specifications Technological	Extended, with the local, national and international community
Software	Quality Systems	Operating Practices	Specific knowledge of the market	
Patents	Culture, norms and encoded values		Knowledge Personal General	

Source: Vicari, 2008

Although this is a general classification, the identification of the containers of knowledge also provides an indication as to the factors that generate knowledge within companies, which form the basis of development of data, information, of new learning and then for knowledge for the individuals who are part of it.

This means that each of the elements mentioned in this scheme generates training activities not as an object of teaching, but because it contains knowledge and because the mere fact of entering into a relationship with it generates learning processes through educational actions of a different nature and form (bear in mind however that the containers of knowledge highlight the institutional dimension of the corporate culture, we will return to the non-canonical processes and sensemaking in the following paragraphs).

In a society characterised by ease of access and transfer of information a new model of training is necessary that supports the endogenous dynamics of knowledge creation. The transmissive model does not respond to the new need to involve individuals in the processes of growth of knowledge in the organisation. A new model of training action that is not limited to functions of adjustment of personnel to these innovations must respond to this. To accomplish this, an organisation must be transformed into an environment that promotes the understanding of issues and the creation of new knowledge through the set of factors that generate learning.

In summary, the training action is at a more complex level than that of the transmission of knowledge already defined since it accompanies the whole process of using the available knowledge resources and of their growth. In order to operate in a consequent manner, it should take on three key features:

a) all containers of knowledge are the basis and the source of development of new learning and therefore creation of new knowledge, they constitute an inevitable field of training in that they are part of the environment in which the individuals operate
b) there is no separation between research, technology, production, management, on the contrary training works on their synergies and on processes that make knowledge evolve regarding services to produce and deliver
c) training doesn't necessarily take place downstream of some other action, this may be necessary in cases of absorption of knowledge from the outside. Normally, it takes place in everyday life and accompanies all productive processes.

1.3. The human dimension: the construction of meanings in organisations

Choices, decisions, behaviours are not determined by a perfect rationality that turns information into absolutely consistent decisions. This happens because the rationality that guides decisions is necessarily limited because of the limited information available, cognitive limitations of the persons, the time available for preparing decisions (*bounded rationality).*

The choices that characterise the life of an organisation are taken on through the concurrence of non-canonical processes fed by a bounded rationality. This means that within organisations an organisational process operates, coexisting with the formal, institutional model. It is the result of individual and collective processes of *sensemaking* through which each of the individuals acts and gives a sense to what he does (Weick, 1995). In this interpretive model, "organise corresponds to giving a sense to flows of experience" (Bartezzaghi, 2010). The action itself is generated by the sense that individuals attribute to what they do, from the way they interpret reality and the aspects they consider. So, for the individual the elements of reality that exist correspond to those that he has activated through his sensemaking. Consequently, the environment itself is built on the basis of actions that take place and which are the result of the allocation of explanations that are acceptable, credible and desirable with respect to what is done and that legitimate the objectives pursued. But, after it was built, it is the environment itself that influences and constrains the actions of the person (Weick, 1995). In this sense, the organisation is not an external constraint, a higher-level

entity that responds to a pure rationality from which the actions of the agents derive. It is made up of the set of interrelationships between the interpretations and actions of its members and evolves as a result of continuous dynamics between the individual and the context. The organisation is nothing but a "system of meanings and social processes of sensemaking, during which meanings are assigned to things and events" (Ericson, 2001: 113).

If these are the real processes through which individuals act in organisations, in terms of training the factors by which the organisation supports and guides the process of sensemaking are to be identified. In this way we can highlight a second field of educational action: we can add actions to individual support to processes of sensemaking using the elements of the organisational context for the same purpose.

1.4. The actions of guiding the sensemaking

Training someone can be considered the result of the meanings that are built using the materials (behaviours, living conditions, written and unwritten rules, customs, cultures) that are encountered inside the organisation.

Organisations build contexts that provide the material which *sensemaking* feeds on, and they impose on the actors cognitive constraints (or containers of knowledge) impregnated with cultural content and values (Weber and Glynn, 2006: 1642). The organisation provides the raw material, the content for the sensemaking by defining the professional identity of the operator, determining the role of each of the actors, the type of situations in which the actors operate including the challenges to be faced and actions to perform. This is achieved by defining institutional identities, roles within the workplace, by determining the specific types of action that correspond to precise institutional expectations (negotiation, obedience, loyalty, etc.), and, finally, by defining specific types of situations (work, training, agreements, etc.). The combination of these three factors and the various possible combinations determine the starting point of the *sensemaking* processes and their degree of autonomy. Through these elements organisations tend to automate actions that prevent deviant behaviour. This does not mean though that the organisation can achieve this result by the prior transmission of notions for the individuals to internalise. *Sensemaking* cannot be suppressed with targeted interventions done when it occurs, nor can it be done in advance by the internalisation of rules to be adopted or the implementation of fully controlled mechanisms capable of ensuring a unequivocal result. *Sensemaking* cannot be done in advance since it is a process that never starts because it never ends. (Weick, 1995:43). People are constantly immersed in situations that require a continued commitment of interpretation and the equilibriums achieved need to be constantly confirmed.

2. The factors of growth of people

2.1. Introduction

The concept of training in the workplace includes on-the-job training, what is learned while working, and "formal" training that takes place in special moments dedicated to it (*off-the-job*). The formal modes of training are significant for the setup functions at the level of individual abilities to operate in an organisation or even to bring inside knowledge which it does not possess. However, in both cases their legitimacy is given by the possibility that they be grafted on the wealth of knowledge of the organisation, or become part of the processes of knowledge production being carried out and which take place on a daily basis during normal production activities.

2.2. Training action and learning

Action at work develops learning meant as a set of "implicit or explicit mental activities that lead to changing knowledge, skills or attitudes or the ability of individuals, groups and organisations to learn" (Ruijters & Simons, 2004, p. 210, in Bauer: 21). This definition highlights three aspects of learning in organisations, namely:

a) the explicit or implicit character of mental activities, thus making reference to the existence of learning processes, conscious and not, intentional and not. The observation is important both at the individual and organisational level, since unintentional and unaware learning can be a source of processes that are unexpected if not, indeed, damaging or obstructive to growth processes;
b) the ability to produce both new cognitive structures in the subject – forms of categorisation and/or conceptualisation of the experience-, and new behaviours and performance;
c) the possibility that learning concerns individuals, groups, the organisation as such.

Other definitions – learning understood as a process through which knowledge is created by the transformation of experience (Kolb, 1984) – point out how ideas and concepts are formed, transform and reproduce constantly through experience and evolve because of situations. Two thoughts are never the same because experience always intervenes to modify aspects, content, details. Learning implies a continuous revision of prior knowledge –if it exists– or the creation of new knowledge and involves various functions and attitudes of the organism (thinking, feelings, perception, behaviour).

Learning from experience involves placing learning inside the relationship between individual and context (the set of factors that make up the action). To

state that one learns while working does not mean that putting a person in a place is sufficient to enable them to work and grow. Incorrect selections, errors, defects, conflicts, etc. demonstrate that the process is not natural, but is built consciously (and even unconsciously, as a reproduction of cultural models).

The result is the fruit of the encounter between the training potential of the contexts and the propensity of individuals to learn.

The training potential (Jørgensen & Warring, 2002: 9) of an action varies according to its characteristics. For our purposes, it seems useful to refer to the classification based on the level of cognitive adjustments (Rasmussen, 1987) so the distinction is made depending on whether processes prevail in the action:

a) based on the possession of skills that allow a high level of automatic behaviour not necessarily based on full awareness of the actions undertaken. Such actions are mainly based on tacit knowledge, not formalised that guide the action, but that can not be easily reconstructed by the person (Ellström, 2006).
b) which imply the ability to apply rules and procedures that are routine in family situations, but which must be interpreted and implemented in a flexible way, adaptive to each specific situation.
c) that they involve the possession of a knowledge base that allows facing new situations with respect to which compliance with the existing rules is not sufficient, in which it is necessary to know how to set up plans and projects that require the ability to predict, experiment, evaluate and make decisions.

It deals with the types of actions that can coexist within the same professional role, but which may also be present in different moments of the activity of a same role. We could conclude that the learning potential of a type of action will vary according to the type of cognitive processes they entail.

2.3. The construction of learning actions in the workplace

The actions that take place within a productive activity are highly structured due to the aim pursued. Even for training purposes it is hard to say that they are less structured than a course. A job description, a process, a procedure foresee in detail the actions and operations that must be performed and how to achieve them.

Building a learning action is a process that is completed during its course, in the interactions/transactions that are activated between the elements at stake.

The construction of work action may or may not provide for processes that stimulate or inhibit reflection, or that enable or not the person to first of all commit himself, participate in the action and, therefore, carry it out being able to develop –where necessary– an own learning cycle (Kolb) made of:

- full participation in the concrete experience
- reflective observation of the experience carried out analysed from various perspectives
- conceptualise and systematise on a theoretical and methodological level the experience completed in order to make valid conclusions for future experiences
- testing the cognitive results achieved

2.4. Individual participation

Non activation of the learning potential of the context depends solely on the ability of the person and on the interactions between the subject and the situation in which he is called on to work. Such interactions have three basic characteristics:

a) the decisions of the individual to work in learning processes is oriented by the context, but are formulated on the basis of individual characteristics, by the values, personal life stories, learning styles resulting from previous life and work experiences. This explains the difference in results depending on the people concerned;
b) the participation of individuals is active and involves dynamic processes of negotiation even in situations of high training potential. It is the search for meaning, the evaluation of the relevance and coherence with values, interests and life projects to produce the level of commitment of each individual. The absence can lead to a profound loss of identity with respect to the values and work practices of one's organisation, to the rejection of the proposed action. This means that even in learning activities with the highest potential, the care of individual negotiation processes that determine the quality of participation is necessary;
c) the quality of the results in terms of growth of the individual, however, is strongly influenced by the quality of affordances and rules in the workplace and in the action in which individuals are called to work (Billet, 2001:213).

The assumption that learning is at least partially self-directed and that this is an attribute or characteristic of each individual best explains the dynamics of negotiation of the commitment and outcome of the training.

2.5. The factors that produce learning growth

At this point, we can try to identify the factors, the organisational conditions that make training in companies. Eraut and Hirsch (2007: 30–34) propose a synthesis that takes into account all the factors so far analysed and the results

of years of empirical research conducted in workplaces. The basic elements to consider are three: the individual's propensity, the relationships with the other actors on the scene of the workplace, the organisational context (cf. Fig. 1)

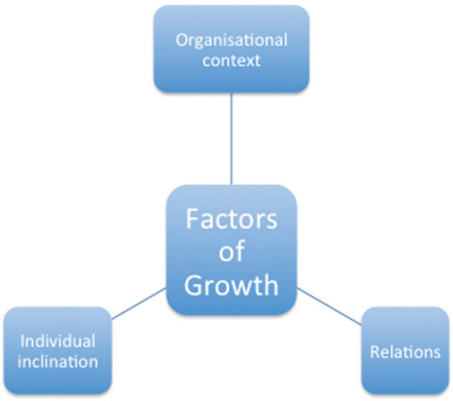

Fig. 1 The factors that produce growth

With regard to the individual's propensity to learn in the workplace, we have already pointed out that this is based on participation and individual involvement, on commitment, on people's trust in their ability to deal with the tasks, on motivation and the dynamics of sensemaking related to work carried out. Even at the individual level the propensity to be proactive affects identifying the educational opportunities contained in each of the activities (Eraut and Hirsch, 2007: 30), the level of self-efficacy also affects it (Bandura, 1995). This is also manifested in the ability to devote time to one's own training through talks with colleagues in the workplace.

As for relations between actors –including customers and suppliers-, what matters is the feedback on performance achieved in work, the support, the trust received from colleagues and superiors (Eraut and Hirsch, 2007: 30). Here at least two levels must be distinguished relative to the dynamics within the team and to the relationship with the direct manager (in addition to these, the relationships with suppliers and customers should also be taken into consideration). The level of the team concerns dynamics such as the existence of a relationship of mutual learning between members, based on reciprocal respect, the frequency of informal discussions with colleagues on work-related matters, the formal processes of team life (meetings, project reviews) that involve questioning individual skills (Eraut and Hirsch, 2007: 87). The managerial level highlights the dual role of the Head. In business, in order to learn it takes the teachers (Vaughan, O'Neil, Cameron, 2011: 28), meaning people who can manage the training processes that are at the origin of the performance of their collaborators. These skills are

manifested in the attention paid to the training consequences of actions such as the distribution of roles, the definition of work processes, protection of the learning dynamics both on– and off-the-job, tolerance to diversity of views and the ability to consider alternative suggestions, possession of coaching, delegation, negotiation, dialogue management skills and the emotional aspects of the work (Eraut and Hirsch, 2007: 33).

As regards the organisational context, the essential component is the nature of the work and its expansive or restrictive features (Ellström), as well as the culture of this training and policies for growth and development of human resources. This depends on the characteristics of actions such as: systems of performance assessment as well as the reward systems and the extent to which they keep the training culture stimulated, the presence of values that insist on personal participation in work, building a collaborative climate, encouraging the growth of social capital through the development of networks of relationships, both internal and external to the company.

2.6. The Employee Value Proposition

The combination of these factors may be identified and measured (and, therefore, managed). They interest us because from the organisational point of view they determine the sensemaking of the subject and contribute in creating the learning potential of the organisation. The initial theory is that the best possible balance between people's expectations and value perceived by each organisational condition in which they operate, determines the best results in terms of motivation, growth, permanence in work and, ultimately, quality of individual performance. The Employee Value Proposition (EVP) is an approach that tends to align, with respect to each individual, the set of policies and measures that can be adopted by an organisation for its employees. It then becomes a tool that tells to what extent the level of balance between salaries and benefits, policies and practices is considered adequate with respect to how much the company requires in terms of performance (Hill & Tande, 2006).

Adopting an EVP perspective is useful to understand, from the individual's perspective, the level of alignment, of coherence of the different factors that create growth in people; it helps to understand where there are contradictory dynamics that frustrate the efforts made, for example, on the terrain of innovation or monetary incentives.

The model of the EVP (Fig. 2) is generally based on the following elements:

Compensation: the amount of salary earned by an employee.

Benefits: the indirect salary that includes payment of benefits relating to health services, work leave, social security conditions, time off, etc.

Job content: satisfaction that the employee may derive from work performed, linked to the intrinsic nature of the work undertaken, including the level of autonomy and responsibility of the job – that is, the degree of

control the employee has over their working life (Towers 2008). Here it is the training potential of the work that counts, its intellectual qualities. This will also affect the relationships with suppliers and with internal and external customers, the ability of management to build constant opportunities for motivated commitment, ethics.

Career Development: opportunities for horizontal and vertical mobility in the medium/long-term offered to a person for his professional advancement and development. This should be seen in relation to advancing age in people and the consequences in terms of diversity management on grounds of age.

Belonging: the sense of identity and belonging that a person has with respect to his organisation. Here are considered the quality of relations with the company and with the various internal actors, the reputation of senior colleagues, the feedback from supervisors, respect, assessments. Also important are the peer relationships within the team they belong to and, in civic terms, the perception of social responsibility of the company, the sense and importance attached to its role in society.

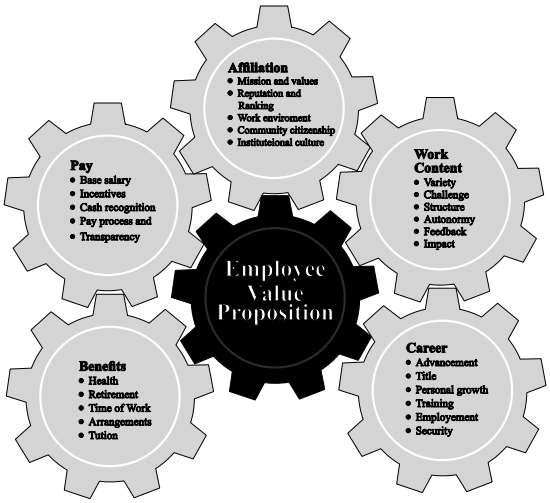

Fig. 2 – The Employee Value Proposition model

We have not placed training within any of the elements of the EVP since they are processes of learning generated by the training that accompany and enable the career paths that are necessary for work so that this uses and generates the knowledge necessary for its development, generating a sense of belonging since they are at the base of the person's construction of interpretations of the mission and the values of the organisation and the decision to filter them and share them.

Less significant is the relationship with the remaining two elements: compensation and benefits. These rather constitute contextual elements that encourage or discourage the learning potential of the context, they increase or reduce the motivation to learn, but do not affect the results of the training or the contents of learning, as happens as a result, for example, of career development towards one or the other of the professional opportunities available.

3. Options of training

3.1. Actions for learning growth

We have seen that through the management of contextual factors conditions can be established to create expansive situations, growth-friendly to people. Now it is a matter of understanding how training can create favourable conditions for learning and knowledge production. Therefore it is necessary to understand the characteristics that distinguish the various types of training and the devices that characterise them.

The first distinction to consider is that between the training decided independently by the person and that resulting from the choices of the organisation.

The actions of the person, which we have included in the sphere of self-directed learning, play a key role in the processes of sensemaking and knowledge production. These actions, however, depend on the individual characteristics (perception, emotions, attitudes, skills, motivation, memory), as well as the opportunity to have learning experiences in which to free their potential. An organisation cannot intervene directly on the personal characteristics of a person, on his learning styles, but it can create the training actions that generate processes of self-directed learning and knowledge production.

This result can be achieved through actions that aim to have the person *participate* in situations where new knowledge is created, not yet codified, that still does not exist in the organisation, but is obtained through the activities of its members. This type of action includes the situations where a person is called to be part of a research project, and also the less complex and most recurrent analysis of errors made in their work, aimed precisely at learning from their mistakes.

Alternatively, even though the knowledge already exists within or outside the organisation, the actions taken aim at making the person *acquire* knowledge, whether encoded or not, through specific transfer actions. This type of action includes both the usual training opportunities (safety in the workplace, for example) and the training by coaching.

Participating in the creation of new knowledge or acquiring existing knowledge are the two basic types of educational actions through which an organisation manages the growth of its members.

3.2. Training through participation

Learning through participation in the processes of production of new knowledge is achieved through actions which presuppose the existence of teams with high training potential that practice peer cooperation, the analysis of potential problems, they observe the production processes in their complexity. These are teams that create new collective knowledge, skills, relationships which can then be used also by other teams and turned into routine.

Not all teams have these characteristics and, therefore, not all jobs have the same level of learning potential. These depend, first of all, on the reasons a team exists, or the characteristics of the tasks entrusted to it: the higher the level of innovation, the greater the effort required to produce new learning and knowledge. Secondly, the criteria of the team composition and the richness and variety of professional content within it should be taken into consideration. A cross-functional team has a greater training potential.

The training intensity of a team depends on the quantity and quality of knowledge resources that the organisation puts at its disposal and which are the basis of knowledge on which they can accumulate new knowledge (see Ch.1.2.). Physical capital (machines, equipment, information systems, etc.), organisational structures, management methods and work practices are the elements through which the team can develop the skills of its members and produce results.

The group of these resources is activated for purposes of production through various types of action that Eraut (20) ranked according to the type of process and the cognitive methods that characterise them, distinguishing them, in turn, according to the time that can be dedicated to them.

Table 3: Interactions between time, mode of cognition and type of process

Type of Process	Mode of Cognition		
	Instant/Reflex	Rapid/Intuitive	Deliberative/Analytic
Assessment of the situation	Pattern recognition	Rapid interpretation Communication on the spot	Prolonged diagnosis Review, discussion and analysis
Decision making	Instant response	Recognition primed or intuitive	Deliberative analysis or discussion
Overt actions	Routinised actions	Routines punctuated by rapid decisions	Planned actions with periodic progress reviews
Metacognitive engagement	Situational awareness	Implicit monitoring Short, reactive Reflections	Monitoring of thought and activity, reflective learning Group evaluation

Within a team with high learning potential there are all these types of actions and all its members have undertaken to assess situations, to take decisions,

to implement actions and to elaborate knowledge. What characterises this type of team is the commitment to activities that involve actions of an analytical type and metacognitive processes, both carried out in cooperative relationships.

In summary, there are two conditions that accompany growth within this type of team: reflexivity and sharing.

The reflexive character comes from the fact that the tasks of these teams involve doing practical work experience, reflection on what has been achieved, their conceptualisation and their practical implementation (Kolb), all this in comparison inside and outside the team (Revans). That which enhances the reflective component of this type of work activities is the possibility of *reframing* (Argyris and Schon 1974, 1978), i.e. processing pre-assumptions, the initial assumptions that inspired the start of activities (Mezirow).

Sharing is linked to the group of interrelationships that mark the course of an activity within a team. These are numerous and their character is both formal and informal, i.e. they can be planned and structured, or they can take place within the normal dynamics of relationships between people of the same team or belonging to the network of relationships that accompanies the development of the activity. If we consider, for example, the path in which a team with responsibility for product development is inserted, we see that it is marked by numerous opportunities for sharing and verification that follow each other, whether weekly or monthly, or in relation to the different phases of activity progress. Formal and informal occasions for sharing are the moments in which team reflection in action is expressed through decision-making and metacognitive commitment.

However, research on the subject is unanimous in pointing out some limits of this kind of training action.

The first limit consists of the character of communications between team members. Research shows that these are always full of ambiguity: the substantial matters of a work type are always imbued with content dictated by the emotional dimension of the relationship. The latter ends up having a decisive weight and consents communication focused on professional content, provided that it complies with various conditions such as: mutual trust, the preservation of autonomy, the perception of not being in vulnerable circumstances.

Furthermore, some research suggests a further limit due to the difficulty of expressing both codified knowledge and uncodified or tacit knowledge. In fact, the creation of new knowledge for the same event that takes place within an organisation is imbued with tacit knowledge, it is elaborated taking into account the situation, and its subsequent absorption will be possible provided that account is taken of the ways in which this establishes its very existence. All this hinders investigation of the topics since the validation of the conclusions reached and the knowledge that is created can be achieved only if it takes into account the tacit knowledge of an organisation. In other words, what is true for a multinational company is not true for a small business.

Lastly, in productive activity the time factor is a binding factor. The modes of analytical cognition take time to switch from the diagnosis to the definition,

to testing, and then to evaluation and systematisation of the results. Lack of time, combined with the other limits just mentioned, has resulted in the limitation of the contents object of the team's reflection. The focus is directed towards the decisions to be taken, while attention thins towards the reasons for the choices made and towards the methodological reasons that led to these choices.

In order to be exceeded, these limits require a different model of learning that strengthens the reflective components of knowledge creation in the work through the inclusion of learning and training support, or through embedded forms of learning.

3.3. Learning through supported participation

Embedded learning is through incorporation in learning of components built specifically to promote the growth of people while they work and to accelerate the achievement of levels of excellence in their respective job positions. It aims at strengthening the capabilities of prediction, analysis, evaluation and organisation of technical and methodological knowledge of the work performed or to be performed. It accompanies the work and is closely connected to the learning potential of the tasks a person is working at and helps him prepare to tackle them, to monitor and evaluate the successes and failures of the work carried out. It is addressed to individuals and groups in moments distinct from the normal course of work, although closely intertwined.

Embedded learning is translated into specific actions to support the cognitive processes already in practice in its various phases of creating solutions to be adopted, process management, evaluation of the results achieved both in terms of work and of personal growth, transfer of acquired knowledge to collaborators, further growth of personal skills by insertion into new teams.

Lastly, the measures to support the conception aim at giving the individual and the team the opportunity to form useful knowledge for work and for personal growth.

All organisations have their own strategies for knowledge management and adopt rules for the distribution of knowledge already acquired and access to the unthinkable, to knowledge not yet held (Bernstein). Actions supporting the conception intervene, in particular, towards innovative challenges, when a team or an individual are called to create new products, new components, new processes.

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QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION CAREER GUIDANCE: PROCEDURES AND PROCESSES FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF STUDENTS' EMPLOYABILITY[1]

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Abstract

This paper aims to reflect on procedures and processes which ensure effectiveness of career guidance in higher education within the framework of quality assurance processes. In 2014 Eurydice report *Modernization of Higher Education* states that the main challenges for European higher education institutions were access, retention and employability of a wider range of students (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2014). The tools that the authors of the report identified in order to face these challenges were the implementation of flexible learning paths and the improvement of guidance services. Addressing this issue imposes to understand career services design and provision as part of the process of higher education improvement. The added value of this paper consists in the essay to present a local experience as an example of ensuring quality in higher education through the evaluation of guidance processes impact on students' employability.

Key words: Quality, Employability, Career Guidance, Monitoring, Evaluation.

Introduction

This paper deals with an experience in higher education career guidance developed by the University of Florence. It links this experience to the important

1 The paper is the result of joint work in the common parts of *Abstract*, *Introduction*, *Conclusion* and *Bibliography*. However, paragraph *Defining employability of graduates* can be attributed to Gaia Gioli, paragraph *Career Guidance services and Quality* to Nicoletta Tomei and paragraph *Reasons and evidences from an on-going evaluation activity by the University of Florence* to Carlo Terzaroli.

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role that quality assurance processes have assumed in the context of higher education improvement. The approach followed in this paper focuses on the different meanings of employability and on the concept of transition. Reconstructing graduates' transition from education to labour market, this paper presents the potential role of university career services as a tool to enhance employability for specific clusters of individuals.

The relevance of the paths through which individuals enter in the labour market and the importance of specific requirements of certain sectors highlight the need to constantly monitor and evaluate how university career services work, what is their impact on different populations and what are the activities which better answer to the labour market needs. The experience of on-going evaluation carried out within the *Cantieri di Intraprendenza e Lavoro project*[2] (*Cantieri project*) seems to foreshadow the possibility that the involvement of external evaluators, not only improves the quality of services' provision, but also helps the institution to accomplish their missions.

Argumentation will follow this plan: first of all, it will try to clarify the role of employability related interventions in the promotion of individuals' transition to the labour market. Secondly, it will focus on the issue of university career services' quality. Thirdly, it will present an on-going evaluation experience from the University of Florence in order to highlight how a constant relationship between educational institutions and employers, as external evaluators, can lead to a general improvement of the quality.

Defining employability of graduates

In the current era of continuous change, the notion of employability has gained a very important role because of the growing need of individuals to develop a greater ownership of their life-path and to secure employment. Moreover, the highly competitive and volatile labour market highlights the need to anticipating the acquisition of employability skills before the entrance into the labour market in order to maximise the potential for a successful career. Indeed, employers expect graduates to demonstrate their "work-ability" through something more than a formal certificate of education based on good grades.

Employability is a multifaceted concept that has been interpreted in various ways in the last twenty years. Many researchers have defined employability as the propensity to secure a job, a progress in career, or as the "capacity to move self-sufficiently into and within the labour market, to fulfil potential through sustainable employment" (Allison et al., 2002, p. 3). Others as Yorke and Knight define employability as "a set of achievements, understanding and personal at-

2 The *Cantieri di Intraprendenza e Lavoro project* (Intrapreneurship and Work Yards Project, the English translation) has been developed, within the Guidance and Placement Office, under the scientific responsibility of prof. Paola Lucarelli who has been the University of Florence Delegate of career guidance activities for the last five years.

tributes that make individuals more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations" (Yorke, 2004, p. 21). A third group claims, "employability is not just about getting a job" but it is linked in its core sense with "the acquisition of attributes (knowledge, skills and abilities) that make graduates more likely to be successful in their chosen occupations (whether paid employment or not)" (Harvey, 2004, p. 3) nor it is something "automatic" (Harvey, 2003, p. 3, about Joan Newton). In general "employability is more than about developing attributes, techniques or experience just to enable a student to get a job, or to progress within a career. It is about learning and the emphasis is less on 'employ' and more on 'ability'. In essence, the emphasis is on developing critical, reflective abilities, with a view to empowering and enhancing the learner. Employment is a by-product of this enabling process" (Harvey, 2003, p. 3). As a consequence, it is not a product in itself but a pedagogical process that has much to do with reflection and transformative learning. This process enhances development in terms of competences, understanding and personal attributes (Figure n. 1): and here the notions of learning and development are something that transcend the capability-based approach to employability.

Figure 1 – The process of employability
(Harvey, 2003, p. 4 adapted from Harvey et al., 2002)

As suggested by Harvey, Locke and Morey in 2002 (p. 17), "employability is about how individuals engage with opportunities, and reflect and articulate their skills and experience" or as a starting point for the development path that brings to transition into the first "decent job" (ILO, 1999, p. 1).

In the background there is a reflection on how the employability process can be influenced by external factors. Indeed, individuals are not ontologically independent of one another, nor their role is external to the changing context of society but tightly linked with it in a bi-univocal relation. As a matter of fact, human beings are proficient in transforming and developing themselves and their skills, knowledge and learning in a consequential way. Moreover, they learn according to their previous experiences or, as defined by Beach (1999, p. 114), using a portability approach they transform their skills, knowledge and learning. The transfer concept of Beach suggests that when someone has overcome successfully a prior learning-based experience, he/she will be able to apply the learning to a new task, being highly influences by the former. This means that individuals that can count on an *accompany* or *support construct* can live a much more positive experience of transition that changes the individuals and makes them become something new.

Following that, many experts have developed the idea that institutions should help transition of the young graduates from the educational to the work context through specific learning and teaching strategies or educational actions, such as guidance provision at a micro, meso and macro level.

This support system, involving teaching and learning activities as well as services, could become part of the employability curricula (The Pedagogy for Employability Group, 2004), both directly and indirectly, i.e. by letting students know or not the employability aims of the course or program. As a consequence, higher education providers should audit their curricula to evaluate their effectiveness and how employability can be achieved in reason of the fact that care for education and for the educational process is the essential key for reading the transitions to work. From this perspective, some researchers begin to think about transitions as "pathways of care for the subjects' formation process" (Boffo, 2015, p. 158) that, at a micro-level or from the students' perspective, corresponds to the care for the self, and, at a macro-level or from a higher education institutions perspective, can be identified with the care for the human being and their wellbeing and their role into the civil society.

This understanding enforces the agreement on the idea that the moment of the acquisition of employability skills is prior to the entrance into the labour market and corresponds to the presence in higher education institutions of services that are increasingly expected to contribute to the labour market entrance by equipping students and graduates with skills for employment. Indeed, a key goal of the Bologna Process is to enhance employability and mobility of citizens creating a European space for higher education.

This means creating the basis for the development of higher education as link between education and employment. International stakeholders and policy makers recognize the impact of higher education in enhancing young graduates' employability and a direct correlation between skills, productivity and employ-

ment (Leitch Review of Skills, 2006, p. 3). Yet there is a strong debate on how to achieve this goal, due to the absence of a recognized model to do it at best, or a best practice that every higher education institution can adopt.

In this sense higher education institutions have initially used a *skill approach* based on the development of specific skills through specific models or extracurricular activities. After that, they have adopted a more holistic approach feeling the urgency of adapting their activities to the changing nature of the workplace and the requirements of the employers (needs) in order to be responsive to these changes and be responsible for the equipment of their students. The present approach seeks "to develop employability attributes as an explicit and embedded part of academic learning" (Harvey, 2003, p. 16), or as a curriculum with embedded employability. This is particularly evident and clear when the study course is developed in consultation with labour market and stakeholders with the aim of helping students make easier transitions into the workplace.

In Italy the reform of the study courses in 2010 included this concepts in the Law no. 240/2010 where it was stated that "finding work and finding work that is coherent with the study path followed is not just what graduates want, but it is also one of the standards by which the Italian Ministry of Education, Universities and Research assesses the degree course that the student has come from, and, as a consequence, the capacity of the universities to be productive in terms of both research and teaching. It is not possible to consider the topic of the transition into work of Italian graduates without taking into due consideration the close link with the quality systems, third mission, teaching and training offered by the study courses" (Boffo, 2015, p. 156). In this sense the "third mission" is the long-term reflection of the Ministry on the importance of connecting University and labour market through linked actions, relationships,... that can benefit students and not-traditional students to gain "meaningful employment" (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2014, p. 62) and a decent work in condition of freedom (ILO, 1999, p. 1).

Career Guidance services and Quality

As seen in the previous section, the concept of employability can be interpreted in different ways. Certainly it plays a central role in the European commission's higher education reform strategy as well as in European strategies such as *Europe 2020* and *Education and Training 2020*. Relevance given to graduate's labour markets transition, has contributed over the past decades to several different phenomena in higher education. In this perspective the most relevant is the fact that it has brought an "output and outcome awareness" (Teichler, 2011, p. 29) that has progressively involved curriculum development, teaching and learning processes as well as the assessment of university services.

In 2009, Helmut Zelloth claimed that "among international organisations, it was the OECD which addressed career guidance issues for the first time as part of an examination of policy issues related to initial transitions from school to work" (European Training Foundation 2009, p.10). Referring to that institution it is possible to include in career guidance "services and activities intended to assist individuals, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training, and occupational choices and to manage their careers" (OECD, 2004, p.10).

In the same period in which policies and strategies for career guidance have become a political priority in many European higher education institutions, several authors noticed that "the improvement of quality of higher education has become a common focus of the western world government" (Do Céu, De Nazaré, 2014, p.94). Among these authors there are researchers who link the spread of quality assurance processes to the need of compete in a globalized knowledge society and others who insist on their link with recent economic crisis. In both cases the attention to returns on investments in higher education seems to be an undoubtable trend which results in the spread of "several definitions and models of assessment and management of quality in higher education" (Do Céu, De Nazaré, 2014, p.94). Although the differences among them, in literature it is possible to find an integrative conceptual approach. Following this approach "the aims of a quality-assurance system and mechanisms are to improve efficiency in service provision, to increase institutional financial accountability and to create transparency from the perspective of the citizen" (European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network 2012, p.50).

From this point of view, there is a strong relationship between quality and evidence. "One of the ways in which quality and evidence are inter-related is through the collection of data as part of service provision and improvement" (European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network, 2014, p.12). The main activities which can provide service provision and improvement through data collection are monitoring and evaluation. Two are the elements that allow to draw a distinction between them. The first one concerns the goal of the activities. Monitoring is the routine collection, analysis and use of information about an on-going intervention which ensure that a programme stay on tracks while evaluation is usually concerned with more with strategic questions such as effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, impact and sustainability. The second one concerns the involvement of external stakeholders. As Hooley claims in fact "monitoring... is usually carried out by individuals and organisations directly involved in the development intervention" while "evaluation... is usually carried out in co-operation with external evaluators or entirely outsourced" (European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network, 2014, p.12).

Since employability is increasingly seen as a key performance indicator by higher education institutes, career guidance services start to be involved in more than one assessment in order to ensure a result "as systematic and objective as possible" (European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network 2014, p.12). In the large

majority of countries, higher education institutions are obliged to submit employability related information to quality assurance authorities in order to accredit institutions and programmes. "Besides formal quality assurance procedures, several countries have established other processes of evaluation based on employability criteria" (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2014, p.73). The basis of such evaluation is often student and graduate surveys. Another source of information can be employers or HR specialists as well as higher education itself through their plans and prospects.

Employability-related quality standards can focus on a variety of issues. Quality assurance agencies can simply verify the presence of services that can provide support for the labour market transition of graduates or they can be required to show that their programmes and activities answer an existing demand. In other cases, they have also to be able to prove that they involve employers and specialized staff in designing and implementation processes. The main goal of quality assurance processes is to make relevant information about the impact of career services in higher education public, however, several countries, Italy included, "have also developed (or are in process of developing) systems of performance-based or purpose-specific funding" (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2014, p.74). This means that data of career guidance impact are not only transparent, but also able to influence higher education funding.

On the basis of this complex framework, Italian universities tried to promote the transition of their graduates facing a severe occupational crisis and the shift of higher education public provision from an input oriented model to an output oriented one.

From this point of view, the University of Florence *Cantieri project,* started in May 2015, can highlight what could be the role of quality assurance processes in the achievement of continuous improvement of processes and procedures.

The project was conceived within the activities of the Guidance and Placement Office. It uses a provision of the Italian Ministry for Education, University and Research that allocated some funds on the basis of a selective procedure. These funds intend to improve, in three years, the effectiveness of the university career guidance activities and to built an integrated system able to promote the transition of graduates to labour market.

From a structural perspective the project aims to:

1) Coordinate the systems that are devoted to identify the needs of students and employers.
2) Support the design and research experiences gained about employability, transitions and career guidance inside the university,
3) Build up a university committee which can monitor and evaluate all the processes,
4) Training a selected staff in order to allow it to manage the career guidance activities showed in Figure n. 2.

Figure 2 – The activities carried out by the *Cantieri project*

Considering these activities, the project not only spread good practices already carried out by academic schools and departments, but also design new services thanks to the implementation of monitoring and evaluation strategies able to account their results to internal and external stakeholders such as Ministry, students and labour market's organizations.

Even if the accountability is a condition to be funded by the Ministry for the entire length of the project, the University of Florence devotes a lot of energy to involve internal and external stakeholders in the evaluation process in order to:

1) evaluate the impact that career guidance services can have in term of production of employable human capital,
2) ensure a quality offer for students and graduates,
3) collect evidence that can be used to improve university system as a whole.

Reasons and evidences from an on-going evaluation activity by the University of Florence

As presented above, the *Cantieri project* invests in career guidance in order to measure the impact of the services on employment rates of recent graduates. Two are the main questions that lead the first 5 months activities. The first one is: what is the relevance of these actions for the transition of graduates into the labour market? The second one is: what are the impact and the transformation of graduates' conditions?

In this direction, the role of monitoring and evaluation as two important steps to get aware of quality of actions planned is confirmed (European Commission, 2015, p. 6–7). As a matter of fact, a project, that aims to induce a change by targeted action, needs an evaluation during the implementation phase and an

impact evaluation to deduce quality of effects produced. Due to their educational dimension, this consideration is particularly important in higher education and career services which have continuously to match learning outcomes and trends of the world of work in order support students developing their future life, and work-life as well. That's why the evaluation of project's development and the collection of «good-quality data» (Federighi, 2013, p. 77) have become very important for the *Cantieri project*. This evaluation in fact «enables us [...] to *learn internally*: involved stakeholders are able to learn and improve their programme, and [...] to *present externally*: the results of the programme can be presented to a broader public» (INTERACT, 2012, p. 11). Therefore, it could be significant and useful to elaborate strategic decisions (INTERACT, 2012) and also to activate a reflective process on scope, aims and strategies eventually leading to a review of planned actions.

For these reasons, it has been activated a process of on-going evaluation as «a process taking the form of a series of evaluation exercises» (European Commission, 2007, p. 6). The process presented in next paragraph is the first part of a broader process of on-going evaluation. It aims to verify the matching between the offer of career guidance services into the *Cantieri project* and the employers' demand during the recruitment phase. Since the final results could be evidence which allow to transform some guidance activities for better ensuring employability development, the on-going evaluation is not just monitoring the project progress, but it produces knowledge and policy learning which inform University level as well (Federighi P., Abreu C., Nuissl von Rein E., 2007; Federighi P., Torlone F., 2007). Moreover, it also produces evidence to create innovative educational strategies to support graduates' transition.

In this framework the first stage of the on-going evaluation of the *Cantieri project* has been unrolled during the University of Florence Career Day[3]. In this context the research group of Adult Education of the Department of Educational Sciences and Psychology[4] has conducted a survey on recruitment phases and processes of the companies who participated at the Career Day. The survey had the goal to understand the different recruitment phases depending on company dimension and to point out the matching/mismatching between the services offer and the demand of labour market, in order to plan educational activities that could help graduates facing the transition into labour market.

3 The inquiry presented here has been unrolled to HR Recruiters during the 2015 edition of the University of Florence Career Day, which took place in 6th, 7h, 8th October 2015 in Florence and counted 119 companies and more than 400 students. They were 21 multinational corporations, 11 big companies, 27 medium companies and 18 small companies.

4 The research group of Adult Education is composed by Prof. Paolo Federighi, Prof. Vanna Boffo, Dr. Francesca Torlone, Dr. Gaia Gioli, Nicoletta Tomei, Carlo Terzaroli.

The purpose of survey[5], in details, was to analyse four main topics of the recruitment process: used methods, phases of selection process, importance of soft skills, use of social network for selection. Looking at results, we can notice that *Curriculum Vitae* (CV) screening (90% of companies) and individual interview (76,7% of companies) are the most used methods for selection among all companies. Connecting to methods, data analysis provides also an interesting overview on phases of recruitment into the interviewed enterprises. In fact, looking at the first stage of selection process (Table 1), it emerges that CV Screening is the most used method in big, medium and small companies as a way to know first characteristics of candidate; it's interesting, on the contrary, that multinational corporations prefer to have a phone interview, also to know how people usually relate in a phone call.

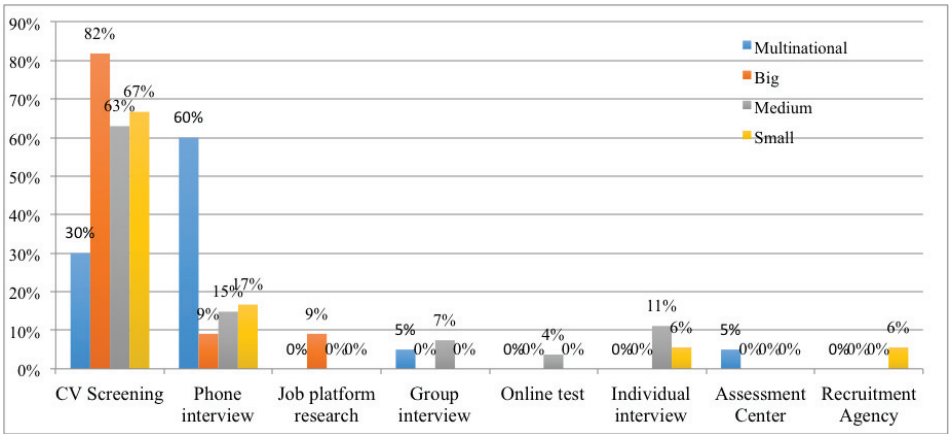

Table 1 – Recruitment process, first phase

These data provide a first relevant suggestion to guidance services planning: the personal and professional preparation to the recruitment stage can't be the same for all field of study. As a matter of fact each economical sector in each territory presents different dimensions companies, which use different methods in turn: that's why it is so important a continuous relation with the local labour market. And that's why an effective guidance service has to plan educational actions tailored on sector field needs. Other data (Table 2), that show multinational corporations use of Assessment Centre, lead our analysis in the same direction: it asks indeed for specific preparation especially for student which would like to apply for jobs into multinational organizations. The data also shows an intense use of Skype call in selection process of medium companies (23%), small companies (12%) and multinational corporations and suggest a different pathway to enter into this type of organizations.

5 The survey has been delivered by a semi-structured interview, composed by five questions with multiple answers or with blank spaces to fill in.

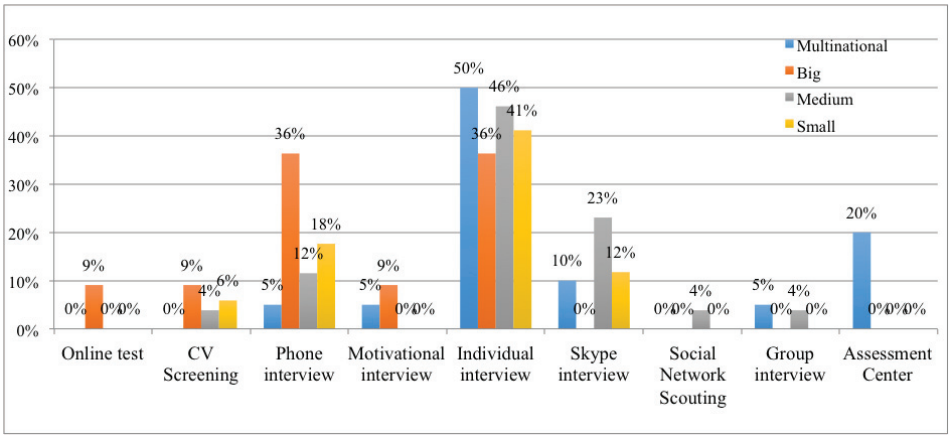

Table 2 – Recruitment process, second phase

Conclusion

On the basis of these elements it is possible to conclude that company size influences recruitment methods and phases as well. This conclusion leads to claim that career services carried out by the University of Florence now partly fulfil the needs of their main stakeholders. However on the perspective of processes' improvement two considerations are due.

Firstly, it seems clear that Career services should start to tailor their activities according to what different kind of companies require to students who want to apply there (*sectorization of guidance services*). Secondly, as personalization is highly difficult to provide, it seems appropriate to invest in research that lead to the identification of different graduates' transition paths in order to focus what are the needs of different clusters of students (*clusterization of guidance services)*.

Interpreting these considerations through the lens of quality assurance processes allows to claim that pursuing this goals means not only foster the impact of career guidance activities effectively helping graduates transition to the labour market. It also contributes to the improvement of higher education as a whole by the accomplishment of its third mission.

From a procedural point of view, as these conclusions are built on evidence produced by an on-going evaluation which involved skilled professionals, such are researchers, and external stakeholders such as recruiters, quality assurance seems to be closely linked to good-quality data collection and interpretation.

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NEW PERSPECTIVES IN RESEARCH OF ADULTS' ON LINE LEARNING

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Abstract

The development of the Internet and new technologies brought about many changes in the field of learning which has opened multiple possibilities for methodology of andragogic research to explore the phenomena which are at the center of its interests. Adult online learning represents one of these phenomena. In this paper, we aim to examine whether modern analytical research methods and logical models can be successfully applied in the study of learning and adult education which refer to the online community. The results showed that use of the software and logical models in empirical research of adult on line learning has its justification, but it must be noted that there are some important limitations in their application.

Key words: online adult learning, on-line adult education, connectivism, digitization, empirical research

Introduction

The advancement and development of technology have brought numerous innovations in the world of communication and opened different perspectives on the field of learning and education. One of the particularities of the modern information society is the requirement for permanent adult education. Modern technology has provided multiple opportunities for adults to meet this need in a way that is least time consuming or disturbing their daily schedule. As knowledge is growing exponentially and the demands that society and the labour market are setting for adults are becoming bigger, they are forced to learn and educate continuously in order to meet the requirements that have been set previously.

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Only forty years ago, people who have left the formal education system would begin their career after graduation and it would usually last a lifetime without excessive turbulence (George Siemens, 2005). Today, due to changes caused by technology development, situation has altered significantly, since knowledge required for successful integration into society, on a personal and professional level, is rapidly changing. Hence, the authors warn that *life of knowledge* have shortened so that now it can be measured in years or even months (Siemens, 2005). In such an environment, learning has become imperative, and not only the one that refers to the formal education and school – because people learn every day (Anita Woolfolk, Malcolm Hughes, Vivienne Walkup, 2014), but in any other, informal and empirical learning that takes place in various ways: through practice, creating personal connections, job-related tasks, and similar (Siemens, 2005).

In this paper, learning is understood in the broadest sense, while under the term of learning we think of a process that occurs "when experience causes relatively permanent change in knowledge or behaviour of a person" where "change can be intentional or unintentional, for better or worse, right or wrong, aware unaware of (Hill, 2002, as cited in Woolfolk et al., 2014, p.14).

The study of adult learning in a dynamic new environment and rich resources for learning is a challenge for andragogy both in theoretical and methodological sense.

Adults' on-line learning and Connectivism

In the literature, there are distinctions between the concepts of online learning, e – learning and distance learning, but as a deeper analysis of the reasons underlying the distinction between these concepts are beyond the objectives of our work, we will not go further into it. It is important to say that online learning is defined as a process in which learning takes place electronically and in which the learning resources are available via the Internet (Glomazic, 2013). Furthermore, adults' online learning is characterized by the use of new technologies in learning which represent its key feature. However, in order to understand the process of adults' learning in online environments and to aid professionals in educating adults while creating online learning programs for them, their characteristics and specificities must be taken into account (Cercone, 2008). The authors believe that it is important for professionals in the field of on-line adult learning to care to support adult learners, by taking into account their experience, needs, barriers in adjusting to a new way of learning (ibid.). It must also be kept in mind that adult students, as they go through the process of online learning (and learning in general), transform their experience and need support as they go through these changes. In this regard, the role of the instructor is to act as a mediator, not a lecturer, "allowing students to experience the discovery as part of the learning process"(Cercone, 2008, str. 151).

From the literature in the field of adults' online learning, we can conclude that it can be viewed in two ways: as a form of learning in the formal education system which includes the use of all available technological novelties in order to innovate and modernize classroom practice. Another form of adults' online learning refers to informal learning or, even more precise, empirical learning that takes place in the online space by using the Internet, new media and social networks. This paper is primarily interested in the informal aspect of adults' online learning. Therefore, we want to know if it is possible to learn in virtual space and how to measure the effects of such learning.

In order to understand the methodological challenges that are put before researchers who study learning and adult education, we must first pay attention to the theoretical basis or explanation of the learning that takes place in an atmosphere of rapid development of technology. Behaviourism, constructivism and cognitivism are learning theories that have a purpose to explain the complex processes of learning, but the fact is that they are developed at a time when learning was not significantly dependent on the development of technology (Siemens, 2005), or not to the extent that it depends today. Although in the past twenty years, technology have become so advanced that it reorganized the way we live, communicate and learn (Siemens, 2005), we should not forget that traditional learning paradigms do not become outdated; in fact, it is necessary to, in comply with the requirements dictated by the information society, existing theories incorporate attributes that reflect modern learning environment in themselves (Clarissa Davis, Earl Edmunds & Vivian Kelly Bateman, 2008). In that sense, there was a need for processes and principles of learning, as well as learning needs, to be explained in a way that appreciated the social environment in which they take place. Furthermore, all of these theories, including the theory of transformative learning and connectivism, have a common component whose basis lies in steering the path that will help students to gain knowledge and develop a deeper understanding of what they learn (Debbie J. Wicks, 2009).

Connectivism, the theory of a new age[1], attempts to answer to some of the questions concerning learning in general, as well as adult learning, in the online space. George Siemens (2005), the creator of this theory, considers that the technological tools we are using not only define, but also shape our thinking. The very fact that the technology is involved in learning causes displacement of learning theories towards digital era. Siemens (2005) examined the theory of chaos and realized that chaos is a new reality in learning in the digital era, which is defined as "hidden form of order" by some authors (ibid.). His view, based on theory of chaos, states that chaos recognizes the connection of everything with anything and that there is a meaning within

1 We use *theory* only conditionaly since there is no agreement between researchers if it can actually be called a theory or it is just a pedagogical method

itself. Therefore, it is a challenge for student to discover the meaning or to recognize schemes, patterns and relationships that seem hidden. At its core, George Siemens' theory of connectivism is the combined effect of three different components: chaos theory, importance of networks, and the interplay of complexity and self-organization. He believes that our knowledge does not necessarily have to be placed inside of us, but that it might reside outside of us (in organizations or database) and that learning is defined as the active construction of knowledge aimed at linking the worlds of information and connections that allow us to learn. Thus, the ability to connect and build relationships, or having a skill to carry out a selection of information and separate the important from the unimportant among them, is more significant than our current state of knowledge, since information and knowledge are changing rapidly. As the author states, the ability to leverage resources in order to achieve knowledge becomes the key skill: knowing when and knowing what is replaced with knowing where. Siemens believes that learning (knowledge) located in the databases must be connected with the right people in the right context in order to be classified as learning. As a part of social networks, essence are well connected people who are able to maintain the flow of knowledge and them being connected between themselves may have effective flow of knowledge as a result.

The author believes that the starting point in the cycle of knowledge is an individual, whose personal knowledge consists of creating a network and which is later subsequently incorporated into organizations and institutions. It then circles and is returned back to the network to eventually continue to provide knowledge for the individual. This cycle of knowledge (from personal to network to organization) allows the one who learns to remain stable in their field through the connections he have formed. Siemens states that the spread of learning, knowledge and understanding through increased personal networks represents a concise review of connectivism. Although this theory suffers complaints and criticism because of the lack of merits and its status as a theory is disputed (see: Frances Bell, 2011[2]; Betsy Duke, Ginger Harper, and Mark Johnston, 2013[3]), it is popular in scientific circles and is used to explain learning process that undoubtedly refers to the online community, especially because of the great popularity and widespread use of mass open online courses (MOOCs). Moreover, this approach provides an explanation of the adults' online learning whether it takes place in higher education institutions of formal education, informal education, business environment or on social networks.

2 Bell states that connectivism is influential in practice because of the prevalence of massive open online courses (MOOCs) especially for those who use them in learning as well as for others who want to implement it in practice, but that it lacks more serious critics

3 This paper presents the advantages and disadvantages connectivism; it problematizes the question of connectivism as a theory

In higher education, online learning has become especially popular as evidenced by numerous scientific papers on the topic of this area. British organization *Research Information Network*[4] deems that social media have established a new way of interconnection, which represents an important technological trend. They believe that social media have significant implications on a way in which scientists (and people in general) cooperate and exchange information, thus that connecting and exchanging information, knowledge and educational resources among scientists and researchers via Internet is one of the innovations that marked the adults' on-line learning. Research Information Network presented a tutorial on using social media in research, scientific, or academic purposes where there is a very detailed classification of social media that are resources for adults' online learning and the exchange of educational information: "This guide uses the term 'social media' to refer to Internet services where the online content is generated by the users of the service "(Social media: A guide for researchers, 2011, p. 7). According to their classification, we can distinguish several groups of social media out of which each can be an educational resource for adults. They are following: *Social networking services* (Academia.edu, Facebook, Linkedin...); *Social bookmarking, news and social citation tools* (BibSonomy, CiteULike, delicious, Digg, diigo, Mendeley, Newsvine, Reddit, Zotero); *Blogging and Microblogging tools* (Blogger, LiveJournal, Twitter, Google buzz, Plurk, Posterous, Tumblr, Wordpress...); *Virtual worlds* (SecondLife, OpenSim, World of Warcraft), *Presentation sharing tools* (Scribd, SlideShare...); *Audio and Video tools* (YouTube, Picasa, Viddler, Vimeo); *Examples of academic and research blogs* (Research blogging, Academic blog portal, Science in the Open, Science of the Invisible, Stanford blog directory Starting out in Science...); *Research and writing collaboration tools* (Dropbox, Google Docs, Wikia...); *Managing projects and cooperation tools* (Bamboo, Skype...); *Information management tools* (Google Reader, iGoogle).

This, of course, does not exhaust the topic of adult' online learning because this type of learning does not refer only to a category of highly educated people, but serves to illustrate the many ways in which it takes place and is used. It actually refers to all adults who use the potential of the Internet for the exchange of knowledge, whether it occurs as a result of their deliberate intention to acquire a certain knowledge and skills, or unconsciously, in which case learning can be defined as an accidental, side effect.

Logically, along with the development of new paradigms that explain the flow of the learning process in an era of technological revolution, there was a need to find new methodological approaches in the study of learning and adult education.

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4 See: http://www.rin.ac.uk/our-work/communicating-and-disseminating-research/social-media-guide-researchers

Methodological challenges in the study of adults' online learning

Since studies show that in developed countries, the population of Internet users nearly became equal to the general population – a similar trend is noticed in less developed countries – logically follows that the availability and use of digitized data and records from the virtual space for research purposes increased and that wide space for the development of advanced analytical methods and approaches in the study of contemporary social phenomena opened up (Branković, 2013).

The authors argue that digital society brought "new stations and tools for practical actions, which are completely different, much more powerful, faster and more effective in comparison to what a classic, pre-digital society had to offer" (Brankovic, 2014b, p. 1). This has opened multiple possibilities for exploring the phenomena which are at the heart of their interest for the methodology of social research, and therefore the methodology andragogic research.

In his article *Social networks and new possibilities of social research*, Brankovic states that "life" of the entire society literally takes place on the Internet, given the fact that in the modern world "functioning of the state, education, the whole political and cultural life is unimaginable without the Internet" (Brankovic, 2013, p. 4). As the major social changes, made by development of communication technologies, have resulted in connectivity and networking of individuals and groups, that was further reflected in the changes in the field of methodology of social research (ibid.). Brankovic (2013) describes several levels in which changes in the methodology of social research have occurred. They are following:

The subject plane – there is a newly opened possibility that subject of the research can be anything defined as "life" of the whole society ("real life"), meaning that "much broader thematic intervention is possible in relation to classical studies" (ibid., p. 4).

Transferred to the field of online learning and adult education, this means that it is possible to extract themes from the so-called "real life" and this way explore this andragogic area.

The "social unit (individual) –social universe" axis – unlike the classic studies that have been done on different samples of the population, using modern research methods, research can often be carried out on entire population.

The possibility that opens up by using this methodological approach is equally important for the research carried out in andragogy as well as in all other areas.

The time axis – "real life (where it is possible to select a part which will become the subject of research, author's note) is exposed to a continuous row along the timeline" which "provides easier detection and monitoring of trends and deeper insight into the relations of connectivity, conditioning, causality, and causality "(ibid. p. 4).

The phenomenal aspect – digitalized data on the occurrence which is the subject of research allow their easy individual identification, clustering, classification, ranking, measurement and involvement in a series of advanced statistical and other analyses.

This, as well as previously described plane, has universal significance for the research carried out in the area of social sciences, and consequently in the sciences of education and adult learning.

Since modern channels and methodological tools are not sufficiently explored in the methodology, and the author Brankovic (2014b) himself concludes that the literature almost does not have any recorded research on this topic (and consequently on the topic of their use in the research of adult's online education, author's note). Therefore, this paper will have to set up a hypothetical problem and assume that the global settings that apply to social research methodology, should likewise apply to the methodology of research in andragogy, since it belongs to social sciences.

Adults' online learning is interactive and takes place in the process of communication on the Internet. Since the data about the communication is available in digital form, traces or records of the ways in which the learning process takes place through communication constitute a specific database. These digital traces exist in the form of text, images, audio and audio-visual records. Therefore, a large amount of the raw material on the Internet, in the form of database, is available for research. Brankovic noted that, so far, not many serious actions have been made to use such a base "to the extent it is available, as it is not used to the depth of the project which would seriously surpass the achievements of the classical empirical research" (Brankovic, 2014a, p. 70). For this reason, the same author and his colleagues[5] have developed an original and unique analytical model and a research tool that provides entirely new possibilities in the field of empirical research and called Symbols Research (SR).

By using this analytical model, it is possible to explore the phenomenon of online adult learning, at least in some aspects, though it is not its primary purpose. Since it might be useful to researchers from different scientific disciplines: communication, sociology, political science, economics, linguistics and many other disciplines (Brankovic, 2014), it is possible to test it in the field of learning and education[6]. Software – Symbols Research – belongs to a new field of applied researches, which is known as a large set of analytics (Brankovic, 2014b), while the characteristic of a model itself is to review all communications that

5 The authors of the analytical model and software Symbols Research are Prof. PhD Srbobran Brankovic, PhD Ljubisa Bojic and Alek Kezeleand and its realization included a team of psychologists, mathematicians and programmers.

6 In that sense, one of the authors of this paper have agreed to the idea of research in the field of the adults' on-line learning in collaboration with the creator of the analytical model SR, Srbobran Brankovic.

take place on social networks. It is based on the idea that quantitative studies of communication among people are possible, which is primarily related to written communication and in later stages, communication through voice and image. Brankovic said the following (Brankovic, 2014a, p. 71): "Symbols Research views the entire communication on social networks in a given time and social space, automatically detects the requested content, sorts them in real time and makes basic checks, then notices certain regularities and provides analytical findings, including recommendations to clients of what to do in order to improve their results. "Its main qualities that make us believe it can be successfully used in andragogy research are following (Brankovic, 2014, p. 72–73):

- Symbols Research involves the whole population in the research (the entire communication in social networking that takes place in one language), which is a qualitative leap in relation to classical studies.

  In contrast to this type of research, classical studies investigate the pattern, tiny fraction of the population.
- Within the SR, analysis is done in real time, which means that a tool for the identification, classification and evaluation is pre-made and a much more dispersed.

  SR advantage over the classical study is that the tool is standardized to a greater extent than it is the case with the classical analysis of the contents.
- In the process of research when it comes to the SR "place of a man – analyst" is different compared to classical research: he is able to bring changes and corrections during the research process that can be applied both forward and backward. This is possible because it is a so-called smart software, or more precisely artificial intelligence, which is in the basis of this model.

  In traditional research, the role of man is in reviewing content and drafting concepts that represent basic units of research, then input of the data into the program for processing and analysis, while, in the SR, there is a pre-made list of terms, and a man constantly controls its "sensitivity" and efficiency in identifying content which might be interesting for processing.
- In the basis of SR is an extensive study of language and its various layers (literary, written, spoken, various versions of professional language, as well as various categories of slang) and on that basis dispersed symbol table is made.

  In classical content analysis, tool (list of terms and meanings) is made individually for each subject in analysis.
- Tracking trends is of a much better quality in comparison to classical content analysis.

– With the SR, impact of some independent on dependent variables can be significantly more effective compared to classical research. Thus, for example, formation of some movement or action on the social networks can be tracked: what was the trigger for an event, how did actions and announcements of actors or followers reflect on the flow of the event, and similar. By having these insights, many social phenomena become more understandable.

Therefore, SR works in a way where, in the first stage, we make a symbol table that contains a list of words, phrases, idioms, simple frames, emoticons, photos ... after which this software browse communication content in real-time and makes an overview of communication. In the second phase, which takes place almost parallel to the previous one, analytics and presentation of results is done (tables of intersecting and correlation between variables), while in the third phase more delicate analysis are done – multivariate and regression analysis, in order to find algorithms which largely explain changes in the dependent variables (ibid., p. 74).

Symbols Research is an analytical model that relates only to research in the area of social networks which is one of the limitations of its use in online learning for adults. The online learning does not take place on social networks only, although it is becoming one of the most important channels for exchange of information and knowledge among adults. However, this portrayal of one approach or analytical models should not be seen as an imperative and something authors insist must be followed as it is considered to be "up-to-date". It should be primarily seen as an additional option which is open to researchers, and which might possibly contribute to the improvement of current research practice. It should also be noted that it is always possible to combine traditional methods with new ones and therefore we can still see modern models as a supplementation to the ones that already exist.

Concluding remarks

Because of the widespread of on-line learning on the Internet, as well as opportunities to explore the entire population and measurements in real time, it would be beneficial if new research models or methods would find their place in a wide field of research of adult education. Furthermore, we should be careful and understand this attempt we made as a proposal to make efforts in order for this methodological approach to be tested further, which would check its usability in further research regarding adults' online learning. Although the theoretical review presented before suggests that using of software and logic models in empirical research in adults' online learning is valid, it must be noted that there are some important limitations in their application.

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CURRENT PERSPECTIVES FOR STUDYING PROFESSIONS

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Abstract

The paper aims to review emerging and renewed conceptual frameworks applied in researching professions within the field of the sociology of professions with the intention of identifying new research focuses beneficial for studying the field of adult learning professions. New framings, new issues will be highlighted that have surfaced as a result of reflecting changing social contexts and sensibilities of our time that affect professional practices.

The question is approached mainly through mapping the academic discourse and constructed theoretical models in the writings of the network members of the ISA Sociology of Professional Groups. A brief overview of the governing concepts present in research projects on adult education professionalism will also be given.

This conceptual paper finds that over the last decades organizational and managerial dimensions became dominant and what is called: *hybrid professionalism and new professionalism* shows new patterns of interplays between the factors what make a profession.

Key words: Profession, Professionalization, Professionalism

Framing Professions and Professionalization

Professions are high prestige occupations. What constitutes a *profession* can be interpreted through numerous theoretical viewpoints. Earlier and contemporary social theories influence the area of studying professions, professionalization and ways of constructing professionalism.

The discipline of the sociology of professions has formulated a lot of influential and explanatory conceptual models of professions and professionalization so far. Some aspects are outdated now, but most of them can be reworked and made applicable to understand issues of the contemporary times.

Profession can be interpreted as a recognized occupational knowledge community providing services to the clients, an organized, institutionalized occupa-

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tion that has control on its own work, as such a special mode of organizing work in the labour market, an authority making clients, an ideology or a discourse serving the members'interest, just name a few approaches.

Professionalization may be defined as a gradual process (via contingent routes, naturally) of seeking an attaining a recognized status of the profession. The literature speaks of the types "*professionalization from within*" and "*professionalization from above*"(McClelland 1990) highlighting the difference between the drivers of the process. Some occupations can achieve some elements of professional status while missing others.

Professionalism is a mode of practice, a capability of producing and improving quality services based on expertise, an occupational and a normative value, a discourse establishing legitimacy, an image signalling quality standards to users, a resource.

Earlier structural-functionalist theories (Tawney, Carr-Saunders and Wilson, Parsons, Marshall, Millerson, Wilensky, Barber etc.) perceived professions as special occupational communities possessing not only a unique body of knowledge but virtues (not driven by solely economic motives, but having loyalty to universal values) both being very beneficial for the society as the practitioners themselves embodied the ethos of serving the public good.

Brint (1994) calls this phase "social trustee professionalism" and explains that the status professions of medical doctors, lawyers and clergy dealt with really sensitive stakes of the clients' life (health, civil liberties, salvation) that had to invoke trustful relation necessary in the professional-client communication.

Exploring key distinctive traits and properties that distinguish professions from ordinary occupations was a general approach to studying the theme.

The trait or taxonomic approach

There is a long list of characteristics found essential and sufficient by the different authors such as like

- organized profession,
- highly sophisticated and codified knowledge and expertise in certified forms,
- an extended in-depth education,
- identity-building and professional subculture,
- vocational commitment,
- individual and social responsibility for professional judgement,
- non-standardizable activities and professional tasks, quality performance

- a professional self-governing organization controlling entry to the professional community, designing the content of the training and monitoring the quality of practices and professional conduct,
- continuous development of knowledge base,
- peer control,
- ethical code,
- acquired social prestige,
- favourable state regulations, exclusive jurisdiction guaranteeing boundaries, exclusionary market shelter

Having seen through critical lenses it has become obvious in the scientific debates that the arbitrary constructs of different sets of criteria cannot be supported if they are formulated in universalized, generalized, ahistoric or sequential-processual conceptual frameworks.

But some of them have served well as a justifying ideology of those professions which had achieved a highly esteemed status and were capable of demanding the criteria above from other emerging or aspiring occupations.

The distinctive features are contingent and vary a lot according to different historic and social contexts but nevertheless constantly keep surfacing as decisive or dismissable factors in newer concepts.

The semi-profession concept

Etzioni's *semi-profession concept* (1969) is based on the key traits model stating that semi-professions are weaker variations of the real professions, failing to meet the criteria of professions however they do seek professionalization. According this concept the extent of training is shorter and less deep, the creation of professional knowledge is rather limited, more of only an application, there is less discretionary privileged communication, the ethical codex is inconsistent and opaque, state control is more intensified, their social status is less legitimated. He argues that being employed in organizations erodes professional autonomy. This factor will be interpreted very differently in the new organizational discourse of corporate professionalism of today.

The Professional project and the Dominance model

Larson in her famous book The Rise of Professionalism (1977) puts forward the cognitive knowledge-base, the education, the professional organization, work autonomy, the code of ethics and the social recognition-aspect as fundamental elements. She calls the process of professionalization as a „*professional project*" of

a knowledge community meaning a collective mobility project through which an occupation creates itself, carves out its relative autonomy and authority, establishes control over its work and attains legitimated status that translates to social and monetary rewards.

The 1970s and 1980s is the period when the issue of power takes centerstage, professionals are not seen as actors working for the public good but rather as an interest group that struggles and competes with other occupations for its own relative power. Creating a profession means achieving a relative autonomy over the practices in the form of a market shelter (and obtaining state regulation guaranteeing it), that could be possible only through a self-constructed symbolic power based on specific performance and complex knowledge-base.

This Dominance model or the Power-discourse of profession-building (Freidson 1994, 2001; Larson 1977, 1990; Johnson 1972; Parkin 1979; McDonald, 1995) highlighted the process of constructing authority through credentialling and claiming special rights over the professional domain. Abbott (1988) explores that professionalizing means striving for setting and transforming boundaries and carving out territories for special jurisdiction in competition with other professions. Others call this concept neo-Weberian as it fits his social closure approach.

> *"A neo-Weberian approach provides greater precision in delineating professional boundaries and more policy leverage in its focus on state underwriting than discourse analysis in considering the control of knowledge and expertise."* (Saks, 2012, p.5)

The self-creation of symbolic power is also very important as it can be converted to real dominance.

> "*The ability of a profession to sustain its jurisdictions lies partly in the power and prestige of its academic knowledge. This prestige reflects the public's mistaken belief that abstract professional knowledge is continuous with practical professional knowledge, and hence that prestigious abstract knowledge implies effective professional work. In fact, the true use of academic knowledge is less practical than symbolic.*" (Abbott, 1988, p.53–54.)

This conceptual framework offers very insightful approaches in the contemporary scenes when different kinds of occupational groups, stakeholders from the governments and business sector, engaged citizen user groups, and universities fight in the arena to shape the dominant professional discourses. Professions are seen as one of the key social groups that can affect social structures, either contributing to reproduce or change them. The ability to create professional discourses and networking gives opportunities to effectively influence policies and governmental projects.

Social closure is not without class, gender and ethnic inequality patterns that also call for research macro and meso level in the new context of diversity management practices, and even at micro level to explore subjectivities of interested parties and career paths of professionals.

The rising managerialism –„Professionalism from above" – „Professionalism as a management tool"

Occupational professionalism is considered to be under threat by managerialism.

> *"Organizational objectives (which are sometimes political) define practitioner–client relations, set achievement targets and performance indicators. In these ways organizational objectives regulate and replace occupational control in practitioner–client interactions thereby limiting the exercise of discretion and preventing the service ethic that has been so important in professional work...* (Evetts, 2011 p.408) *Quality control and performance review become reinterpreted as the promotion of professionalism*" (Evetts, 2011, p. 413).

Managerialism believes in contextualizing professional services and in introducing tightened control, formalized methods of checking, audit and inspection regimes, management by objectives, targets and indicators. Public service delivery has been changing driven by market incentives and prompted by the so called Public Management Reform policies. Recent austerity measures emphasize constant cost efficiency and have weakened welfare state provisions.

> *"Contemporary knowledge societies with neoliberal climates favour flexible specialization, within emphasis on consumers, cost control, and performance management, so that professional autonomies are hard to maintain. This means professionalism is attractive, but there will be strong barriers for establishing professionals—both the maintenance of classic professionalism and the rise of new professionalism will be restricted... Professionals are forced to adapt to social changes, capitalist pressures, and consumerist tendencies that resist autonomous, closed-off occupational spheres. Professionals must prove their added value*." (Noordegraaf, p. 763.)

Autonomy of the professions has given way to an increased accountability. Competitive markets are interpreted now as public good.

> "*An important shift has taken account: „managers and professionals are changing places in an increasingly unified elite division of labor*" (Leicht and Fennell, 2001, p. 2).

De-professionalization and Proletarianization

The ideology and practice of managerialism was explored in order to show how it constrained the professions' autonomy. This conceptual framework has been alive from the 1970s. (Toren, Haug Oppenheimer, Derber, Murphy and others). It has been conceived to highlight professionalism's control challenged by managerialism through subordination to the logic of the employing organizations and to market. Through reorganizing jobs, redefining tasks and responsibilities the managerial power tries to standardize and divide the repertoire of profession-

al activities into smaller units and allocate them to lower-skilled, less-credentialed and low-salaried workers. Other explanations list that the authority of professions has been questioned by the service users who are more knowledgeable as they are better educated and informed and much more critical about the problem solving capacities of the professionals. Watching professional failing in obligations and discrediting scandals portrayed in the media doesn't help either.

New perspectives on professions and organizations see a different picture. Organizations can be utilized in professional strategies.

New professionalism – Organizational Professionalism – Corporate professionalism – Hybridized professionalism

There are hybrid positions where professionals are taking on managerial responsibilities developing both professional and managerial identities. Even when working in an organisational bureaucracy, full professionals are able to exert autonomous decision-making. Professionals working at organizations are likely to expect to be involved in organizational decisions, negotiations and consultative discussions. But that goes without saying that professionals have to adapt to organizational and financial considerations.

Muzio and Kirkpatrick are writing on *corporate professionalism* and discover the new organizational dimension of expert work, employ theoretical frameworks from management and organizational studies and consider organizations as sites for professional development. Large companies train and socialise their professional practitioners for displaying characteristics such as specific behavioural rules, presentation styles, dress codes, time keeping and negotiation manners and through peer pressure and different internal disciplinary mechanisms they can reframe professionalism and „reshape individual identities around corporate priorities – thus achieving 'control at a distance' " (Muzio and Kirkpatrick, 2011 p.396). That means a new perspective of professionalism can be redefined by large firms through maintaining corporate standards and behavioural codes.

Showcasing the changing realities of work place, the organizational turn, exploring new governance mechanisms and managerial practices within professional services firms is an explicit goal of a new research periodical coming into the scene in 2014. (Journal of Professions and Organizations). In the introductory article it is stated that

> *"More recently, research has focussed on a range of new professionalization projects within emerging knowledge domains. These projects display hybrid characteristics as they blend traditional concerns with occupational closure, credentialism, and selfregulation with an increasing recognition of the importance of large organizations as sites of professional regulation and identity formation (Cooper nand Robson 2006); as such they have been defined as examples of corporate professionalism*." (Brock et al. 2014, p.9.)

According to the perspective of neoinstitutionalism professions are capable of creating discourses and belief systems, taken-for-granted assumptions in the mindsets that may be embodied in the design of new organizational contexts. (isomorphism thesis).

Contemporary analyses (Bourgeault et al, 2011, p.70) argue that often symbiotic relationship exists between professions and organizations, organizations offer resources, clientele, a culture of socialization and a secure professional career structure for the professionals and some professions are generated by organizations in part through the expansion of the bureaucratic apparatus of the state. This is a conceptual frame that moves „from a more conflict-based model of the relations between professions and organizations to a perspective that takes into consideration where some convergences and overlapping interests may lie" (Bourgeault et al, 2011 p.73).

Differences between organizational fields or between organizations within a field can vary dramatically in terms of their relations with professions. Organizational forms are in process (only partly structured), Mike Saks (2014) used the telling metaphor that animals are very differently „organized" and regulated in zoos, in circuses or in safari parks, so the fluid character of the organizations is stated.

New professionalism 2 – New interrelations between professions, organizations and clients – inclusive professionalism, collaborative professionalism

Recently late modern societies are calling for a more *inclusive professionalism*. Client and service orientation has always been an inherent value for professions. Now co-developing with service users, jointly participating in creating products and services, working with non-professionals and different partners are practices seen and promoted by the co-construction discourse. Enhanced collaboration, sharing power, fostering genuine dialogue and building reciprocal-contractual relationship are key principles of inclusive professionalism that builds on Habermas' communicative rationality concept. Professions can be conceived of as acting intermediaries between organizations and their empowered clients.

Clients even can capture professional organizations when they have become very powerful (mostly corporate clients are depicted in case studies). In the literature Johnson (1972, p.45–46) dealt with the relationship between the organizations and client needs. 3 types have been differentiated: a collegiate professional control, a patron-control and a mediative control of client needs. At one end of the continuum the client needs are constructed completely through the professional authoritative glasses, at the other end client control is the dominant one. Clients' increasing partnership role and participation have become an influential factor in contemporary professional practices.

Collaboration demanded of professionals today embraces interprofessional relationship building and skills in working in multiprofessional and cross-sectoral teams.

New research focuses coming from concepts constructing new profesionalism

Professional Occupations and Organizations. What new organizational models are emerging? To what extent are occupational and organizations actually hybridized or "blended"?

Professional and organizational cultures.

Variation of intra-organisational relationship between managers and professionals.

How professional norms and values are co-existing with values of markets and the growing variety of organizational forms? What ethical challenges do arise?

What are professionals' perceptions of and responses to increasing managerial and organisational control?

Forms of resistance or challenge to the power of management discourses and practices.

Professional identity, personal and professional habitus formation.

Development of professionalism in education and work. Professional knowledge formation.

Impacts on professional careers, pathways. How do careers of professional workers evolve?

How are expert groups and emerging professional projects portrayed?

Legislational and jurisdictional battles involving a multiplayer arena (state, universities, public movements, professional organisations, transnational policy makers, media, user groups, employing organizations)

Policy formation assemblages, networks, the power of creation of discourses

Trust relationships, redesigning bonds for inclusive professionalism, forms of client-participation. How trust is built? Based upon knowledge and expertise or degrees and credentials or upon actual performance or appearances, manners?

Contextual specificities. Workplace and employment contexts and their impacts.

Professional recruitment.

Class, racial, ethnic, gender inequalities, splits within the professions.

Internationalization of professions and professionals; international professional networks, associations, representation of professional interests; standards, new forms of authority; alternative regulatory frameworks; transnational dimensions.

The Adult Learning Professional Field A pendulum swinging: Is professionalization a worthwhile goal?

The adult education universe is really heterogeneous involving numerous forms and professional cultures each possessing distinct orientations and beliefs. Adult educators have been found swimming with and against the tides of professionalization processes and ideologies. The move towards the profession-building of adult educators in the modern times has been an appealing goal set by many practitioner groups. The professionalization projects involved targeting key traits of established and recognized professions such as the doctors, lawyers, etc.

Others emphasized resisting the siren song of professionalism, believed that its authority defines a citizen as client, determines that person's need and hands immediately the presciption making them dependent. (Illich 1977:17). These groupings permanently felt a concern wondering whether it doesn't it erode the humanistic value-base and the original calling of adult education.

But the heritage that adult education was deeply rooted in social movements later featured in several distinctive traits that made them different from the established professions, mainly resisting to creating forms of monopoly and hierarchical dominance over clients, rather favouring the concept of collaborative learning environment that was crystallized by Malcolm Knowles' approach to andragogy. He highlighted the adult educator's desirable roles being more of a "helper, guide, encourager, consultant, resource – not that of transmitter, disciplinarian, judge, authority." (Knowles 1980:37). This perspective automatically calls for the rejection of the social closure oriented, exclusive status-ensured professionalization pattern and even monopolizing knowledge is against the philosophy of andragogy.

The Present Quality Discourse

At present the issues of professions, professionalization process and professionalism have returned to the spotlight, different stakeholders seem to voice these notions mostly as a means for ensuring and improving quality. The core concern of the ideology of professionalism has always been that the members belonging to a practioner community are able to produce quality services and improve them collectively, maintaining the capacity of doing a practice that never goes below a certain high standard while serving the best interests of the client groups and in abstracto the public good, beyond self-interest, thus attaining public trust and as a consequence, suitable social rewards.

It is obvious, that the public trust in professions has weakened, other powerful actors and discourses want to shape what professional quality means. It is

a common phrase, that quality is doing the right things right, but the question should be posed who defines what that right is. Obviously professional communities do have a voice of their own and intend to influence educational policies, however in the composition of the policy mix managerialism of both the bureaucratic state forces and business corporates is getting the upper hand over the professional bodies determining the criteria and expectations, setting up regulations, monitoring mechanism and indicators, requesting external controlling structures to be used and demanding strong accountability.

Contemporary Researching the European Adult Education Field – Focusing on competencies and core tasks

The professionalization of adult educators has been recently tabled on the European research agenda.

The prime component of a profession has always been creating and constantly developing a core body of specific knowledge that qualifies someone to be a practitioner. Claims to specific and unique competencies is a prereqisite in defining a profession. We can safely say the main concern of the EU-funded European collaborative research projects over the last decades was to define the core knowledge-based expertise of the adult educators through analysing their roles and required professional skills within the wide variety of social contexts and work environments. Having done that establishing national and transnational qualification frameworks and curricula design were named as next steps for development of professionalism. (Strauch et al. 2011)

Let me cite some research and development projects that showcase the European mainstream in this respect:

The AGADE-project's approach (2004 –2006) was to design a curriculum building for adult educators based on the perception of what makes a good adult educator. 8 European countries took part in the research and their conclusion was:

> The *"diverse adult learning practice created very different training practices and while on the one hand there was diversity, there was often fragmentedness on the other hand as it was difficult to see/find standardisation, a common quality framework or transferability. What is more, the recognition of similar courses was not only problematic in different countries but these courses also mostly lacked European recognition in terms of acquired competences."* (Jaager – Irons, 2006, p.4)

The 2008 ALPINE research project provided an analysis of competence profiles of practitioners working in Non-Vocational Adult Learning across Europe. The key finding of the Dutch research group showed again a very divergent picture.

> *"The country studies show that on European and national levels there is no clear view on the standard competences or skills needed to fulfil the professional tasks"* (Research voor Beleid & PLATO 2008, p.81).

The researchers hardly found any professional organisation representing non-vocational adult learning practitioners in the countries surveyed.

In 2010 Research voor Beleid in partnership with the University of Glasgow, University of Thessaloniki, and the University of Leiden published another research on the core competencies of adult learning professionals. Duties, tasks, responsibilities, roles and work environments, domain specific knowledge, skills and attitudes required have been studied in a descriptive fashion. (Research voor Beleid, 2010).

The QF2TEACH project (2009–2011) involved eight research groups in European countries and conducted a Delphi study with the aim of identifying the core competencies of adult learning facilitators. The expert-panels covered 200 practitoners, managers, and researchers. Contributing to a transnational qualification framework was their objective as well.

Both key note presentations of the ESREA 2013 conference in Bonn on the theme of *Professionalisation of Adult Educators. International and Comparative Perspectives* higlighted the mixed nature of the people engaged in adult education and pointed out that adult educators can be seen in many roles: as teachers of adults, social pedagogues, learning facilitators, community developers, coaches, adult education planners or institutional leaders and many others. So the question stands whether it is logical to see adult educators as members of a homogeneous profession and try to formulate the never-ending competence lists and catalogues of core activity profiles?

Prof. Reischmann voiced the view that the term "adult educator" used for a wide variety of minor and major roles in the field ranging from part-time instructors to full-fledged experts seems to be rather destructive for professionalisation.

Others also argue that conceptualising Adult Education as one professional field may be a barrier to clarify issues of professionalization as the domain doesn't consist of a monolithic occupational group, quite the contrary. Fragmentation fails to present a contoured image of the profession. Professional roles and occupational grouping vary according to their visibility corresponding to historical evolvement and specific contextual and country-specific factors. Within an institutionalized professional field there are and should be different segments of frontline practitioners, policy makers, researchers, academics, and managerial professionals in their ranks.

The conceptual way ESREA conference papers approach what professionalism means within the field of adult education is revolving around the knowledge-base, core competences and issues of professional education. Power and autonomy components and even the theme of orgnizational contexts are very thinly represented.

A Swedish empirical research searched answers for what professionalism meant for the practitioners. It found that the respondents linked it to terms such as knowledge and skills and characterized professionalism as a contextual rather than general ability, practical know-how elements were emphasized and only a smaller percentage of the sample mentioned ethical elements. Surprisingly, professionalism hasn't been defined as a feature at the organizational level, it was perceived as a characteristic of individuals. (Svensson, 2006).

The need for building the profession, organizing the adult learning professional field and making its voice heard within the realms of adult learning and beyond is a strong recommendation all over the board: without this construct other stakeholders get disproportionate or excessive control that could ruin the potential outcomes in delivering broader social functions. Gaining legitimacy in the eyes of those external to the profession is a mission still has to be completed.

> *"Alternative ideas of professionalism can be developed, and hybridized images of professionalism can be underscored. This is highly relevant in ambiguous domains, in which expertise can no longer be isolated from other experts, decision makers or clients. It is highly relevant in the face of rising demands and declining capacities. It is highly relevant in mixed occupations that bring together (contradictory) types of control, such as managerial professionals and professional public managers. Hybridized images of professionalism do not emphasize only occupational control (pure professionalism) or organizational control (situated professionalism) but reflexive control (i.e., reflexive searches for a professional use of professionalism) to establish meaningful connections between clients, work, and organized action."* (Noordegraaf, p.780).

The available inputs of freshly constructed or re-visited multiple conceptual perspectives within the field of studying professions has been argued here that can enrich researching the adult education professionalism.

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PRISON EDUCATION AS PERCEIVED BY RECIDIVISTS[1]

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Abstract

Despite that the role of prison education in reducing recidivism and successful reintegration of the convicts into society is generally recognized and acknowledged in recent studies, overcrowded prisons and the lack of financial support to prison education programs are objective factors that hinder its implementation in Serbia. Another important factor that affects the outcome of these programs is related to convicts' eagerness and motivation to participate in prison education. The goal of the following paper, based on the data obtained in the survey conducted on the sample of 85 recidivists incarcerated in the Penitentiary Institution[2] Sremska Mitrovica, is to present how this population perceives education in Serbian prisons. The results of the survey show that the experiences of the convicts included in prison courses and trainings were mostly positive, further, they reveal different motives that brought them to these programs and finally they provide us with valuable insight into how convicts understand prison education, i.e. how they perceive its role and purpose.

Key words: education, recidivists, prison, reintegration

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2 In further text PI

Education in prison

Generally speaking, in comparison with the state average the subpopulation of convicts is significantly undereducated. The fact that many of them exhibit poor basic reading, writing and mathematical skills implicate that education programs have to be integral part of the prison treatment. Therefore the question that emerges is not whether the implementation of prison education is justified or not, but whether education programs meet prisoners' individual needs and the requirements of the society as a whole as well as whether the penal system can provide appropriate courses and qualified staff capable to educate, train and introduce prisoners into working processes while serving prison sentence.

High rate of recidivism in our country as well as in the world proves that neither harsh punishment nor long term isolation from the society can achieve desired results, i.e. they have not shown positive effects in deterring from criminal practices. The only approach to this issue that is proved to be efficient in preventing and reducing recidivism is inclusion of the inmates in prison education while serving a sentence. Prison education achieves multiple goals such as: it diminishes collateral consequences of imprisonment, it provides professional training for in-demand jobs which could facilitate inmates' employment after prison release, it teaches convicts to resolve conflicts in nonviolent way as well as to improve their social skills and last, but not least, it makes incarceration period usefully and thoughtfully spent. Another positive aspect of prison education is to give an opportunity to an inmate to exhibit his/her skills and knowledge, to develop them further, thus improving their self-confidence and responsibility towards others. The implementation of prison education according to the needs of individual prisoner and to the needs of wider community actually demands from the society to revise its responsibility towards imprisoned population. Hitherto experiences and researches demonstrate that inclusion of the inmates in education and practical work programs are crucial for human incarceration as well as for the post-imprisonment reintegration.

Despite that prison education is undoubtedly useful not only for individual prisoner but for the society as a whole, its successful implementation in penal institutions is not an easy task. The accomplishment of this goal is hindered by existing unfavourable circumstances such as prison overcrowding, high rate of recidivists and changed structure of convicts. Besides, poor architectural conditions – huge and gloomy prison buildings, in which it is difficult to maintain even daily hygiene or to perform everyday activities, certainly cannot create stimulating study environment. In addition to these, there is lack of consistent classification as well as insufficient number of qualified stuff, e.g. one trainer is in charge of 100 convicts. Finally, apart from these "physical/technical" circumstances, a factor that makes significant impact on education in prison is support and devotion of the prison staff, not only of those directly involved in teaching/training process, but also of others who are in everyday contact with prisoners.

Recidivists

From the aspect of prison treatment effectiveness, convicts/recidivists belong to specific group. Compared with primarily convicted prisoners, they repeatedly commit criminal offences, mostly related to property crime, so that thefts and burglaries become their habitual behaviour. Recidivism is therefore an indicator of ineffectiveness not only of previously implemented penal policy and applied penal treatment, but also of a post-prison reception and reintegration into society. It is also a sign of unfavourable social and economic circumstances in general before and after prison release. Recidivism is complex phenomenon conditioned by social context, i.e. socio-political changes, socio-economic instability, social disintegration and society impoverishment, unemployment, migrations, refuge, family disorganization, crime increase, drugs and alcohol consumption, as well as by person's character. A convict excluded from the society for a long period of time and exposed to various deprivations often loses confidence not only in other people but in himself as well. In such circumstances integration in post-prison life is difficult even in cases when there is support and understanding of the primary social group. In cases when such encouragement is missing, former inmate's conflict with the community, often followed by his inner psychological conflicts, inevitably results in his return to prison, which is perceived as familiar and known place (Knežić, 2009).

Considering the high rate of recidivism, it is obvious that fear of punishment and of freedom deprivation is not effective in recidivism prevention. On the contrary, it is proved that prisoners who have served long term sentence are even 2–3% more prone to relapse into crime which refutes the claim that harsh punishments deter convicts from committing crime in future (Šarić, 2006).

In contemporary society in general the rate of recidivism is unacceptably high, on the world's level it is 50–70% (depending on state and measurement criteria), while in Serbia it reaches 60–70% (e.g. in PI Sremska Mitrovica the rate of recidivism is 70%, Jelić et al, 2010). A recidivist for one society presents loss of an active and potentially useful society member, while for the state it presents financial cost. For this reason the USA, which makes 5% of world's total population and 25% of world's prison population (Esperian 2010), systematically and on long term basis follow and examine prison education which is the only factor that always produces desired results in recidivism reduction.

Numerous researches prove that inmates attending educational programs are less likely to return to prison. This means that prison education has significant impact on recidivism decrease (Harer, 1994, 1995; Stevens & Ward, 1997; Cecil et al., 2000; Hull et al, 2000; Steurer & Smith, 2003; Vacca, 2004; MacKenzie, 2006; Kling, 2006; Lois et al., 2013). Researchers (Gehring, 2000; Lewis, 2006; Wade, 2007, cited in Gaes, 2008) point out that the effects of education on recidivism vary depending on how recidivism is measured, on the type of

education program (the outcomes of which are examined) as well as on selection of programs' measures, but they all seem to agree that prison education undoubtedly exhibit positive effects. Bozos and Hausman (2004) argue that inmates who have passed some kind of prison education are 10–20% less likely to return to prison. In addition, the study of Steurer and Smith (2003) shows that the rate of recidivism among released *prisoners* previously included in prison education programs is 29% lower in comparison with those who haven't. One recently conducted study (Lois et al, 2013) among other, brings updated review of scientific articles/surveys on prison education and a meta-analysis of the gathered data. The results of this analysis show that convicts included in education programs are 43% less likely to return to prison and that their employment chances after prison release are significantly higher in comparison with the inmates who have not attended prison courses and trainings.

Apart from the fact that prison education programs provides specific professional competences and practical skills required for employment after prison release, it also enables acquisition of new social skills and prosocial behaviour crucially important for reintegration into society. Certain studies show that participation in prison education decreases the level of violent behaviour of the inmates involved (Vacca, 2004) and reduces the range of their discipline problems (Kling, 2006). According to Ripply (1993) the best effects of education on recidivism reduction are accomplished in cases when education programs are designed to improve inmates' social skills, to encourage their artistic expression and to provide emotional self-regulatory strategies and techniques. The same author emphasizes the ethical/moral aspect of education and its impact on improvement of critical thinking and problem resolving abilities. Participating in such programs enable inmates to utilize their time more *productively and efficiently* while, at the same time, the acquisition of new skills contributes to their self-esteem.

Education in Serbian prisons

According to the regulations of the Law on Enforcement of Criminal Sanctions and to the regulations and strategies adopted by the European Prison Rules prison education is recognised as a crucial component of resocialization process which prepares prisoners for post-incarceration life and prevents repeated relapse into crime. The role and significance of prison education is being debated in Serbian society in the last 50 years, but without any particular result. In order to acknowledge prison education as crucial element of prison treatment and convicts' behaviour improvement it is necessary that both sides – state authorities and prisoners realize and confirm its educational potentials. The idea of prison education as integral part of the penal treatment has been always followed by suspicions, doubts and deliberate resistance not only of the subjects di-

rectly involved in its implementation but also of subjects who only declaratively advocate the right on education and vocational training during imprisonment in order to facilitate convicts' successful reintegration into society. This ambiguity regarding prison education is based on the standpoint that education is privileged often unaffordable even to citizens who do not breach the laws and that investing public funds in imprisoned population is useless.

Due to the said attitude toward imprisoned population, prison education programs have not been organized at all in Serbian prisons during the last two decades (Knežić, 2014). The first attempt to revitalize prison education was the pilot project implemented in PI Sremska Mitrovica from December 2006 until December 2007. In this program, organized by the OSCE Mission, 104 prisoners were included in primary and secondary education. According to the data collected by the Helsinky Committe for Human Rights in 2010 more than 200 persons (out of total 1764) have not attained elementary education but only 10% of them were included in equivalent educational courses provided by the prison. When it comes to secondary education the situation is even worse – 514 prisoners in total have not obtained secondary education and only 15 of them agreed to attend courses equivalent to secondary technical school programs.

The second important step was the project "*Support to vocational education and training in penitentiary institutions in Serbia*" financed by the EU. This project intended to update professional capacities of the Directorate for Enforcement of Criminal Sanctions of Serbian Ministry of Justice and Public Administration in establishing sustainable and productive system of prisoners' vocational education and training (VET). The goal of the project was prisoners' successful resocialization and employment rate increase after prison release. The project consisted in detecting five professions in-demand in Serbian labour market: baker (3 types of training), printer in screen printing, welder (3 types of training), carpenter and truck farmer, and in organizing adequate vocational education and trainings in 3 penitentiary institutions Pozarevac, Sremska Mitrovica and Nis. The said professions were in demand for a long time in Serbia and the first training was completed in September 2013. Success accomplished by 500 prisoners serves as an indicator of capabilities not only of the prisoners themselves, but of the prison staff as well (i.e. of teachers, mentors and trainers engaged in specific mode of education of even more specific group of trainees). The conducted project showed that both trainers and trainees need to be engaged in more practical and useful education programs which meet the standards and requirements of the Serbian labour market given that only these programs can facilitate employment of released prisoners and their successful coping with society changes. According to the recent reports the number of convicts interested in prison education significantly increases and consequently in 2014 an additional vocational training – air conditioner installation – was introduced. Taking into consideration the total number of prisoners and penitentiary institutions in

Serbia, the new models of vocational education and training are rare and insufficient, but they serve as positive example and encouragement for other prisoners, prisons and staff (Knežić, 2014).

In order to revitalize prison education, apart from providing programs and vocational trainings according to the demands of labour market, equally important is to stimulate prisoners to participate in learning and development opportunities. In the following research we wanted to examine the reasons why inmates/recidivists do not participate in education, what were the experiences of those who have been included in prison education programs and how the research respondents define the purpose of education.

Research

Structure of the sample

The research was carried out in the IP Sremska Mitrovica in June 2015. The data are gathered through a questionnaire comprising open-ended, closed-ended questions and a list of statements with Likert's scale. The survey was conducted on appropriate sample of 85 convicts/recidivists who at least once served prison sentence.

Almost half of the sample (48,2%) are younger middle-aged persons 25–35 years old, who with the age category 35–45 years makes 80% of the whole sample. The age structure must be taken into consideration in analysing convicts' perception of prison education.

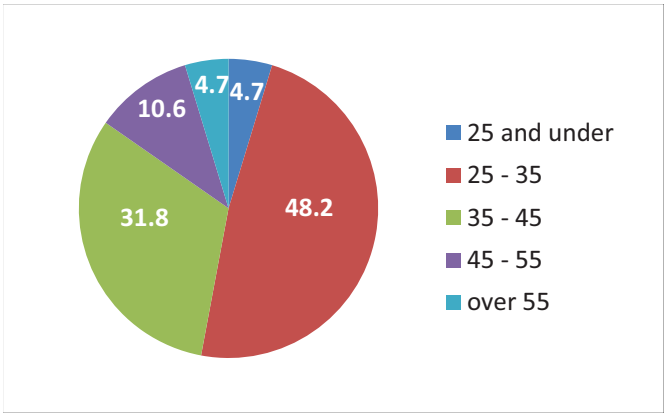

Figure 1. *Age structure of the respondents*

As expected, the majority of the recidivists, prevailingly young population, previously have served prison sentence once (43,5%) or twice (34,1%). However,

when the age structure is examined in terms of the number of previously served sentences it emerges that 90% of those who have served 3 or more prison sentences belong to the age category 25 to 45 years.

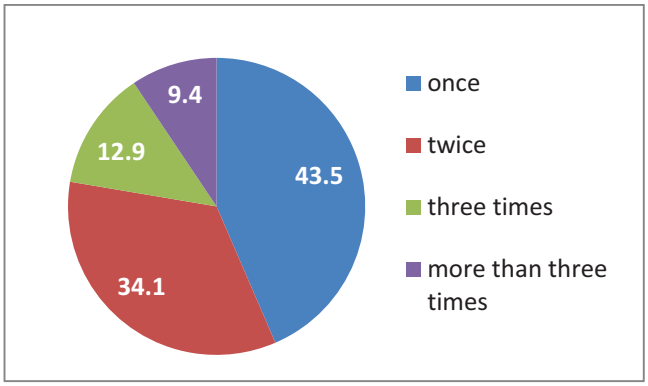

Figure 2. Sample structure in terms
of the number of previously served prison sentences

Regarding the prison sentence length the survey shows that approximately one third (31%) of the respondents serve prison sentence in duration of 1 to 3 years, 27% are sentenced to 3 – 5 years, while 29% of respondents are sentenced to 5 – 10 years in prison.

The most common criminal offences, committed by the convicts included in the survey, are related to crime against property (e.g. robbery, theft, fraud). 36,5% of these criminal offences are sentenced as single criminal acts, while 70% are categorized as multiple comprising criminal acts against health, life and body. The second most frequent are criminal offences against health (such as illegal production/manufacturing, possession and distribution of drugs) 13% of which are categorized as single and 42% as multiple criminal acts (often combined with criminal offences against property, life and body). Follow criminal offences against life and body (such as minor or serious body injury, murder and attempted murder) committed by 5% of the respondents which in combination with other types of criminal acts comprise 19% of the sample. The rate of offences against public order and peace, economy or public traffic safety is significantly lower.

One third of the respondents (32%) returned to the prison within a year after release, one third (32%) was re-incarcerated 1 to 3 years after, while the rest were imprisoned 3 years or more after completing previous prison sentence.

Concerning the level of education, 30% of the respondents have attained elementary education and started but not completed secondary school. The ma-

jority of the sample (52%) have obtained secondary school diploma, 12% have *begun higher or university education* studies, while 3% hold college or university degree.

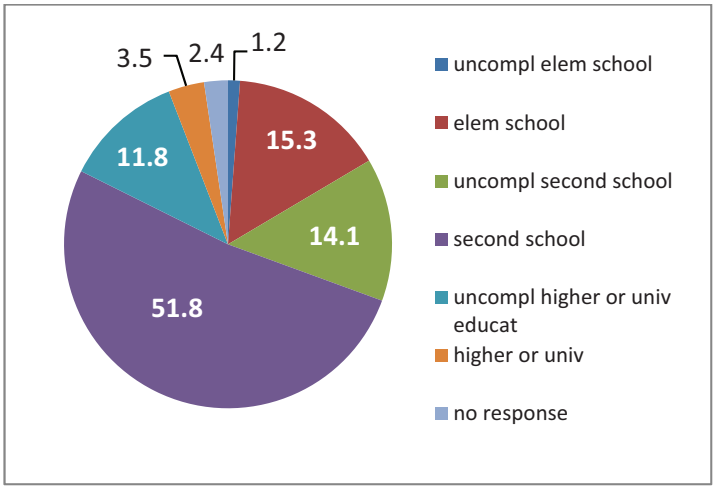

Figure 3. Educational structure of the sample

By profession 37% of the respondents are skilled workers, 23% technicians, 9% trade or service assistants, 7% labourers, 4% agricultures and 3% are experts and artists (architect, economist, film and theatre artist).

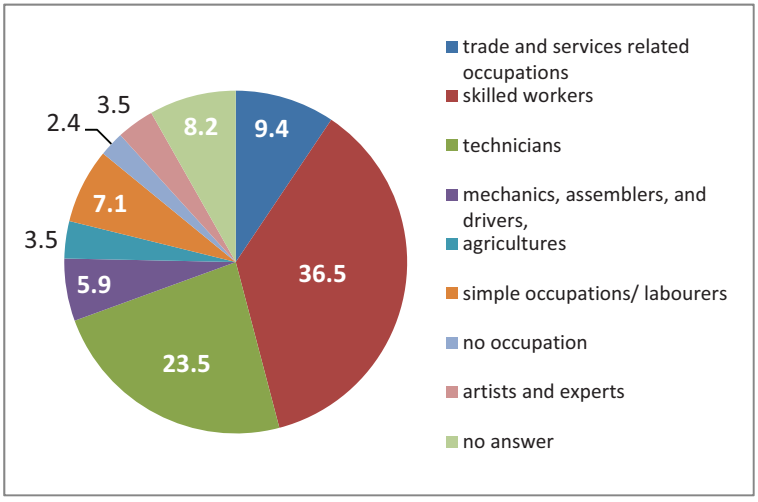

Figure 4. Sample structure in terms of occupation and skills

Before serving the first prison sentence one third of the respondents were unemployed, 35% had temporary employment, 16% had a permanent employment and 13% were agricultures or engaged in seasonal work.

Concluding the description of the respondents, according to the applied variables it can be said that recidivists belong to category of young population (25–45 years), the majority of them serve the prison sentence for the second or the third time, by profession the majority of them are skilled workers who have completed secondary education (in duration of 3 years) and before serving the first prison sentence the majority of them did not have permanent employment (mostly unemployed or engaged in temporary and seasonal jobs).

44% of analysed convicts while serving some of previous sentences were included into prison education, 80% of them estimated their participation in offered programs and trainings as satisfying, i.e. 31% were completely and 49% were mostly satisfied.

Participation in prison education programs

According to the obtained answers (to the question which education programs they were involved in) it can be concluded that respondents have loose understanding of prison education programs, i.e. that they perceive them as a sum of almost all activities performed in prison e.g. work engagement, participation in culture related activities, psychotherapy, drug addiction treatment etc.

Among these as prison education programs in real sense can be selected the following:

- Vocational trainings
  - training for puff pastry production
  - screen printing course
  - building materials related course
  - training in constructing and *assembling manufactured board* furniture
  - air conditioner installation course
  - welding course
  - carpentry course
- Completion of secondary education
- Foreign language courses
- Computer course
- Self-employment program

The majority of convicts, included in prison education, participated in vocational training programs.

Adult learning theory proves that adults, especially when excluded from the society, are more prone to participate in education programs which offer practical benefits and better opportunities of employment after prison release.

Inmates' reasons for not participating in prison education programs

The inmates who have not participated in prison education programs gave the reasons which can be classified into 5 categories:

- Lack of possibilities
- Sentence length
- Disinterest in education programs
- Satisfaction with already attained level of education
- Missed opportunity

Most answers 44% can be classified into the first category "lack of possibilities/ opportunities" to participate in education programs. The respondents said that: during previous sentence serving such programs did not exist; the estimated risk of participation was too high; the program capacitates were full; inmates with lower level of education (or no education) had priority; they were not offered to participate in prison education.

The second most frequent type of answers (19%) is related with respondents' satisfaction with already achieved level of education. The respondents answered that there was no need for additional education; that they are enough educated; that they have obtained secondary school diploma which is enough for them.

17% of answers are related to the prison sentence length, i.e. the sentence duration was too short to complete an offered course/training. The equal amount of answers (17%) is related to inmates' disinterest to participate in prison education (*I didn't want, I wasn't motivated, I couldn't see the point, I wasn't interested in*). In spite the fact that only one answer (3%) is classified in the category "missed opportunity" (*I was stupid and irresponsible to myself*) it clearly indicates the positive change of attitude towards participation in prison education programs.

Summarizing the answers it can be concluded that the majority of respondents (61%) have not participated in education programs for objective reasons (prison sentence length and lack of possibilities) and not due to the lack of motivation. Some of them had applied for several times, but they were not admitted to attend particular course.

The purpose of prison education as perceived by the convicts

Motivation to participate in prison education depends on how inmates perceive its role and purpose. Therefore, the respondents were asked an open-ended

question – *In your opinion what is the purpose of education*? It is interesting that 80% of the convicts did respond in spite the fact that prison population often leaves open-ended questions unanswered. The answers are classified into 7 categories as presented in the Table 1.

Table 1. Categories of answers on question about purpose of education

Answer category	% of answers*
Practical reasons, employment	43
Personal enhancement and development	23
Impacts on relationship with other people, integration into society	20
Other	16
It affects the quality of life	11
Quality spent time in prison	3
Crime prevention/reduction	3

* The percentage of answers that can be classified in one category. Given that some answers can be sorted in two or more categories, the *total* of the *percentages exceeds 100%*.

Even though the question was posed in general, i.e. in relation to the general role of education in everyday life, the context in which it was posed (the entire questionnaire was about prison education and the fact that respondents were imprisoned) naturally affected the given answers and the word "education" was understood as "prison education" – the only type of education potentially available to respondents.

For this reason the majority of answers (43%) refer to the practical purpose of education – i.e. to education as a set of acquired skills and knowledge which serve to facilitate employment and social integration after prison release. These are some of the typical answers:

- It [education] helps in finding job after the release from the PI. It is a chance to learn something new and useful.
- It [education] makes it easier to find job, it makes you more competitive.
- A man, who knows more, is worth more and copes better with life.
- I couldn't find a job without diploma; with additional education it would be much easier.

In the next category are classified the answers (23%) in which notion of education is interpreted in terms of personal enhancement and development. In these answers education is perceived as a value in itself closely related to personal happiness and satisfaction. The most characteristic are the following answers:

- *[The purpose of education is] in acquiring new knowledge, experiences, work habits and social responsibility.*

- *There is no harm in knowing more, even if it is not useful.*
- *A man should learn as long as he lives, the more man knows the more worth he is.*
- *[The purpose of education is] to be smart.*
- *If you want to understand certain things in life and the meaning of life, you have to be educated. A man should be educated for his own good.*

To the following category are sorted the answers (20%) in which education is perceived as a means of socialization, i.e. as a factor which determines one's position in the society. This meaning of education is implied in the following answers:

- [The purpose of education is] to behave normally and to be fitted into society.
- To make communication with other people easier.
- To be educated so as to learn how to live in modern world.
- Education is permanent, life long process which determines man's position in the society.

One part of the answers (11%) emphasize that education affects the quality of life. These answers are vague and beside that they express respondent's generally positive attitude towards education, they don´t reveal how the respondents understand the idea of "better" and "normal" life.

- *[The purpose of education is] to enable easier and more comfortable life.*
- *Education enables better future and better quality of life.*
- *Development and improvement of life.*
- *Education enables nice and normal life.*

A small proportion of respondents (3% of answers) see education as a means to pass time in prison in *purposeful and creative way and as a link to the outside world.*

- [The purpose of education is] to stay normal while in prison.
- To kill time, otherwise 22 hours of a day would be spent in prison block.
- To pass my prison time purposefully and to learn something useful.

Several answers (3%) show that respondents define purpose of education in terms of crime prevention:

- *[The purpose of education is] to give a chance to a convicted person in order not to commit a crime again after prison release.*
- *To enable inmates to find job after release so that they don't have to steal.*
- *Not to get stuck in prison again, to find a job and live a normal life.*

Some answers (16%) are classified in the category "other" because they are too general, common and vague or because they couldn't be sorted in the said categories. Such are the answers:

- I don't have a clue.
- It has multiple purposes.
- For knowledge.
- *To learn something.*

In only one answer the notion of education occurs in explicitly negative connotation: "*Nowadays, education is purposeless. No matter how educated you are, it is impossible to find and get a job*". More precisely this answer doesn't imply respondent's negative attitude towards education per se, but towards how it is valued and estimated in our society. It is surprising that in the entire survey no similar answer could be found. Taking into account the social desirability bias factor, i.e. the fact that imprisoned respondents highly valued the role of education partly in order to fulfil social expectations, it is still surprising that the majority of respondents did answer the open-ended question on the purpose of education and expressed positive attitude towards it.

Conclusion

The role of education in convicts' resocialization and recidivism prevention is generally recognized and acknowledged in the last few decades. Its positive effects are confirmed on everyday basis in related academic researches. Despite that the state penal system promotes prison education through various legal acts and regulations, it is debatable whether it is implemented to the necessary extent and available to everyone, as guaranteed by the law. Investments in education (in programs, staff and equipment) depends on how education is valued in society, whether it is recognized as one of the crucial factors which impacts the quality of life of its members and prosperity of the society as a whole, and last but not least, education is dependent on state financial support and its economic power. The relationship between society and education is the most perceptible in penal institutions and additionally burdened with an ambivalent attitude towards the prison population. Furthermore, the prison population is generally undereducated and frustrated with previous education experience, and consequently even in optimal prison conditions, there is an additional challenge to stimulate it to participate in provided courses and trainings. However, the results obtained in our research, conducted on a smaller sample of recidivists, are optimistic. They show that the experiences of the inmates included in prison education programs were mostly positive, that among those who have not participated there are many interested candidates and, which is of the utmost importance, prison education

is perceived as meaningful, i.e. as a useful means of employment, of successful society integration and personal development. In other words, the results prove that from the inmates' point of view education is highly desirable while the interest for participation in particular courses/training exceeds prisons' capacities. Finally, in order to realize the full potential of education's transformative power on the Serbian prison population it is necessary to track its outcomes (effects on employment rate, recidivism, functioning in the community) after prison release.

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QUALITY OF ADULT EDUCATION RESEARCH CONDUCTED THROUGH THE GLOBAL COMPUTER NETWORK

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Abstract

In the past decades the Internet has become the subject of many adult education research studies, but it is also a tool with which the field of adult education is investigated. If there is intent to improve the quality of adult education it seems important to ensure the quality of research in this field in general, but also in that part which is conducted through the Internet.

The objective of this paper is to analyse quality issues concerning Internet use in adult education research. The method applied in this theoretical research is content analysis. This analysis refers to: sampling quality; quality of data; software quality; ethical considerations that reflect the most on adult education research quality.

The main results of this analysis indicate that the quality of adult educational research conducted through the Internet depends highly on achieved representativeness of samples, data validity, the safety of software equipment, and ensured participants' informed consent, voluntariness and confidentiality.

Key words: adult education research, adult education quality, research quality, Internet research.

Introduction

As historical analysts state, the Internet emerged in the mid-eighties of the twentieth century as a globally wide-spread computer communication network (Leiner, 2009; Štambuk, 2004; Keefer and Baiget, 2001). Before that it had very strict and limited purposes. Its forerunner *ARPAnet* was used exclusively as a defensive military network in the United States during the Cold War with the Soviet Union. Although not conceived from the educational net-

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work, the Internet had connection with the educational field from its very beginnings. Even in the mid-seventies of the twentieth century, before the Internet had actually emerged, there was the intent to organise the functioning of an entire educational institution on networked communication based on information and communication technologies (*ICT*) (Ovesni, 1998). Another similar attempt happened in the mid-eighties of the twentieth century as Leiner (2009) states. These attempts were rarities since the mid-nineties, when *ICT* and the Internet became a part of almost every human activity. Thus, they became essential parts of education in general, but also a part of adult education. So, until the communicational function of computers didn't prevail and the Internet didn't emerge as a global network available to almost every part of the human living space, the basic preconditions for their use in the field of adult education were not satisfied and their application was rare and limited (Watson, 2006).

In past decades the Internet is observed and investigated as a *medium through which adult education is delivered* mostly through different models and forms of e-learning and online learning (Fee, 2008; Aldrich, 2005, 2004; Anderson and Elloumi, 2004; Bourne and Moore, 2004; Boshuizen and Kirschner, 2004; Aragon and Johnson, 2002; Rosenburg, 2001; Bonk, Kirkley, Hara and Dennen, 2000; Ovesni, 1998; Ovesni i Samurović, 1997). Besides that, the Internet as a *tool by which researches in adult education are conducted* is also relevant and an actual topic (Dillman, 2007; Dicks, Mason, Coffey and Atkinson, 2005; Mann, 2006; Buchanan, 2004; Hewson, Yule, Laurent and Vogel, 2003; Nosek, Banaji, and Greenwald, 2002; Mann and Stewart, 2000).

In this paper the focus is on the second of the two above-mentioned research aspects referring to the Internet. To be more specific we focus on the quality issues of adult education research conducted through the Internet, since we find it strongly related to the quality of adult education itself. So, the objective of this paper is to analyse quality issues concerning Internet use in adult education research. The research method applied in this exploration is content analysis. This theoretical research and analysis of relevant previous research findings covers subjects such as:

- Quality of sampling methodology via the Internet;
- Quality issues referring to gathering research data by using the Internet;
- Quality of software used in conducting educational research through the Internet;
- Some ethical considerations in Internet-mediated educational research that reflect the most on adult education research quality.

In the following sections we will discuss each issue mentioned above and present the results of the realised analysis.

Quality issues of sampling methodology via the Internet

When we reflect on the quality of sampling methodology in educational research that is conducted through Internet, the most important issues that arise are the issues of sample representativeness and access to respondents. It seems logical to assume that the Internet population is more accessible than the population in the real (physical) world (Nosek, Banaji, and Greenwald, 2002; Mann and Stewart, 2000). As Mann and Stewart (2000) argue when using computer-mediated communication in scientific educational research, researchers extend access to potential participants by overcoming barriers such as geographical access, reaching participants that are physically hard to reach, individual psychological barriers (sensitivity or shame), limited access to politically sensitive sites, limited access to concrete interest groups etc. But, these statements are very arguable. That is because the Internet and computer-mediated communication is still available to limited parts of any research population despite the fact that the Internet is rapidly growing and is available in almost every part of the world. Having in mind that the Internet demographic is dramatically skewed, the problem of representativeness and validity becomes more visible. Results of some inquiries (Hewson, Yule, Laurent and Vogel, 2003) suggest that there seems to be a tendency for Internet samples to have a wider age range and to be more ethnically diverse, and perhaps to contain more males than females. However, it seems apparent that the type of sample obtained will rely heavily on the sampling methodology employed, for both traditional and Internet samples. Representativeness problems logically lead to the lack of possibilities for delivering general conclusions no matter what the subject of an educational research is, which surely reflects on research quality in general.

The perceived fact that respondents are more accessible is also arguable. Beside the facts that the asynchrony of communication via the Internet provides opportunity to get responses without thinking about the time or place factors and that Internet-mediated research is cheaper (Dillman, 2007; Hewson, Yule, Laurent and Vogel, 2003; Stewart, 2000), there is still a question of respondents' availability in educational researches. So, it is important to make a distinction between *accessibility* and *availability* of respondents in an adult educational research project conducted through Internet. The point is that all the preconditions to participate in an educational research project could be fulfilled but the low response rate would still be present. For example, we conducted a research concerning the issues of students' computer literacy and their relation toward some aspects of education in computer classrooms (Ljujić, 2013; 2011). In this research we investigated only 34 out of 209 respondents through computer mediated communication. Sheehan (2001) explains the reasons and gives some practical advice that should increase the response rate in adult education researches

and by that improve the quality of these researches. He states that the main factors that impact the response rates are:

- The extent of the online survey – the more extensive the survey is, the lower the response rate is;
- Early announcement about the examination – if respondents are informed in the right time that the research is going to be conducted, the response rates are more likely to be higher;
- Subsequent notification – repeated information and calls for participation increases response rates in educational research;
- Significance and contemporaneity of research topic – the more the subject of the research is perceived by participants as significant and actual, the higher the response rates.

In our case none of these suggestions had long-lasting results. Results were immediate, but pretty soon the response rate decreased. How to explain this? Well, there can be different reasons – maybe respondents feel more free to decide to not participate in the investigation when the "technological wall" is between him/her and data collector. When they find themselves in a face-to face situation with the researcher, respondents may be more motivated to participate in investigation rather than to come out with explanations and reasons that are not based on logical or objective trammels for participation. However, some issues concerning the quality of data collecting instruments will be discussed in the following sections and some implications referring to the problem of response rates might be revealed.

Quality of data collecting instruments

Technological and software solutions provide the opportunity to create a wide range of data collecting instruments (questionnaires, interviews, observation lists, etc.) that are potentially attractive and easy to apply (Dillman, 2007; Hewson, Yule, Laurent and Vogel, 2003; Mann and Stewart, 2000). However, the issue of validity of data collected in Internet-mediated educational researches is actual, which threatens to decrease the quality of educational research conducted through Internet.

As Hewson, Yule, Laurent and Vogel (2003, p. 44) argue, in general, Internet-based procedures are likely to reduce the level of researcher control and involvement. So when materials are delivered through a computer network, rather than in person, the researcher is less able to judge the extent to which responses are sincere and genuine, the conditions under which the questionnaire was answered, the state of participants at the time of participation (for example, intoxicated, distracted, and so on), and the identity of participants. The possibility of

fraudulent responses means that asking participants for details of these factors may not lead to accurate information. The extent to which this lack of direct control may present a problem for researches that are conducted through the Internet is still a subject that needs to be explored, especially the motivation for giving insincere answers.

Dillman (2007) observes educational researches conducted through the Internet as a specific form of social exchange. In that sense, some of recommendations he mentions should increase the quality of data collection in virtual environments and maybe reduce the rate of appearance of some of the problems mentioned earlier. These recommendations refer to:

- *Showing positive regard* which means that respondents should be informed about why the research is being conducted, provide channels through which respondents can pose any questions considering research etc.
- *Give appreciation* to respondents for their effort launched in one educational research that is conducted through Internet.
- *Ask for advice* since people often get a sense of accomplishment from knowing that they have helped someone.
- *Support group values* since most people identify with certain groups. The values that should be supported depend on the population that is in focus in one educational research realised via Internet.
- *Give tangible rewards* such as small amount of money. This is effective because it raises a sense of obligation which disappears after the adequately filled research instrument is returned to researcher.
- *Make the instrument interesting* by improving layout, template and design, putting more interesting questions at the beginning, making questions easy to answer etc. This can lead to higher response rates, but also to authentic answers which increase the quality of research in general.
- *Give social validation* means that respondents are informed that other people have also participated in educational research via Internet. It is highly motivating for many people to do actions that others have also done.
- *Give the information to respondents that it is a very rare situation (opportunity) to participate in an educational research via Internet* also has a motivational effect on participants, leading them to decide to actually participate in a research.
- *Avoid subordinating language* because people are most likely to avoid answering questions that makes them feel subordinated.
- *Avoid embarrassment* that could be the result of sensitive questions, indistinctive questions or inadequate order of questions.
- *Make instruments appear short and easy to fill out* because this attracts people to respond and increases the response rates, as has already been mentioned.

- *Minimize requests to obtain personal information* because there is a wide range of information that respondents do not want to reveal especially in virtual environments.
- *Keep requests similar to previous requests* since there is a tendency that participants develop hostility toward participating in educational research that reveals any kind of inconsistency (Dillman, 2007).

It is obvious that these recommendations are not easy to achieve all at once. But it is also a fact that it is not impossible. So the importance of following the points mentioned above for a sufficient level of adult educational research quality to be reached, is evident.

Software quality in educational research conducted through the Internet

There is a variety of technological solutions that make adult educational research through the Internet possible and easy. As Hewson, Yule, Laurent and Vogel (2003) state *FTP* (*File Transfer Protocol*) was the basic tool for using the Internet for research purposes since it was the first advanced form of data exchange through *WWW* (*World Wide Web*) as the most wide-spread Internet service. Today *FTP* is normally used since it is incorporated in different web browsers, which are the basic software that provides the ability to surf the Internet.

According to different authors (Hewson, Yule, Laurent and Vogel, 2003; Mann and Stewart, 2000) the *WWW* is the most important delivery system in educational research on the Internet. At the core of using the *WWW* for research purposes is the application of web browsers through which the stimuli are presented, responses are collected and are automatically sent back to the researcher. Web browsers are convenient in terms of educational research since they support many useful functions such as displaying text, graphics, animations and other sophisticated interactive programs. In other words, web browsers provide the opportunity to use different forms of multimedia (audio and video streams) for the purposes of realisation of educational research. Speaking in terms of synchrony of communication on the Internet we can point out different kinds of synchronous and asynchronous forms of computer-mediated communication. Amongst the asynchronous forms e-mail, mailing lists, newsgroups and *USENET* newsgroups play the most important role in educational research. Synchronous communication in virtual environments is realised through chats, audio and video conferencing etc.

In terms of the quality of educational research conducted through the Internet it seems important to point out the *safety* and *stability* of software equipment mentioned above as aspects of technological and software quality. Since the issue of stability is pretty clear, the intent here is to emphasize some aspects of

safety regarding research via the Internet. These aspects mostly consider potential misbehaviour that could be manifested by some respondents in educational research, which is directly connected to the aforementioned problems of validity. First, potential "hacking" activity which is, in terms of educational research, seen as intentional action directed toward interrupting educational research should be brought to minimum if can't be eliminated completely. In this regard, control of the *IP* (*Internet Protocol*) addresses from which respondents are posting their responses, or a log to communicate with the researcher is highly recommended and is not that hard to accomplish. Secondly, researchers should also be aware of the fact that people online have their online identities and that they are acting in accordance with these identities. As an illustration for that, three types of identities that people have in virtual worlds of video games could be used. Gee (2003) points out that when playing video games people have their *virtual*, *real*, and *projective identity* in virtual worlds. In short, in virtual environments people tend to behave as virtual characters (*virtual identity*), and according to that they try to achieve a projection that is prescribed to that character (*projective identity*). So, if there is recognition that respondents are significantly different in online worlds than in the real world (if their virtual or projective identity dominate), they should be excluded from the inquiry. These issues are connected to intentional deception that is very common in Internet-mediated research.

Ethical issues and adult educational research quality via the Internet

Ethical considerations are a very present subject in contemporary literature concerning adult educational research via the Internet (Buchanan, 2004; Hewson, Yule, Laurent and Vogel, 2003; Nosek, Banaji, and Greenwald, 2002; Mann and Stewart, 2000). Focusing on the quality of adult educational research on the Internet, some specific ethical issues can be segregated. These issues refer to *obtaining consent* to participate in educational research, ensuring *voluntary* participation, *confidentiality, security* and *anonymity* of respondents and clarifying the distinction between *private* and *public* space in virtual adult education research environments.

As Hewson, Yule, Laurent and Vogel (2003) state the issue of *informed consent* arises since it is easier for the participant to deceive the researcher over the Internet. This is highly related to data validity, as mentioned earlier. Traditional research settings provide the opportunity for the researcher to obtain consent by asking respondents to sign an agreement for participation in research. Since there are age limitations to participation, the problems that occur in research conducted via the Internet are related to the fact that participants have greater opportunity to lie about their age. Aforementioned authors suggest that the solu-

tion for this problem may be achieved by asking the participant to click on some kind of confirmatory button that is visible on the web page. An alternative may be sending a password by e-mail to potential participants who were identified to be of adequate age. By using this password, participants can then enter the research procedure.

To ensure that participation is entirely *voluntary* it should be easy for participants to withdraw from the research at any chosen moment (Hewson, Yule, Laurent and Vogel, 2003; Nosek, Banaji, and Greenwald, 2002; Mann and Stewart, 2000). Again, this issue is resolvable by putting a visible button on the web page that allows the participant to quit the research procedure at any time. It is also recommended that respondents are informed at the very beginning of the research that they are absolutely free to enter and leave the investigation whenever they want.

Ensuring *confidentiality* and *security* of information is another important ethical issue referring to the quality of adult education research on the Internet. It is more likely that research data will be seen by a third party in virtual research environments than in those environments which are mostly defined by physical parameters (making typing errors while sending an e-mail is only one of the reasons this could happen). There is also a problem of potential hacking activity that threatens participants' privacy which is clearly exclusively related to virtual research environments. Problems of confidentiality and security are very close to the issue of *anonymity*. According to Nosek, Banaji, and Greenwald (2002, p. 165), this issue is easier to overcome in Internet-mediated researches than in those conducted in face-to-face settings. They argue that issue of anonymity can be controlled by using floating IP addresses in research communication on the Internet by which real-life identities of participants are never being revealed. Another way to increase the level of confidentiality and security and to ensure anonymity in educational research conducted online that those authors suggest is exchanging research information through *secure server lines* (*SSL*), which is an encryption technology that encodes information from participant to machine in a form that it is meaningless if intercepted in the process of transmission.

Since the Internet provides a wide range of forms of communication the issue of the distinction between *private* and *public* space on the Internet has become actual. As Hewson, Yule, Laurent and Vogel (2003) argue the main question is whether the researcher is ethically justified in using publicly available information as data for a research study. To be more specific, the question is in which context is this ethically acceptable or not acceptable? Authors' positions on this matter differ. In general, there is an opinion that all information that is available in the public space on the *WWW* could be used by researchers, but not hackers or other potential intruders in an adult educational research. On the

other side, data that is considered to be private should never be used in conducting adult educational research on the Internet.

Conclusion

In this paper the focus was on analysis of the Internet when observed as a *tool* with which adult education research is conducted. The emphasis was on the quality issues of adult education research realised through Internet. The importance of such an investigation is reflected in the belief that the quality of adult education itself is strongly connected with the quality of adult education research in general. Since the contemporary state of technological development provides more opportunities for research activity in the field of adult education (both in a qualitative and quantitative sense) it seems quite important to examine the aspects of adult education research quality that is conducted in technologically empowered environments, based on the Internet as a global computer network.

The results of the literature analysis presented in this paper leads us to several conclusions. To be more specific, the quality of adult education research conducted through Internet highly depends on the following:

- Quality of sampling methodology via Internet. This is mostly in connection with assuring sample representativeness and access to potential participants (recognising the difference between accessibility and availability in order to increase response rates);
- Quality issues when it comes to gathering research data by using the Internet. This is affected by the quality of data collecting instruments used online, which determines the validity of gathered data;
- Quality of software used in conducting educational research through Internet that is mostly defined by the stability and safety aspects of the software application; and
- Some ethical considerations in Internet-mediated educational research which reflect the most on adult education research quality, among which issues of obtaining informed consent for participation, voluntariness to participate, confidentiality, security and anonymity of respondents and clarification of the difference between public and private space in virtual research environments, stand out.

It is obvious that the aforementioned issues are not new in terms of phenomenological meaning, but these are novelties in the sense of the changing technological background they emerged from. Also these issues are more noticeable in adult education research environments based on new technologies such as the Internet, compared to environments in which relevant factors are determined mostly by physical elements.

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RECENT STUDIES OF TEACHERS' CAREER DEVELOPMENT, FROM METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE[1]

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Abstract

The goal of this paper is presentation of new research contributions on teachers' career cycle from the perspective of the applied methodology. The paper also describes main results of the researches, out of which we learn about the course of change in teachers' professional development, attitudes towards change, perceptions of relationships to students and factors that contribute maintaining commitment during career. The results can contribute well to the creation of the programs for teacher in-service education, having in mind their educational needs at different stages of the career, varying attitude towards introduction of the innovations into the practice and stimulating characteristics of school environment. We conclude that quantitative research opens topics for qualitative research that offers insight into the stories and description of the context, while qualitative researches facilitate quantitative ones that can give more certain predictions, offer possibility of generalization and control of different relevant variables.

Key words: teacher, career development, professional life cycle, teacher's career development

Teachers' career development

Since teachers represent particularly important professional group, group that influences knowledge attainment, skills development, values shaping, interests discovery and ambitions creation of many generations of children, scientific interest in studying this profession from different perspectives has always been great. If we want to study teachers from the perspective of their occupation, one of the most important topics we should focus on is the professional life cycle of teachers, or teachers' career cycle. Professional life cycle must show large inter-

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individual variance, due to individual differences, important events and surrounding characteristics. Still, researchers succeed to find some regularity in the course of changes in this field, which is why we can speak about career cycle, or stages of a career.

There are different theoretical models that define teachers' career cycle constructed more than three decades ago (Fuller, 1969; Burke, Fessler and Christenesen, 1984; Sikes, 1985; Huberman, 1989). The topic was reapproached in more recent years and new models were constructed by Dall'Alba & Sanberg in 2006 and Day, Sammons, Stobart, Kington & Gu in 2007. In this article we have chosen older and newer theoretical models to rely on – Huberman's (1985), Fessler's (Burke et al., 1984 and Fessler,1995) and the model offered by Day and associates (2007), all of them of considerable influence. In order to grasp a picture of the utility of these scientific contributions we can refer to citation frequency of these authors' works. Article *Professional life cycle of teachers* by Huberman (1989) has been cited 793 times, and *The teacher career cycle: Understanding and guiding the professional development of teachers* by Fessler and Christensen (1992) 242 times according to Google scholar. Results of extensive research VITAE, published in *Variations in teachers' work, lives and effectiveness* Dey, Stobart, Sammons, Kington, Gu (2006) has achieved 162 citations till this moment. The components in common for all the models, are: connecting career cycle to chronological age and years of service; describing work behavior– responsibilities that teacher tend to accept during the stages and their professional self in different stages; and describing psychological state of being– concerns, preoccupations, emotional state (Maskit, 2011). Therefore, through the offered models we can follow the characteristics of changes during career on three levels – cognitive, motivational and emotional, because they reflect on how teacher perceive their job and themselves in the professional framework, how they behave and how they feel considering the professional aspect of their life.

The aim of this paper is to get insight into several research contributions concerning teachers' career cycle, and answer the following questions:

- what methodological approach do they use?
- what are the strong and the weak aspects of the applied methodologies?
- how is the career cycle operationalized?
- what insights have we obtained into teachers' career cycle through these works?

By giving answers to these questions, we have the intention in the first place to offer some good examples for studying career cycle of teachers, to help conceiving new researches of this important theme, as well as to offer review of some relevant research results about teachers professional lives and professional development – to teachers themselves and to other individuals interested in the quality of teacher education and practice.

Methodology

In this study, we analyze four empirical researches of teachers' career that shed light on the hypothesis about teacher career cycle offered by three theoretical models – Huberman's, Fessler's and the model given by Day and associates. Through searching *Google Scholar* (key words: *Huberman, Fessler, Day, Teacher Career Development*) for the articles published in English language for the period 2011 to 2015, we have chosen articles that apply different methodological approaches and originate from different countries. The gathered articles were analyzed in terms of methodology (methodological approach – Qualitative-quantitative, paradigm – critical pedagogy/phenomenological-interpretative/positivist; method: experiment, survey, case study, ethnography, phenomenology, narrative analysis etc.; data collection techniques – questionnaire, interview, focus groups, observation; and sample characteristics) and in terms of content (main results concerning teacher career cycle). This kind of analysis might be useful in the first place to inspire researchers to reflect on the methodological approaches they are using, and to facilitate future research of teacher career cycle, having in mind well established theoretical background.

Presentation of researches and discussion on applied methodological approaches

In the table below we present a review of researches we will analyze for the purpose of our study.

Topic	Country	Approach	Paradigm	Method	Data collection	Sample
Profe-ssionnal development during career cycle	Germany	quantitative	positivist	survey	questionnaire	N=1939 secondary school teachers
Attitude towards pedagogical change in various stages of cycle	Israel	quantitative with qualitative elements	positivist with elements of interpretative	survey	Two questionnaires, self identification of teachers, interview	N=520, teachers from primary schools, junior high schools, and high schools
Teacher-pupil relationship across career	UK	qualitative with quantitative elements	interpretative	narrative analysis	interview	N=30 primary school, different length of service
Resisting career plateau	USA	qualitative	interpretative	Pheno-meno-logical research	interview	N=4 veteran secondary teachers

Quantitative researches:

First research: Professional development across the teaching career: Teachers' uptake of formal and informal learning opportunities (Richter et al., 2011)

Theoretical background– Huberman's career stage model is used to derive hypothesis about uptake of professional development opportunities (Huberman, 1989).

Operationalization of career cycle – The authors do not measure if the characteristics of particular stages are present, but take the age of the respondents as criterion, referring to its correlation to career cycle.

Goal – To describe how teachers at different age use professional development opportunities, having in mind formal and informal learning and its content as well as work engagement and demographic characteristics of respondents.

Methodological approach

This is a quantitative research relying on positivist paradigm, searching into relationships of variables on a large sample, with intention to find regularities and make generalizations.

Participants were selected from a nationally representative sample of 198 secondary schools, making 1939 teachers all together – which makes about 10 teachers per school. Teachers participated on voluntary bases in the research and questionnaires were administered by school principal. This big sample has provided high range of variation in age, thus representing all age groups, which is particularly important, since the age is main predictor variable. Still, it would be even more informative to know the proportion of teachers who have participated and who have not, and their relevant characteristics. The authors have used two potentially mediating variables – *work engagement*, defined as "motivational disposition to progress in the career and willingness to invest resources to achieve this goal" (Richter et al, 2011: 119) and *additional professional responsibilities* – which helps overcoming this weak point. Namely, we could imagine, for example, that the volunteers to participate in the research might be the individuals with more professional agility and motivation for professional development. By adding these variables between the age as independent and the uptake of professional development as dependent variable, we get cleaner picture of real effects of respondents' age. The same comment applies to demographic control variables the authors have introduced.

For data collection in this survey authors use a questionnaire, with an open-ended question about formal in-service activities in last two years. After teachers had numbered all the formal professional development activities, two trained independent raters had task to categorize them by their content. The inter-subjec-

tive agreement between their rates was calculated, achieving a satisfying degree. Informal activities were measured through 4 point Likert scale for two indicators – teacher cooperation and reading literature. Variable *Work engagement* was operationalized through teachers' answers on *Occupational Stress and Coping Inventory* and the internal consistency of the instrument was satisfying. Additional professional responsibilities were assessed through an open-ended question and answers to the question were coded as dummy variable.

Findings about teachers' career cycle

There is a recognizable pattern in the participation of teachers in different moments of their career. The correlation between age and participation in formal in-service professional development takes nonlinear shape, being at its highest in mid career, during the stage of *experimentation and activism* (Huberman, 1989). Informal development through cooperation with colleagues takes linear shape, and gets less frequent with age. We can interpret this result with characteristics of Huberman's (1989) *survival and discovery stage* – teachers in the beginning of their career search for support and opportunities to learn from more experienced colleagues. Finally, late career teacher are more inclined to learn through reading then younger colleagues. Generally speaking, we can conclude that educational needs change during career cycle; and, as authors state, there is not an overall decrease of activities and engagement with age. Also, work engagement and additional responsibilities were confirmed to be mediating variables, and teachers with higher scores on them were participating more frequently in in-service learning.

Second research: Teachers' attitudes toward pedagogical changes during various stages of professional development (Maskit, 2011)

Theoretical background: Eight-stage model of teachers' career cycle (Burke, Christensen, Fessler, McDonnell & Price, 1987; Fessler, 1992, according to Maskit, 2011).

Goal: To explore to what extent teachers' attitudes towards pedagogical changes (teaching strategies that concern students, content and educational orientation) depend on the stages of their career development.

Operationalization of career cycle: The six stages that refer to practicing teachers are included in the study – *induction, competency building, enthusiasm and growth*, *career frustration* and *career wind-down*.

Methodological approach

This is a mainly quantitative research, which applies a qualitative technique in order to make data validation. It tends to describe attitudes prevailing in categories of teachers designed according to theoretically defined career stages.

Participants (N=520) were teachers working at different levels of education – primary schools, junior high and high schools, in different ethnic backgrounds (Jewish schools, 455 teachers and Arabic schools, 65 teachers). By the selection of sample we recognize the author's intention to make extended conclusions, and we understand that the socio-cultural background might play role in determining professional behavior and job attitude during career.

There were four instruments used for data collection – *A questionnaire of attitudes toward pedagogical changes* – that assesses an overall attitude towards pedagogical change, participants answer on a 4 point Likert scale. Author has checked content validity with help of experts in the relevant area; internal consistency of the questionnaire was proved to be satisfactory. Second questionnaire was *Questionnaire of semantic differential*, where the attitude towards pedagogical changes was assessed through teachers' answers on 7 point Likert scale containing descriptions of their attitudes through pairs of contrasting adjectives; reliability calculated through internal consistency was acceptable. Third instrument measures the stage of career development of respondents – they read the descriptions of stages given in detail and evaluate which stage corresponds best to their situation. In this place we get insight into the *operationalization of career cycle* in this study. It is worth noticing that the researcher does not check the validity of the instrument, she relies at the theoretical models and asks from the participants to sort themselves in the described categories. We can see the reason for this approach – the author wishes to see the typical attitudes of teachers being at different stages of the cycle. Still, in this way we might lose information on the variability in professional behavior, for example, some teachers might perceive that characteristics of more than one stage correspond to their current state, which could offer even richer information on relations between career cycle and attitude towards pedagogical changes. Finally, the author has used open interviews for data validation; 50 respondents were selected and interviewed regarding their attitudes towards pedagogical changes, referring to their most recent experience in introducing change. We consider this final part of data collection rather valuable – first because it refers to concrete experience and teachers can recall easily their feelings and problems, therefore the obtained statements are getting more accurate and reliable. Also, it gives us a vivid picture of variety of activities and teachers' reactions to them.

Findings about teachers' career cycle

Based on the results, author has succeeded to make profile of teachers in certain career stage considering their attitude towards pedagogical changes. The most positive attitude is present at stages *competency building* and *enthusiasm and growth*, and less positive in *career frustration* and *wind-down*. The author explains that during stages of *competency building* and *enthusiasm and growth*, teachers search for challenge, innovation, and show increased efficacy and pro-

fessional consciousness. The motivation, satisfaction and commitment change over the cycle. In the *wind-down* stage we "hear" statements of teachers who feel tired of introducing new practices, don't wish to experiment any more through application of new methods. Moderate attitude towards change in the *induction* stage can be understood by lower self-efficacy and feeling of insecurity that beginning teachers often encounter (Maskit, 2011). Finally, in the stage of *career stability* teacher also show moderate attitude, but this time, we think, it happens for other reasons – at this stage teachers' engagement declines, they have reached the career plateau and attribute less value to professional development. Therefore, they also attribute less time to innovations and changes in practice.

Qualitative researches

Third research: Narratives of variation in teacher – pupil relationship across a career (Kington, 2012)

Theoretical background – Research relies on results of Day, Sammons, Stobart, Kington and Gu (2007) study that recognizes 6 phases of teachers' professional life, where each phase has at least two possible outcomes (more or less favorable).

Operationalization of career cycle – teachers with different length of service were grouped into three categories, using the criteria given by Day and associates – six defined phases were conflated into three broad phases: 0 to 7 years of service (early career), 8 to 23 (mid career) and more than 23 years of service (late career).

Goal – To explore the perception of teacher – students relationship, from the perspective of early, mid and late career teachers, and define any similarities and differences between them.

Methodological approach

The present study is primary a qualitative one, applying an interpretative paradigm through analysis of teachers' narratives. (Also, some quantitative analysis was performed in order to calculate frequencies of different key events related to changes in the relationship between teachers and students). Having in mind the goal of the study (exploration of perceptions of teachers) and the lack of previous data on this topic, it is clear that the chosen methodological approach is the most appropriate one. For the data collection critical event narrative approach was used, that consisted of *narrative approach interviews* and *critical event line*. After making the interpretations, the author has returned them to the respondents for validation. *Narrative approach interviews* provide rich and fruitful data, and they might be specially useful to study a developmental phenomenon, like career cycle, because they take into account the previous and the

present experiences, providing the possibility for the comparison of these experiences (Kington, 2012). (In this way we can have some advantages usually offered by longitudinal studies). Also, it was found useful to focus the topics of the interviews on the critical events. "In this sense, each interview was tailored to the situations, contexts and concerns of individual teacher-participants..." (Kington, 2012:192). Hence, the participants themselves could structure the topics of the conversation and give their perceptions of relationship with students, selecting events they considered important. And the researcher could obtain an insight into the key turning points of teachers' careers, and all their variety (Kington, 2012). The appreciation of key events (influence of important others, economical changes in the society or in the family, childbirth, sickness or death in the family etc.) when studying the career cycle takes us one step further, because we can with more certainty claim that there are mutual characteristics of groups of teachers in one stage of development, if we have insight into the key events in personal and professional lives of these people, causing variance in their professional behavior.

Sample consists of 30 teachers – 10 for each career phase, which is a proper size to provide plenty of information, and enough data per each group. Teachers come from 10 primary schools, different types of settlements (rural, suburban and inner city) and different levels of socio-economical status. We consider the decision to choose teachers form different schools a proper one – because by choosing for example all the teachers of one school it would be more difficult to generalize the findings, because there is no control of the effects the school environment itself would have on teachers' perceptions. It is also obvious that the author has considered the urbanization level and the socio-economical status of pupils as variables of importance for the phenomenon she studies, and tried to control for them by selecting schools from different types of settlements and with different SES background. This is exactly where we meet the restrictions of research on small samples – it is very hard to add mediating or moderating variables and see if they contribute to the explanation of the perceived effects. In this particular case, if the variables settlement type or socio-economical background do play a role, then the number of cases studied is not large enough to see in which way they do, in other words, the data cannot account for the influence of each variable or their interaction.

Findings about teachers' career cycle

We can summarize the findings in the following way: there are certain similarities of perceptions of three groups of teachers, related to their interactions with children (ability to obtain and sustain fair relationships with students in seen as crucial by all groups; all groups are concerned with the quality of relationships, about understanding pupils they work with and being accepted by them etc.). On the other hand, there are differences in perceptions of relations with pupils between early career, mid career and late career teachers. When de-

fining quality of relationship with children, early career teachers focus on humor and familiarity, mid career teachers focus on academic-related interaction, while the third age category combines both approaches. Difference in practice is observed, among other things, in terms of proximity – early and mid career teachers use proximity to develop familiarity and define boundaries, while in late career the use of proximity declines. Also, early career teachers have less self confidence concerning maintaining discipline, mid career teachers are trying to balance friendly attitude with authority, "while among late career teachers control seems to be taken for granted." (Kington, 2012: 196).

Fourth research: Resisting plateauing: four veteran teacher' stories (Meister and Ahrens, 2011)

Theoretical background – Milstein's research of career plateau, which he defines as state of loosing illusions, feeling of frustration and stagnation. Description of resilient teachers relies on characteristics of Fessler's *enthusiastic and growing* stage.

Operationalization of career cycle – research refers to characteristics of one stage – enthusiastic and growing described by Burke and associates (1984) and Fessler and Christensen (1992), according to Meister and Ahrens (2011). Being in this stage is measured through teachers' perceptions of the stage that describes them best at this point of their professional life.

Goal – To explore into the characteristics of teachers who have succeeded to resist plateauing in late career, and maintained enthusiasm and idealism

Methodological approach

Phenomenological approach – the researchers are interested to find out how the respondents place together their experiences, in order to find the meaning in them, and to describe participants' lived experiences. They try to understand the meaning that events and interactions have for the participants. The interviews were focused in the first step to teachers' reflections about their careers, their career path and specific, important events. In second interview, the details that emerged in the first one were discussed, an in final meeting the participants were asked to reflect about the meaning of the selected events. The researchers chose to meet the participants several times, in order to have the opportunity to analyze the data meanwhile, and discuss the findings again with the teachers so that the interpretations would get more accurate. Also, we suppose that teachers themselves need time to reflect upon the important experiences in their career, and new, deeper meanings might appear if the interviews get repeated. On the other hand, it helps developing closeness and trust between the participants and the interviewer, which might also contribute to the quality of the study. After the

stories were captured and described by the researchers, they were checked by the respondents, to be verified.

Sample of the study was a purposive one, consisting of four veteran teachers, which is appropriate, since the research does not intend to offer statistically generalizable data. It was also necessary to use a purposive sample, because the researchers were searching for respondents with particular characteristics that can be considered more to be layouts then bearers of majority's behaviors. Therefore, several techniques were used in order to form the sample – intensity sampling (Patton, 1990, according to Meister and Ahrens, 2011), criterion-based sampling (Patton, 1990, according to Meister and Ahrens, 2011) and reputational-case selection (LeCompte, Preissle & Tesch, 1993 according to Meister and Ahrens, 2011) The researchers were in search of respondents who strongly but not extremely manifest the phenomenon (enthusiastic behavior) – for those who can give rich information (Patton, 1990, according to Meister and Ahrens, 2011). So, it was necessary to consult people from teachers' work surrounding who can recommend the potential respondents, according to certain criteria (like innovative practice, recognition for their work, showing positive attitude towards job and professional development). We can see that in establishing criteria for selection of participants the authors rely on description of enthusiastic and growing teacher, but search for them in the group of veteran teachers, where they are not met so often.

In this place we could make the comparison with previous research, aiming to describe experiences of teachers in different phases of career (Kington, 2012). When choosing the sample size in the previous study (Kington, 2012) researcher decided to take larger sample in order to have the possibility of comparing perceptions of three groups of teachers, and to allow them to make inferences about differences between career stages. Therefore, it was rather difficult to repeat interviews, and make the insights even deeper and broader. In this case, only four respondents could give rich information, and their number allows the interview to go in-depth and discover reasons for their enthusiasm and resilience. It was also crucial whom the researcher will interview, not how many of respondents will participate.

Findings about teachers' career cycle

This is a research that tends not to confirm the hypothesis derived from theory, but to describe the characteristics of people who represent positive exceptions from the majority. The authors state that common characteristics can be recognized among the respondents.

All four teachers see themselves as being in enthusiastic and growing stage. And there are several factors that facilitate this job attitude and behavior: these teachers were supported by leaders (professors in the faculty, school mangers) and given recognition, autonomy and freedom, which has helped greatly main-

taining enthusiasm. Another characteristic of school environment recognized as helpful is existence of clear and firm cultural norms in the school. Further on, all teachers have strong feeling of self-efficacy, they get inspired by development and success of their students; they feel that they can make impact on the children they work with. Also, all four veteran teachers buid external support systems, bond with colleagues and exchange with them ideas and experiences which strognly support their growth. Another source of support comes from teachers' families, and they state their partners and parents to be important resource in periods of frustration (we notice that often these important others come belong to teching profession, as well). Finally, some teachers get strengthened from their religious believes, which helps finding meaning and sense and they all participate in leisure, relaxing activities and hobbies.

Still, in case when we have small number of respondents, no control of any mediating (intervening) or moderating variables can be achieved. For example, it would be valuable to have the comparison of stories of veteran teachers who also have affirmative social surrounding conditions but do not achieve high enthusiasm and certainly do not maintain of it in late career years.

Discussion and conclusion

It is obvious that the list of researches chosen for this paper is short, and it is difficult to make generalizations out of them. It was not our goal though. We can see this analysis more as study of four cases that offer a good deal of methodological variety. It was not our intention to present all the ways that career cycle was studied lately, because it would overcome the volume of one paper. It would possibly even not be so fruitful, because the advantages and the disadvantages of certain methodological approach can be seen from one work that applies the approach properly.

From this short list of researches we can see that different methodological approaches and paradigms are employed in studying teachers' career cycle. Depending on the scope – search for regularities that are to be generalized and identification of relevant predictors and correlates of career cycle characteristics, or explanation of perceptions and insight into the meanings that teachers in different career have – the paradigms vary and give different contributions. We can see on the way from the first, purely quantitative research into the behavior considering professional development (Richter et al, 2011), to the second research (Maskit, 2011) that uses reflections of respondents referring to certain experiences – a change. Namely, in the first work numerous variables are introduced (formal and informal professional development, content of it, demographic variables, work engagement, additional responsibilities). This makes the inferences strong and reliable. Still, when offering only data about connections between

variables, we easily lose from our sight – the man and the context. On the other hand, the second research, relying on positivist paradigm, gives also information about the relationship between career cycle and important attitudes of teachers – concerning introduction of novelty and change, and at the same time offers descriptions of concrete "lived experiences". We can understand that it was almost impossible do describe also the context of these experiences and events, and the information we could get about differences between schools of different level and schools from different socio-cultural background was out of reach of this study. The third, qualitative study (Kington, 2012) does exactly this – goes into the differences between certain groups of teachers. It introduces rich information on teachers' lives and offers analysis of similarities and differences between the three age groups. We can understand the flow of change in their perceptions and work attitudes. But again, these stories originate from different contextual frameworks, and numerous variables could have influenced them. This is where we meet the limitations of qualitative research that does not have the power to study the influence and interaction of possibly relevant variables. The same applies to the last study (Meister and Ahrens, 2011), the one that carefully comes to in-depth conclusions, by interpreting and correcting interpretations several times. We get acquainted with factors that contribute to maintaining the feeling of enthusiasm and high commitment in late career. And yet, there is no comparison to other groups – for example, we do not discover why the other teachers, with similar circumstances, do not present same job attitude (and we presume that there are cases). The questions opened here certainly offer directions for future researches, and imply that quantitative researches open space for qualitative ones, that introduce stories and help us understand individual experiences; and qualitative researches trace a path for quantitative researches, to give stronger support for its findings and account for different influences.

From the presentation of research findings we can recognize the importance of career cycle models for teacher professional development. If we have in mind the characteristics of the career stages, we can understand better the uptake of learning opportunities, the attitude towards pedagogical changes and the priorities that teachers have. On the other hand, these results have also presented to us how important the school environment is, and in which way it can facilitate maintaining an enthusiastic attitude towards work and professional development.

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SEARCH FOR DIFFERENCES IN LEARNING AND EDUCATION DURING THE AGING PROCESS[1]

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Abstract

Within the andragogical researches, scientists differently relate to the issue of aging and old age and specifics in the process of learning and education during the aging process. In this paper, we analyze approaches to age issues in student's final research papers, defended at the Chair of Andragogy, Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade. The aim of our research was to determine how the aging process is treated and explored in student's final papers, as well as which differences are being sought in the researches of various phenomena of learning and education during the aging process. We followed whether, where and how problems of aging appear, starting from theoretical research approaches to the research problem, through subject, objectives, tasks, hypothesis, variables, sample, the research instruments, to statistical processing of the research results and analysis of those results (10 units of analysis). Special attention is paid to the analysis of the research results obtained in student's final papers and the possible implications of these results to improvement of various aspects and elements of quality of education of elderly.

Key words: student's research, gerontagogy, aging

1. Introduction

The fact that a person begins both to learn and to get old from the moment he/she is born, could present such a defined theme, on one hand as unspecified, and on the other, to give everyone the right to place the expectations from the

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theme in its own reference frame defined by the vision and understanding of aging and old age and differences in learning and education which occur in that process. The aim of this paper is to deal with the outlined problem in a very specific way – how is the aging process as a social construct treated and examined in the final papers of students of Andragogy. Researching different phenomena and problems from different andragogical disciplines, student's research attention, directly or indirectly, always involves a problem of aging. The question is why students in their research works open the issue of aging and its effects in the phenomena they research in so many different ways. They also give different significance and meaning to the relationship between aging, learning and education. Possible answers are different and the key reason is certainly still fluid border between the different age groups of adults and the elderly and the importance of differences among these groups within the phenomenon being studied in andragogy.

Since andragogy explores problems of learning and adult education, the issue of aging and old age is always implicitly or explicitly contained in the problem of its research. Chronological age, i.e. age of people when their learning and education starts to be the subject of andragogical researches is in some way dividing line between andragogy and pedagogy. Equal interest of pedagogist and andragogist to research problems of learning and education of student population, for so-called "higher education didactics", shows that the beginning of adulthood is a formal question with chronological and sociological nature. Pedagogists are researching education of this chronological age as the completion of formal education process and as a final product of the educational system. Andragogists – as initial vocational education or education level achievable through a lifelong learning process. But, whenever andragogy "begins", lifespan, lifecycle to which it relates lasts for the next 60–70 years. Therefore, it is difficult to consider group of people living along this continuum as homogeneous when it comes to their learning and education. When we speak about learning and education, the differences between the youngest and oldest group of adults can be far greater than the differences in learning between age categories studied by pedagogy, on the one hand, and andragogy, on the other.

Such complexity brought more implicit approaches in the limitation of the research area rather than explicit theories about the differences in learning and education in different age groups. That implicit solutions can be identified, for example, in developmental psychology which stops somewhere near attained status of a child (Medić, 1993), pedagogy – somewhere in the school age and issues, adult education – somewhere on the threshold of old age, moving close to retirement. Such a child, such a student and such an adult person form groups that are considered as homogeneous within these sciences from the developmental, educational and learning point of view. Of course there are planned researches with the aim to deal precisely with the differences within or between specified groups.

But such approaches are specifically looking for differences that the usual images do not contain. The problem of andragogy as a science is, as has already been said, long life continuum that andragogy explores and which carries a variety of diversities.

Within the andragogical researches, scientists differently relate to the issue of aging and old age and these specifics in the process of learning and education. The largest number of andragogical scientific papers stops its attention somewhere close to the formal completion of adulthood and the transition to old age. Certain number of scientific papers covers the entire life continuum as a group of adults. A large number of scientific papers are dealing particularly with learning and education of people in the third age, after retirement. So, the term adulthood or old age is not treated uniformly in andragogy, which is reflected in the status and structure of andragogy and its disciplines. At least three constructs about andragogy and its disciplines reflect this issue: andragogy as a science that explores the learning and education of all adults – elderly are included (Savićević, 1991); andragogy as a science that explores learning and adult education, and which has a special discipline that deals with education and learning of elderly in its structure (Bulatović, 1985, 2001, Savićević, 2004) and the third approach in which in addition to pedagogy and andragogy there is a third field of study – gerontogogy which deals with learning and education of elderly and it is in the same horizontal scientific line with pedagogy and adult andragogy (Pastuović, 1999).

Since the beginning of the organization of undergraduate, master and doctoral andragogical studies at the Faculty of Philosophy at University of Belgrade in 1979, there was a controversy about the status of education of older people in andragogical science and its disciplines and subjects in the study program (Bulatović, 1985, 2001; EALG, Level 2, 2008; Medić, 1990, 1998, 2010, 2012; Pastuović, 1999; Savićević, 1991, 2004). Study program, through different subjects and courses, accepts equally all mentioned andragogical approaches to learning and education during the aging process and gives full freedom to students to choose approach to old age that best reveals the "truth" about the researched phenomenon. Thus, the research papers of students are focused on complex consideration of the age of 18 up to 85 and over; some of them stop their research attention at the time continuum when transition from adulthood to old age and the transition from work to retirement begins; and the third are interested for the problems of learning and education in old age by focusing on the old age with different beginning time.

In their thesis, students from 1979 to 2010 were guided by this approach. This approach to the problem of education and learning of elderly was retained in the first accredited program developed in 2006 by the Bologna standards and principles. This program, among other major changes, introduced the final papers instead of thesis that exists since 1979. In the final papers, phenomena are

investigated on a less complex way than in the thesis; final paper has smaller volume graduate theses. According to this Program of basic academic studies of andragogy from 2006, the number of subjects in which it is possible to do the final paper is 26 out of total 41 at the undergraduate studies. In the period from 2010 to 2015 three generations of students graduated out under this program and 72 final papers were defended. In the study program which is the subject of our analysis, from 2006 to 2010, learning in the old age is not earmarked as a special course. Within the Social Andragogy education of elderly people was represented as a special research area, within the research of risk and marginalized social group's education including the elderly as one of the most important.

2. Method

Student's research papers are the subject of content analysis in our research. Since the aim of our research is to determine how the aging process is treated and explored in student's final papers, as well as which differences are being sought in the researches of various phenomena of learning and education during the aging process, all final papers from 2010 to 2015, defended at Department of Andragogy represent a sample of our survey – 72 papers. We applied the descriptive method in this research, within which we applied the technique of content analysis in the process of data collection (in this research we have applied the same methodology as in our study about gender issue in students' research papers).

We followed whether, where and how problems of aging appear, starting from theoretical research approaches to the research problem, through subject, objectives, tasks, hypothesis, variables, sample, the research instruments, to statistical processing of the research results and analysis of those results (10 units of analysis). Representation of the problems of aging and its treatment was monitored in these units of analysis. It was registered whether the issue of aging is represented or not represented, and how it was treated in these different contexts. Special attention is paid to the analysis of the research results obtained in student's final papers and the possible implications of these results to improvement of various aspects and elements of quality of education of elderly. For data collection we used the Protocol for content analysis made for the purposes of this research.

3. Research analysis

As the consequence of the first accredited program of andragogical studies from 2006 to 2010, in which education of elderly is not singled out as an elective or as a compulsory course, resulted in the fact that from 72 final works, only

one is directly related to the field and the problem of elderly education (Savić, 2015). This work is in the field of Social Andragogy, which explores adult education in specific and critical situations. Usefulness and impact of educational programs for older people were estimated in this paper. The subject of our further analysis is not 72 student research papers any more but 49 papers, since in 23 research papers aging was not taken into account in any way during the research of different andragogical phenomena. The subject of our further analysis are 49 works belonging to different andragogical disciplines: Andragogical didactics, Andragogy of Work, Adult Learning, Organization of Adult Education, Vocational Adult Education, Social Andragogy, Family Andragogy, Management in Education, Human Resource Development, Andragogy of Leisure, Andragogy of Communications and Media. In these papers the problem of old age and aging is in some of the 10 defined units of analysis. But, it is not consistently and continuously defined in all units of analysis, and the consequence of that is that aging and old age in some research papers appear only in certain units of analysis, as it is shown in Table 1.

Following will be analyzed: A) The **methodological concept of the research**, which refers to the first 8 units of analysis, and B) The **results of student's research papers**, referring to the last 2 units of analysis.

A) Access to the problem of aging and old age in methodological concepts of research

The methodological concept in the student's research papers consists of 8 units of analysis: theoretical approach to the research problem, subject, objective, tasks, hypotheses, variables, samples and research instruments (Table 1).

Table 1. *Access to the problem of aging and old age in methodological concepts of research*

	Elements of the methodological concept of research	**Represented**	**Not represented**
1.	Theoretical approach to research problem	14	35
2.	Research subject	1	48
3.	Research objective	2	47
4.	Research tasks	29	20
5.	Research hypotheses	24	25
5.1.	– General hypotheses	9	40
5.2.	– Special hypotheses	22	27
6.	Research variables	42	7
6.1.	– Independent variable	24	25
6.2.	– Control variable	18	31
	TOTAL	49	

Phenomena that students are interested in the field of andragogy contained in these research papers cover all scientific fields in andragogy, starting from General Andragogy, History of Andragogy and Comparative Andragogy, to the Management in Adult Education, Andragogy of Work, Andragogy of Leisure, etc. In the first unit of our analysis – **theoretical consideration** of these various andragogical phenomena, the problem of aging is treated in 14 works. In the remaining 35 works aging is not in a theoretical consideration of the problem, but it occurs in some of the later units of analysis (in tasks, hypotheses, variables, sample...). When the connection between aging and old age is considered in the theoretical analysis of key research problem, connecting age with the studied phenomena is mainly affirmative. Advantages of old age and experience in relation to the problem of research are most commonly observed.

In the second unit of analysis, defined **subject** of the research**,** aging does not appear as a problem in any research, except in the aforementioned one work which is directly aimed at exploring the issues of learning and education in old age. Only in the two final papers, the students included the issues of aging and old age in the **research goals**, which are the third unit of our analysis.

Even though the largest number of papers does not clearly define the problem of aging and old age in the objectives of the researches its importance is recognized in the fourth unit of analysis, research **tasks**. A significant number (29) of research papers associate aging and old age with the subject of research. There is insufficient consistency between the tasks defined and formulated **hypothesis** (that are the fifth unit of analysis). Out of the 29 papers in which the old age is in research tasks, 24 of them consistently methodically define hypothesis outlining expectations in relation to old age. The weakness in the hypotheses is mostly that direction of the relationship between researched phenomena and aging is not defined. It happens that in some research papers old age is not included in tasks, but it appears in the research hypotheses. Also, in some research papers the problem of aging occurs in research tasks, but not in the research hypotheses. This discrepancy between tasks and hypotheses in relation to old age and aging as a problem that is being followed in connection with the major research problem is sometimes the result of selected research methodology, and sometimes unjustified inconsistencies in the implementation of methodological procedures.

In the sixth unit of our analysis which treats the problem of **variables**, position of old age is very variable. In a significant number of research papers, old age as a problem appears for the first time in this unit of analysis. Taking into account all research papers together, old age and aging occur as an independent or control variables in 42 research papers. Out of these 42 papers, old age figures as the independent variable in 24 papers. In none of these papers where it occurs as an independent variable, old age is not treated independently. In researches, there is a construct which includes a set of other important characteristics, usually called bio-socio-demographic-work characteristics in all researched papers.

Out of 49 analyzed research papers, aging appears in 18 as a control variable. And, as a control variable old age is always appearing in the previously mentioned research construct of bio-socio-demographic-work characteristics. This position of old age defined in independent and a control variable is mostly the reason of absence of old age in the above-mentioned hypotheses, tasks, as well as the theoretical approach to the research problem. On the other hand, the forthcoming analysis of research results will reveal that importance given to the old age most often depends on the proportion of variance that old age carries within all the above characteristics.

There is a problem of **sample** in research works – a sampling is problem. To create the sample, which is the seventh unit of our analysis, simpler techniques and methods are chosen and selection of sample usually depends on the variety of available technical and material possibilities for the realization of researches for the purposes of the final papers of students. There are few quota samples which provide needed structure or other types of samples that allow a significant generalization of the findings that were obtained for different age groups. Most of the researches were actually realized on so-called convenience samples which are actually the reason why, primarily, control variable cannot be treated in the proper and necessary statistical meaning. Convenience samples are mostly the reason why some element of bio-socio-demographic-work characteristics is excluded from the analysis and is left as a hypothesis for further research. Also, the sample size is determined in a manner that meets the minimum statistical requirements, so that variations of the sample, which would enable more significant research of bio-socio-demographic-work characteristics, are not possible in the work of this scope and depth.

Research papers mostly belong to the type of **quantitative research**, and have the **empirical character**. Most of the research papers in which old age is not included as a research variable, deal with historical, comparative research and case studies. Most of those works in which old age appears as a research variable belong to empirical research and are quantitative. In the analyzed student's final papers two **techniques** were used in order to realize research: survey and scaling. Among other techniques content analysis and interviews were used, but in a much smaller number of papers. In the eighth unit of our analysis, research **instruments**, the most commonly used research instrument was a questionnaire, which actually represents a combination of several types of instruments – in addition to questions, they also contain a number of descriptive scales. The content of the questionnaire is related to dependent, independent and control research variable, the aforementioned bio-socio-demographic-work characteristics of respondents: sex, age, occupation, education level, family structure, etc. Although all the questionnaires included the questions of various types, there was a greater degree of structure of content in them – primarily through the dominance of closed-ended and combined questions. The scales are commonly used for meas-

uring relationships, values and attitudes. Within the analyzed group of works descriptive scale dominates – especially Likert scale. Most of the instruments students created for the purpose of their research. There are almost no papers that provide information about the procedures and the control of the metric characteristics of instruments.

B) Status and treatment of the aging problem in the results of student's research

The remaining two units of analysis are related to the statistical processing of the research results and analysis of the results of student's research work. In the presentation, analysis and interpretation of research results the problem of aging appears in 44 out of 49 research papers. In 5 research papers the result obtained on the connection between the problems of aging and researched phenomenon are not analyzed, although the aging process was found in some of the units of analysis: tasks, hypotheses, variables... Hence the subject of our further analyzes is 44 student's research works. In the analyzed research works, **processing of the received data** (which is the ninth unit of our analysis) different statistical methods were used. In about same number of researches, researches belonging to the field of descriptive statistics and those which fall within the domain of inferential statistics were represented (Matović, 2007). From the group of descriptive statistics, statistical techniques to describe the characteristics of the distribution of the collected data and those that establish connections between phenomena were used. In order to describe the characteristics of the obtained frequency distributions, measures of central tendency (most used arithmetic mean) and measures of variability (mostly standard deviation was used) were calculated. From statistical techniques that determine the relationship between phenomena, mostly contingency coefficient is calculated, and then the Pearson's linear correlation coefficient. Within inferential statistics chi-square test for determining the significance of differences between frequencies, and t-test for significance of differences between arithmetic mean were mostly used. Analysis of variance was used as more complex form of statistical analysis.

Analyzing how the problem of learning and education is connected with aging and old age, both in theoretical approaches and analysis of andragogical phenomena which are researched, and especially in methodological designs of the empirical and qualitative research, it is not unexpected that the level and quality of the **results** obtained open further questions about problems of aging and age in learning and education, rather than giving a clear answers to the defined research tasks. Research papers remain at the level of perceived tendency and none of them search further for more significant research of variance or the share of age of respondents in the researched phenomenon. So, there are quite a number of papers that, beside from noting that the differences are not found

or are not relevant, remain on the fact that the hypotheses were rejected or have not been confirmed, without wondering about the cause of this condition. In the research papers there is a tendency that only connections for which a significant correlation is found are important, and that the absence of correlations with the research phenomena of the study is the result considers as minor importance result or no importance result. Such treatment indicates the attitude that is already given to aging and old age in the approach to the phenomenon being studied.

Neither of the analyzed papers deals with the elderly, except the previously mentioned one paper. Out of 44 analyzed papers, 43 papers include aging as a relevant appearance for the phenomenon that is researched. The range of the age taken into consideration in the various students research papers is very different. The minimum age range is covered by the sample of 18 to 24 years, in the paper which examines students' communication via e-mail, and the largest range of age is from 18 to 65 years, that is involved in a larger number of papers. Student research papers dealing with aging in such a way as researching whether there are some noticeable differences which result from the aging process.

The results of the researches can be roughly classified into three groups. Without intention to exhaustively present the results that were obtained in the student's research papers, we will present only some examples to support our categorization of the three groups of findings. In the first and the largest group are those research papers in which aging and age are negatively reflected in relation to the studied phenomena. Among other things, it was found that:

- Resistance to the introduction of innovative changes in work and willingness to engage in education that would introduce innovations into the working process and organization grows with age.
- Dissatisfaction with the educational offer in companies grows with age.
- In assessing the possession of key competencies (Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, 2007), in relation to others, the elderly are considered themselves as the least competent in the field of communication in a foreign language. On the other hand, they show the least motivation to acquire this competence.
- Readiness for professional development declines with age.
- Awareness about cultural actualities/events in the surroundings significantly decreases with age.
- Oldest workers are mostly dissatisfied with interpersonal relationships in the organization.
- The need to develop social skills of employees in the organization is less important to older workers.
- The elderly do not see training for active job search as a measure to increase employability.

Due to the indicated inadequate attention and importance given to aging and old age in all units of analysis, it is not unexpected that data analysis on statistically significant differences in age remains on mere assertions about the results obtained and mostly stereotyped and insufficiently critical comments that explain these findings. As it can be seen from the presentation of some results, this, in most cases, small number of student's papers open a very important and interesting andragogical issues that sometimes in these papers have a greater scientific significance than the results obtained in relation to the main subject of the research. Therefore, many important things unjustifiably are out of control and scientific attention.

The second group of research works, in much smaller number, represents those papers whose results clarify the contribution, prosperity, quality or quantity increase compared to the measured phenomenon, which aging and old age brings. In these papers hypothesis did not talk about these expectations by researchers and often these results are treated as surprising. However, regardless of the positive direction of the relationship of measured phenomena and ageing and old age, treatment of results and their analysis remain the same as in the previous group of works in which the direction of the correlation is reversed. Also in this group of papers stays conclusion that gain and prosperity is again stereotypically attributed to the experience remain:

- Older respondents, respondents with more years of professional experience, participate in vocational training programs more often.
- Criticism of kitsch and trash content (reality show) increases significantly with age.
- Elderly estimate that:
  - The quality of their own work is better than of the younger ones
  - Greater rationality in approach to work (materials, time, equipment)
  - They produce less write-offs
  - They have less injuries
  - They are less absent from work
  - They refuse work tasks less
  - They have higher productivity
- Affirmative action related to age as compensation for inclusion in society, achieving better pension and training for competitiveness in the labor market is present in the strategies.
- Speaking about competences for e-communications, aging provides greater flexibility and less sense of fear in this communication (Čolaković, 2014).
- Elderly have a very positive attitude towards the use of information technology in the organization because:
  - Social relationships are developed

- It contributes to enhanced teamwork, dialogue and cooperation
- Number of stressful and difficult jobs is decreasing
- Individual responsibility is increasing
- It has impact on the individual development – requires new skills, abilities and knowledge (Nenadić, 2010).

Among the results that speak about the positive direction of the link between the researched phenomenon and aging, there are results that are completely opposite to the results of earlier researches which are dealing with elderly people. Analyzed researches in this paper do not deal with elderly people. These researches follow the aging as phenomenon, and they search for differences in learning and education related with the aging process. This explains the unusual result of the research of competencies for e-communications, which shows that older students have greater flexibility and less sense of fear in this communication. Opposite of the usual findings that elderly people have more fear and less interest in ICT, one of the analyzed paper have shown that when a working context, in which the introduction of information technologies is required, is known, the results can be reversed. Length of experience with working context has resulted among the elderly with significant perceiving of advantages and positive attitude towards the use of ICT in the organization.

Smallest number of research papers deal with the question of aging and old age and its linage with the measured phenomena in which age is not an advantage nor a disadvantage, but only diversity. But they only claim that there are differences and leave to the reader to detect the type or kind of diversity: quality versus quantity, continuity versus discontinuity, reductionism versus formation, elements versus holism, structure versus function, structural or behavioral changes, universality versus relativity and so on (Medić, 1993). The reader is left to formulate new hypotheses that could lead to the explanation of these differences, such as for example:

– Older often choose seminars as type of professional training, read more literature, unlike younger who prefer Internet.
– Assessment of necessary managerial skills for educational institutions management differs with aging.
– Preferences of leadership style in working organization changes with age. Young prefer intellectual stimulation and older – motivation to work.

Summarizing research results in final papers of students it is certainly correct statement that they contain valuable, significant and important results which indicate that the question of age or differences among the various age groups are and should be an important andragogical question. The context in which these findings were placed and their interpretation are certainly a consequence of the lack of strong, clear and scientifically based facts on this issue in andragogical

science. The significance of the results about the differences that appear in the studied phenomena in relation to the age indicates the need to seriously locate this problem both in andragogical concepts, as well as in empirical researches which do not treat aging and age as an epiphenomenon.

4. Recommendations

Research papers in the field of andragogy that introduces the question of old age and aging as an independent or control variable require detailed foundation of the problem of aging and old age in the theoretical approach to the research problem.

In andragogy, question of old age or age has a totally different meaning than in other social sciences. Andragogy, singled out as a science because of the diversity based precisely on the age, requires that inter-age differences in the extent of its research should be treated appropriately. So it is quite unreasonable to treat age together and at the same level with other bio-socio-demographic-work characteristics, which minimizes the importance of age and brings into the same level with the characteristics of different order and meaning. In andragogical research papers old age is unjustifiably included in the construct bio-socio-demographic-work characteristics, because it is not a phenomenon of the same rank nor of the same importance as the other three. Losing its importance in this construct, research papers places in the same level fundamental andragogical question and some other features of personality that have significance for the andragogical research but at completely different level.

When the issue of old age comes to focus of researchers in any way, the issue of the sample becomes critically important. Determination of the sample in relation to the key dependent variable should always contain elements that can adequately and in statistically justified way enable consideration of the share of old age in the studied phenomenon. The sample should provide the possibility of subsequent analysis depending on the initially study results.

Research instruments of certain andragogical phenomena are constructed or chosen according to the greatest possible sensitivity needed for measuring or detecting this phenomenon, but can often be a "crude measure" to detect differences due to different ages. A good research plan should include instruments equally sensitive to study all relevant issues.

Proper theoretical foundation of problems of the share of age in the studied phenomena is reliable framework for defining precise tasks and defining the correct hypothesis. Whenever old age is introduced as a new category in the study, the expectations should be explained and it should be linked to the theoretical construct about the issue of aging and old age in the field of learning and education. This would enable proper understanding of the significance of the

results obtained, whether they approve or reject the defined hypotheses. Studies in which differences were not found can have more important scientific significance than the results in which some differences were found, but it is often overlooked as a possibility.

The general impression is that the problem of old age and aging is insufficient and inadequately represented in the research papers of students. It was not treated appropriately due to the fact that the life continuum of adult and elderly is long period of life and it initiates differences, changes, improvement, decline...

In addition to the specific recommendations that could improve future research work of students, the results of student's research papers analysis indicate the conclusion and, at the same time, the recommendation that it would be better to have larger number of studies directly dealing with research of different andragogical phenomena and their link with aging, particularly old age in empirical research in adult learning and education (Milošević, Medić and Popović, 2013; Medić and Milošević, 2014). Beside the fact that it is not researched as critical variable for learning and education of the elderly in scope and importance that it deserves, even when problems of old age and aging are researched, it is still not theoretically or empirically entirely completed.

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DIFFUSION OF ADULT EDUCATION POLICIES IN THE EUROPEAN EDUCATION SPACE[1]

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Abstract

Europeanization is leading to the renouncement of countries' sovereignty in various aspects of their functioning, and their efforts to maintain sovereignty in the widest possible range of areas as well. Therefore, our research was target-oriented on identifying and analyzing the transferable aspects of European adult education policy[2], and then on identifying and analyzing active (key) mechanisms of European adult education policy's diffusion on the level of individual countries.

As part of the methodological design of the research, we used a model of multiple case studies – studied the mechanisms of European policy's diffusion on adult education policy in Denmark, Slovenia and Serbia. We used historical, descriptive, comparative and hermeneutical methods and techniques of research focused on the analysis of documents, interviews and discourse analysis.

The results suggest the existence of numerous active mechanisms of adult education policies' diffusion based mainly on the financial dimension.

Key words: national adult education policy, European adult education policy, adult education policy's diffusion

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2 When we use this term, we mean the adult education policies created by the European Union.

Introduction

More than six decades have passed since the laying of the EU foundation, thus starting the process of Europeanization. Collaborative efforts of the majority of European nations to jointly solve the economic, security and demographic problems bring on great expectations of adult education as well. Unlike some other areas, the EU has no formal jurisdiction to influence national policy of adult education, but this does not mean that the process of Europeanization bypassed this area. The question is how will education, especially adult education, create a single European labor force that will be trans-European mobile, as well as how will it create a European "citizen" who will actively participate in its management? We get the impression that, although there is no formal compulsion by the European Commission on the issue of adult education policies, European countries created very similar adult education policy. Therefore, we decided to analyze European adult education policy, and then the three national policies, in order to comprehend the possible mechanisms of European politics' diffusion at the national levels.

Adult education policy and related terms

Adult education never occurs outside the specific social, economic, cultural and political context. It is an integral part of the policy of every country and must be viewed as a subsystem of global governance that is connected with numerous, ambiguous relationships with other subsystems.

Therefore, education becomes a prerequisite for reaching different objectives (economic, ethnic, environmental, security...) and thus is part of the other, and above all, developmental politics (Alibabić, Miljković, Ovesni, 2012). The more general term then adult education policies is term of politics.

> *The policy should be defined as all the activities for the preparation and adoption of binding decisions and/or decisions oriented towards the common good and for the benefit of society as a whole* (Meyer, 2013: 31). The open character of political decisions is underlined, because in its field of action *alternatives are always possible*. It is about decisions that should be helpful to all and to oblige everybody. The double character of the political – openness to alternatives in the process of its formation, and the results which are binding for all – is an essential feature of the policy, which is different from other social functions – economy, culture and solidarity (Parsons, according to: Meyer, 2013: 33–34). Political processes, no matter at which level they take place, have three dimensions: *polity* (form), *policy* (content) and *politics* (process) (Meyer, 2013: 71).

Polity-dimension denotes established basis of political community with their written and unwritten laws. In democratic countries written laws can be easily identified in the guidelines and norms preserved in the constitution, laws

and by-laws. Unwritten laws represent the political culture of a country, which is characterized by specific patterns of division transmission of politically important values, behavior, and general orientation.

Policy-dimension is the content of the specific policy. It is always about trying to resolve certain public policy issues through programs of action.

Politics – dimension is the process of realization of selected action programs. It is formed from the dynamic of actions in which different actors bring different interests. Referring to legitimate reasons, the actors are trying to facilitate the implementation of its program, using different branches of government.

In the broadest sense, we can accept the definition of educational policy, according to which it represents "consciously creating conditions of legal, material, financial, personnel ... for the realization of established concepts, strategies and systems" (Alibabić, 2002: 78). Terminology confusion present in adult education has not bypassed this andragogical area of research. In English language the term *policy of education* (Popović, 2014: 5), is a part of *public policy*, and is associated with management issues, mainly at national or regional level and with the character of government. German authors usually refer to educational policy as a series of legislative and administrative measures in order to design and develop the field of education (Bohm, according to: Popović, 2014). It is worth mentioning that part of the adult education policies are created and implemented by private organizations and large multinational companies whose activities are difficult to identify because of the limited access to information. The most obvious terminological and conceptual diversity is present at the international education scene. For example, in the Global Report – GRALE (according to: Popović, 2014), the authors use *adult education policy*, *policy on adult education*, *adult education policies* and *policy approaches to lifelong learning as parallel terms.*

According to many authors (Alibabić, Miljković, Ovesni, 2012), it is very important to recognize and appreciate the fact that *education policy* is a collective noun that includes many different educational policies. The most obvious categorization would include policy of education for children, youth and adults. Within these, we can differentiate various policies aimed at specific levels of education (primary, secondary and higher), special field of education (general and vocational education, formal and non-formal education) or specific target groups (immigrants, (un)employed, persons with disabilities, minority groups, the elderly, etc.). We believe that the phrase *adult education policies should be considered as well*, because in the framework of adult education policy we can talk about differentiated policies, such as elder's education policy, or migrant's education policy. In this case, the phrase *adult education policy* (singular) would indicate unity of more differentiated adult education policies, which are coordinated and harmonized between themselves.

For the purpose of the present study, in addition to the notion of adult education policies, we will define three concepts of importance for our subject of research: the convergence of policies, the diffusion of policies and transfer of policies.

The diffusion (spreading) *of policy* is the way that leads to fusion, to convergence of policies, and the way of their continued expansion. Diffusion of policy can be defined as a process in which the adoption of policies happens by introducing the same policy that some other countries have, but without coercion (Holzinger et al., according to: Popović, 2014). Savićević (2003: 307) highlights that the diffusion of adult education from one to another culture is not value-neutral. It often happens that adult education experts transmit their experience from one to another culture with minor modifications.

Transfer of policy is a concept close to the concept of diffusion of policy, may even be said that the transfer is a form of diffusion. The term transfer of policy implies "the process of using knowledge (current or past) on public policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas of one political system in the development of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in another political system" (Dolowitz and Marsh, according to: Popović, 2014: 22). These authors say that it leads to fusion, to convergence of policy, but warn about the obstacles in this process, such as the complexity of the program, short deadlines, impact of past policy, administrative, human and financial resources, and institutional structural constraints.

The convergence of policy is merging of policies, which manifests itself through the establishment of similar policies in many countries and it is highly expressed in educational policies. Papadopoulos (according to: Popović, 2014: 20) considers that a consensus about the value of lifelong learning is one of the most obvious characteristics of educational policy's discourse convergence in recent decades, both nationally and internationally.

Although adult education policies occur in all three dimensions of politics, we will be primarily interested in polity (dimension determined by laws) and policy (dimensions determined by contents), and special attention will be paid to the instruments or mechanisms that are used for transfer and diffusion of polities.

The methodological framework of the research

The conducted research was *target-oriented* on: 1) identification and analysis of European adult education policy's transferable aspects; 2) Identifying and analyzing active (key) mechanisms of European adult education policy's diffusion at the national level. In the present paper the diffusion of educational policy refers to standard diffusion pathways, such as convergence and transfer.

Within the multiple case study as a research model (educational policies of Denmark, Slovenia and Serbia were used as study cases), we used qualitative

research methods – historical, descriptive and comparative method, and hermeneutical method as a kind of interpretation theory.

The historical method has enabled us to go deeper into the essence and genesis of the studied phenomenon. "In this kind of research synthesis and interpretation are essential" (Savićević, 2003: 18), especially if we bear in mind that the phenomena which are the subject of our research have started, modified and changed over a long period of time and they are an integral part of the culture and traditions of states whose education policies we are interested in.

The use of *descriptive method* served for describing andragogical ideas and phenomena, institutions and processes, and development directions of adult education policies in particular.

The comparative method has been applied to the sample of documents (strategies, declarations, programs, reports). "The systemic, methodologically controlled comparison is one of the most frequently used methods in political science. ... If we explore and compare the same factor – then it can be determined by systematic knowledge about relationships, or even about cause-and-effect relationship between these factors; the more of cases we investigated, the findings are more accurate "(Meyer, 2013: 28).

Hermeneutical method pervades the previous three methods. Meyer (2013: 25) argues that "the interpretation of classical political theory, it is primarily about the proper interpretation of the text using the hermeneutical method .... Some methodological procedures or techniques have established themselves as the most fruitful and become standard in these analyzes – and these are the following procedures: analysis of the text, content, discourse analysis". Therefore, out of different research techniques, we used: *analysis of documents*, *interviews* and *discourse analysis*. In the present study, the emphasis was on the analysis of primary documentation sources. While analyzing the documentation, special attention was dedicated to the discourse of the documents which give it a specific context.

Discourse analysis was conducted by analyzing three types of data: public documents and relevant legislation that regulate adult education policies; secondary sources which criticize the public documents; transcripts of the interviews with the experts in adult education policies.

Discourse analysis is focused on language and meaning created by using the language through speech (narratives of respondents) and through the text (public documents and laws). This is important to emphasize, because "language is not a neutral medium through which we 'only' communicate and share information. Language is a social field which actively shaping our knowledge about the world that surrounds us" (Jarić, I., 2014: 25). In this sense, discourse analysis

allows us to understand language used for collecting data, not as a reflection of reality, but as a medium for the construction of reality.

The interviewing techniques enabled us to gather the opinions of relevant experts on the relationship between European and national adult education policies.

The instruments in this study consisted of semi-structured interviews and analysis protocols.

The research sample was intentional, which is a characteristic of qualitative studies that use "non-random, mostly intentional samples. The characteristic of this group of samples is that the election of the members of the sample is based on an estimate of researchers, in accordance with the specific needs of the object of study "(Matović, 2013: 111). For the research sample we selected experts who deal with this phenomenon as scientists, or they are in the formal position of power to make and implement adult education policy, or belong to the civilian sector engaged in the field of adult education policy. Positions and roles of selected experts are intertwined: engagement in academic and civil society, and also all of elected experts have extensive experience in the realization of international projects financed by the EU. "Non-random samples belong to the group of small samples" (ibid), which is also the case in this study, in which we have included five experts: two from Serbia, two from Denmark and one from Slovenia.

Analysis and interpretation of research results

Transferable aspects of the European Union adult education policy

European adult education policy has evolved along with the European Union. The European Community after the Maastricht Treaty in 1993 transformed itself into the European Union, and a community that has no counterpart in history is created – a supranational community that is more than organization and less than a state. It is used to create a unique economic and political space, within which there are no boundaries, where the mobility of people and capital is stimulated. This way "established" European Union sees itself as a transitional form of future political union, which exceeds purely economic objectives. This creates a precondition for the creation of a "European citizen".

In this sense, the two pillars of the European Union are crystallized, economic and socio-political, and both have their educational dimensions. Based on the analysis of numerous documents of the EU, in Tables 1 and 2 we provide an overview of EU goals whose implementation is contributed by adult education.

Table 1: Economic objectives of EU
whose implementation is contributed by adult education

EU as the most competitive and dynamic economy in the world based on knowledge, capable of sustainable economic growth with the highest employment rate and strong economic and social cohesion
Finishing the construction of an unique internal efficient and integrated EU market
The establishment of economic and monetary union
The answer to the current economic crisis
The competitiveness of industry and services
Facilitating adaptation to industrial changes
More jobs and better jobs
For the improvement of their own skills or retraining those workers who are unemployed, who are victims of restructuring companies or change their career Skills improvement or retraining those workers who are unemployed, who are victims of companies restructuring or are changing their career
Strengthening entrepreneurship by improving and simplifying the regulatory environment for enterprises
Sustainable economic development

Table 1 shows that the EU wants to become the most competitive economy in the world based on knowledge. Adult education is seen as a tool to achieve economic success, which, in practice, is operationalized through investment in skills needed to obtain, perform and keep a job.

Table 2: Socio-political objectives of EU
whose implementation is contributed by adult education

Facing the EU with various challenges: socio-economic, demographic, environmental and technological
Successful expansion of the EU
Strengthening the democratic legitimacy of the European institutions and improving their effectiveness
Development of the EU social dimension, through better social cohesion and inclusion, as well as the improvement of skills and modernization of social protection systems
Establishing a common foreign and security policies
Culture of human rights respect and democracy
Increasing mobility
Active citizenship
Recognizing and preserving diversity of national specificities (culture, language, traditions, etc.)
Personal development of EU citizens

Regarding the objectives specified in Table 2, we believe that they are largely associated with economic objectives. Political stability is necessary for the successful economy functioning. Concept of democracy is the solution for political stability for the European countries, and it is accepted by consensus. However, these democracies are understood differently in different countries, and they range from social to liberal democracy. Nonetheless, adult education in the Euro-

pean Union is seen as a tool for achieving a democratic society through education for the citizens. Our analysis suggests that the EU invested less in this sector than in vocational education and training, and learning for personal development is very rarely and incidentally mentioned. European Union, in its documents, promotes the concept of *lifelong learning*. This way personal responsibility for own development is being promoted, which represents a departure from education, especially formal education. There are many interpretations that this is an attempt of "hand washing" for the situation in this area. The European Union, through adult education policy is trying to solve its demographic problems – the growing number of elderly, migrants and illiterate for the European criteria. In order to conduct this role of adult education, Europe sets numerous objectives for adult education in its documents. The most important goals of adult education that we have identified, based on analysis of documents, are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Objectives of adult education in EU

EU as a knowledge-based society, that is, as a society that learns – doing everything for lifelong learning to become a reality
The creation of a European citizen and the development of the European dimension in education
Creating a European education area, with special emphasis on the creation of a unique, flexible and efficient European system of university teaching and research that would be competitive on the global market for knowledge
Guaranteeing full and continuing access to learning for gaining and renewing the skills needed for sustained participation in the knowledge society
Development of teaching and learning effective methods, but also the conditions necessary for the continuing lifelong and life-wide learning
Modernization of the school education, vocational education and training (the Copenhagen process); higher education (Bologna process)
Improving and promoting fairness in education and training
Improving and promoting efficiency in education and training
Quality assurance in adult education
Improving and promoting active citizenship
Encouraging mobility of students and teachers
Promote and encourage cooperation among education systems of the Member States, as well as between institutions of all levels and orientation
Encouraging mutual recognition of academic degrees and periods of study
Providing easy access to quality information and advice related to the acquisition of lifelong education in Europe through counseling and guidance
Satisfaction of the educational needs of all students and teachers who participate in all levels and forms of education
Achieving key competencies
Learning and popularization of the Member States' languages
Encouraging the development of distance education and broader and more effective use of information technology
Improvement of initial and further vocational training in order to facilitate vocational integration and reintegration into the labor market

Facilitating access to vocational training
Education for increasing employability
Personal, social and professional fulfillment of all citizens
Strengthening creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training
Networking in key sectors for the development of EU human resources, as well as encouraging a visible increase in human resources' investment
Significantly improve the way of understanding and evaluating participation in the education process, as well as the results of education (particularly non-formal and informal learning)
Providing lifelong learning opportunities to citizens as closely as possible, in their places of residence, and supported through ICT technology and infrastructure
Supporting reform of the adult education system, especially the development of national qualifications frameworks and strategies for lifelong learning
Development of measures and learning opportunities, especially for the least qualified adults
Encouraging non-formal and informal learning opportunities through the use of opportunity for their evaluation
Improving the monitoring of the sector for adult education

We are aware that while listing the education aims, we could not avoid the trap of simplification, because of the huge number of goals that appear in a number of European documents. We are also aware that the stated objectives have different levels of generalization (some are sub-goals, means to achieve more general objectives), but without their guidance we could only give a general statement that *the educational objective of the European Union is lifelong learning for all*. Analyzing these objectives, we can roughly divide them into 4 categories: goals that highlight the economic dimension (entrepreneurship, employability, human resources, improvement of professional education, career guidance and counseling ...); educational goals that highlight the social dimension (justice and access to education, social cohesion and integration, cooperation...); goals that highlight the political dimension (creation of a European citizen, developing the European dimension in education, active citizenship); goals with personal and human dimension (personal, social and professional fulfillment of all citizens). The frequency and the presence of these groups of goals in official European documents tell us that the European policy of adult education is most directed on the economical educational objectives. They are followed by educational goals, with prominent social dimensions, and predominantly political goals after them. The least frequently mentioned objectives are educational objectives focused on personal development of the individual.

When we talk about *priority target groups* primarily aimed by European policy adult education, we can emphasize that the most common target groups are marginalized and disadvantaged target groups, such as adults with low qualifications, the illiterate, the disabled, the unemployed, migrants, people from vulnerable social groups and in marginal social contexts, the old people and employees at risk of losing their job. Employed teachers at all levels can be grouped in the

priority target groups of European education policies. Europe's orientation on teachers is logical, considering the fact that they are the bearers and implementers of the education process, and the orientation on employees reflects the priority economical dimension of European adult education.

Based on the presented analysis, we can conclude that the transferable aspects are actually the key aspects of European adult education policy, such as *the general concept and goals of adult education* through which the concept is operationally defined, and then *the orientation on specific target groups*. Transferability of educational objectives implies the possibility of transferability of legislative framework and even educational programs.

Active mechanisms of European adult education policies' diffusion at the national level

Analyzing the national governance systems of adult education in Serbia, Slovenia and Denmark, we came to the conclusion that there is a great convergence between European adult education policies and adult education policies in these countries. Priorities are reflected in the legislative documents in analyzed countries, for which we can say that they were written in full European discourse. On the declarative level, there is an absolute commitment to the concept of lifelong learning, which is seen as a tool for achieving economic and social objectives. Lifelong education is promoted not only in the documents dedicated to continuing adult education, but also in the documents related to the economic, social, environmental, demographic, security, and anti-discrimination policies. The least affected by the European adult education policy are the institutional structures of the national adult education system, which are under the greatest influence of national tradition of adult education. However, the analysis of the programmatic orientation of traditional educational institutions shows that it is in the European discourse, because the programs are largely funded by the EU, so we can ask the question about their true authenticity.

Excessive reliance on European funding may jeopardize the relationship of educational institutions with the needs of its users and lead to a collapse of the system. In our opinion, tradition is the most manifest in the national (or perhaps better to say regionally) understanding of the adult education social role. In Denmark, in a country that is among the top three in Europe according to the criteria of participation in adult learning, adult education is traditionally viewed as a way of life, which they use in the national peculiar way, to solve their social problems. We have the impression that in other countries, such as Slovenia, and especially in Serbia, adult education is conducted more on a declarative level, as can be seen in the states' financial investment allocated in this area. In practical solutions and concepts we can see a lot of peculiarities in Danish adult education policy, such as the concept of flexicurity (adopted by the EU), the financing on

the "taximeter" basis, strengthening the demand for adult education by direct financial intervention of the state, instead of strengthening the educational offering, which is a unique mode of decentralization in education. However, these solutions are in line with the European education policy and European discourse. Differences in adult education funding, in our opinion, beside the economic power of the country, stem from the different understanding of democracy. The fact is that, socio-democratic countries invest more in adult education then countries with liberal-democratic orientation. It seems to us that the European recommendations are sometimes perceived as an idea that still needs to be developed and operationalized and adapted in the national framework, while other times remain only at the level of rhetoric. Therefore, nation-states looking after the European policy also tend to recommend, forgetting that they are the ones that should be implementing these recommendations. So, it seems to us that it is undeniable that there is diffusion of European adult education politics on the national policy of adult education.

Analyzing the literature, we identified the potential mechanisms of European policies diffusion on the national policy of adult education. These mechanisms are divided into several groups and they are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Potential diffusion mechanisms of the European policy on the national adult education policy

Legislative and principle mechanisms of influence
The mechanisms of adult educations mutual policy-making
The mechanisms of financial and program impact
The mechanisms of adult education policies' mutual harmonization
The mechanisms of impact through conceptual and terminological apparatus
The mechanisms of influence through the collection and dissemination of data
The mechanisms of impact through research results in the field of adult education

In the legislative and principal mechanisms of influence we have included: primary sources of EU law (the Treaties), EU's international agreements with non-member countries, communitarian acts (regulations, directives, decisions, recommendations and opinions) and the general principles of community law (the principle of subsidiarity, the principle of flexicurity, basic human rights and principles: legal certainty, proportionality, hearing and equality interested sides).

The mechanisms of mutual policy-making of adult education includes: the Open Method of Coordination and Peer Learning Activities. These are the mechanisms for sharing experiences, creating policies and building approaches related with adult education.

In the mechanisms of financial and program impact, we have included educational programs that are funded by the EU, such as: Comett, Erasmus, Petra, Youth for Europe, Lingua, Eurotecnet, Force, Tempus, Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci, Comenius, Grundtvig, Jean Monnet, Erasmus +.

As examples of mutual harmonization mechanisms of adult education policies we can mention: The European Qualifications Framework (EQF), Common Quality Assurance Framework for Vocational Education and Training in Europe ((CQAF) for VET in Europe), The European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), a Coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks for monitoring progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training. These and many other mechanisms are used for creation of a single educational space.

Mechanisms of influence through conceptual and terminological apparatus are manifested by promoting the concept of lifelong learning, non-formal and informal learning, lifelong guidance and counseling, key competences for lifelong learning.

As last resort mechanisms of influence, we identified collection and dissemination of data and research results in the field of adult education, through data banks and several professional networks, such as are Eurydice, NARIC network, the Euroguidance.

After analyzing the documentation and identification of potential mechanisms of adult education policies' diffusion, we started an empirical research of the experts' opinions. Opinions of experts in the field of adult education policy about the mechanisms of policies' diffusion and their effectiveness are presented in Table 5. Based on the opinions of international experts in the field of education policy, we can conclude that the basic mechanism of diffusion of European policy on national adult education policy is the financial mechanism.

Table 5: The most effective mechanisms of diffusion of European policy on national adult education policies

The mechanisms of financial and program impact
The mechanisms of impact through research results in the field of adult education
The mechanisms of mutual adult education policy-making
The mechanisms of conceptual and terminological apparatus
"Package"

The mechanisms of financial and program impact, that is, programs (projects) of the EU have been estimated as a very strong impact mechanism, and they include direct financial support from the EU for specific educational activities which are part of European adult education policies' discourse.

The research results, their dissemination and application are also a powerful mechanism, which by the force of empirical research arguments have influence on the national education policy. This mechanism is also connected with the research financing at the European level, where research funding is obtained in accordance with the problem-oriented priorities set by EU. Regarding this, it is possible that various stakeholders exert pressure (lobby) in accordance with its

financial strength and the willingness to invest in research of adult education and learning. Poorer countries which do not invest enough in research in adult education, can use the results of other countries' research, or to apply for funding from the Union or other stakeholders, who also promote their goals through its research.

As for *the mechanisms of adult education mutual policy-making*, open method of coordination, according to experts, has a considerable influence on adult education national policies and it represents a mechanism of mutual learning. Here we can also observe the financial dimension: sharing examples of the European adult education practice often takes place through examples that are often financed from European funds and their contents support the European adult education policy.

Experts in the field of adult education policy think that the *mechanisms of conceptual and terminological apparatus* have some influence. This mechanism is partially linked to the mechanism of adult education research, and partly with the "package" mechanism, which means that multiple mechanisms act together and simultaneously. It is clear that the adopted notions and conceptions determine the direction of our thinking and action in all fields, including in the field of adult education.

During the interviews with experts in the field of adult education policies, we have noticed a tendency to often mention that the diffusion and transfer of policy is done *"in a package"*. This mechanism would certainly be further examined, because there are many potential reasons for this phenomenon. It may be about the necessity to "demonstrate" its loyalty to the EU on a declarative level, because most of the documents of this type do not oblige the country that brought them to do anything in terms of their implementation. In some countries, there are not enough experts in the field of adult education policies (or are not involved in policy-making) and they uncritically accept "complete solution" of developed countries.

Experts had mentioned the influence of civil or NGO sector on educational practice, and through it on the policy, but we should remind that this sector is largely financed through EU funds, so this mechanism is not singled out as special one. It is worth mentioning that there are mechanisms, in this case some institutions, such as ETF for example, which are very active and influential in many EU countries as well as in countries that want to be part of the EU, but are not active in parts of some European countries, such as Denmark for instance.

It seems to us that the identified mechanisms do not have the same intensity in the studied countries. In a rich country like Denmark, financing mechanisms or those that involve financial support are not as intense as in Slovenia, and especially in Serbia. Experts and institutions from Denmark are not forced to apply for European funds, in the extent that experts and institutions from poorer

countries are. At the same time, the financial basis for research in adult learning and education in Denmark is much better than in other analyzed countries, providing greater independence in this field. It is worth mentioning that the Nordic Council has a bigger role on this issue for Denmark than the EU.

Questions instead of conclusion

Considering that we found that there are clear mechanisms of influence or diffusion of EU adult education policy, where the funding is in the basis of most mechanisms, we want to present this finding in the form of a questions: is there an influence and who influences the European policy of adult education; is there a reverse influence or diffusion; what is the intensity of the impact of international organizations such as UNESCO, the World Bank, the OECD, at the European and national level? The mentioned questions should be answered by some new research. The European educational policy reflects various interests, including the owners of big business, multinational companies, and the civil sector. Financial dominance of the capital owners certainly exceeds the capabilities of civil society, which is manifested through the scope and type of research that are conducted and their results have implications for most countries that do not have their own research infrastructure. This way an educational discourse that is manifested in educational programs (projects) financed by EU is. Institutions from countries that have little investment in adult education, are increasingly apply for EU funds that promote a policy that is in line with the EU discourse. This raises a number of questions, which may have an ethical dimension.

What we can say with certainty is that the whole spectrum of mechanisms of European adult education policies' diffusion, with a pronounced economic dimension, is applied to European countries, and the intensity, type and form of influence depend on complex political, economic, demographic, cultural and other factors.

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RESEARCH TOOLS AND THEIR IMPACT ON OUR UNDERSTANDING OF LEARNING IN PROGRAMS OF ADULT EDUCATION?

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Abstract

A discussion of how approaches to research relate to understanding quality in adult education programs is proposed here, departing from an analytical exercise making mature students' stances on learning in an arts university based program its' object of interest. Focusing on the language mature students employ in exploring in interviews their satisfaction with the experience and outcomes of learning, it is proposed a socio-cultural perspective to understanding how adults experience learning and form an understanding of themselves whilst at university. To this end, the analytical tools provided by Davis and Harré's positioning theory (1990) and Bloome's chronotopical analysis (2009) developed from Bakhtin's notion of chronotope (1981) have been employed. Reflection on quality of adult education programs is invited, remarking on the manifold ways in which approaches to research impact the understanding of learning and experience in current approaches to adult education.

Key words: learning, experience, adult education, quality.

Introduction

A number of analyses question the nature of inquiry and traditions in theorizing learning in adult education. Traditional understandings of adult education practices generally take an either/or stance to theorizing the two main poles of the individual-society/self-other dualism: the psychological pole maintaining a focus on the self as an abstract category, positioned in a complicated causal relationship with the world around, nevertheless occupying and maintaining a central, determining position within it, and the sociological pole, claiming complete social determinism of the self. Tennant (2014) remarks that the dilemma this

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either/or approach presents adult educators with, is that neither offers a satisfactory perspective on practice: the first seems naive in failing to acknowledge the deterministic power of social forces, the other is overly pessimistic, as it robs education of any transformative power and the learner of any autonomy.

Alternatively, postmodern theoretical instantiations propose a departure from any binary opposition by treating the individual and the societal as jointly produced in discursive practices. Postmodern stances on understanding the individual and the social claim them both to be rather effects being generated, than pre-existing, unhistorical entities to the discursive practices of education. The idea of a coherent, rational, unitary individual acting on the world is rather de-construed in postmodern analyses in the shape of historically generated discourses embodied in every day practices, historically produced, culturally imbued and highly contextualized.

Setting the problem and the proposed approach

The postmodern criticism to theoretical traditions of adult learning is valuable for outlining the difficulties in theorizing a fundamental, stable, unhistorical self. Still, it is very important to recognize that in sites of adult education, many programs are striving for a coherent understanding of the self, indispensable to educational practices that aim at being transformative (Tennant, M., 2014, in Illeris, K., ed.). Correspondingly, research focusing on understanding learning and quality of experiences in adult education may take a variety of approaches informed in either theoretical ground. The importance to understanding the relationship between what the conceptual and methodological tools to understanding learning and the notion of quality in adult education programs cannot be understated.

An analytical exercise taking a socio-cultural perspective to conceptualizing learning is proposed here, in hopes of understanding how adults experience learning and form an understanding of themselves in the various contexts of learning, by focusing on the language and conceptual tools they employ in exploring in interviews their satisfaction with the experience and outcomes of learning, whilst participating in an academic arts program at the university.

Method

The findings presented and discussed in this study come from a small-scale, interview-based study conducted in December 2013 – Jannuary 2014 in a vocational arts university in Romania. Six participants, four majoring in Music Interpretation and two in Visual Arts Pedagogy, four male and two women, between 25 and 70 years old, have agreed to take part in this small scale study asking them

to take part in semi-structured, voice-recorded interviews. The invitation to this study was extended to large year-groups formations attending lectures in Pedagogy at the university. The invitation included an explanation of the purposes of research, which was to explore how mature students experience learning at the university of arts. The six people who accepted to take part in the study where second and third-year students in bachelor degree programs. Interviews were voice-recorded and transcribed at a later stage.

Analysis of language data employed the conceptual tools of chronotopical analysis (Bakhtin, 1981; Bloome et al, 2009) and those of positioning theory (Davis and Harré,1990). Davis and Harré's notion of *a subject position* incorporates both a conceptual repertoire and a location for persons within the structure of rights for those that use that repertoire. The two differentiate between interactive positioning (in which what one person says positions another) and reflexive positioning (in which one positions oneself) as operational tools for analyzing language. Bloome et al. (2009) employed Bakhtin's (1981) notion of chronotope to analyze pupils' engagement with learning opportunities in teacher-pupils classroom interaction. Chronotopes are understood as sets of assumptions (an ideology) about how people move through time and space and how that movement is related to changes in the person and in the worlds in which she/he participates. The construct of a chronotope focuses attention on how people conceptualize their collective and individual movement through time and space. A distinction is made between individually held chronotopes, shared chronotopes, and publicly held chronotopes. By juxtaposing these differing chronotopes participants to activities create learning opportunities, which are social events in which a person or people are positioned to adopt and adapt (take up) a set of social and cultural practices associated with academic domains (cf. Rex 2006).

The analytical tools presented here have previously been employed and some of the data has been presented in an exploration of learning and aspects of identity affirming issues in narrative accounts of adult participants present in the university campus later in life (Mitescu, 2014b).

Findings discussed

In analysis each narrative was treated as an opportunity for the researcher to immerse herself in the storyline in order to make sense of how the narrator was constructing in language a learner identity for themselves, and in this respect, the researcher was a part of the research. The findings of the cross-case analysis of the six narratives performed and presented here do not advance any claim on generalization or representativity of results. This entry prompts an analytical exercise with merely a prototypical value, placing emphasis on the explanatory merits of socio-cultural approaches to understanding learning and on the possible further reflections on the implications of conceptualizing research on understanding and structuring adult education practice.

Thematically, the six semi-structured interviews explore the histories of participants deciding to come to the arts university, their participation in various learning experiences at the university, and participants' projections regarding what was following for the remaining parts of the study-programs they were enrolled in. In analysis the reading of transcripts revealed two common broad subject-positions on exploring learning at the university: the students' perceived level of satisfaction with the learning experiences and exploration of the outcomes of learning. These two translated into a analytical focus on forming an understanding of how these mature students 'read' the terrain of their learning experiences at the university, that is through two main questions: "What am I getting out of it?" and "How does this perceived gain plays in my view of what I need/want?". These two subject-positions help structuring the analytical exercise presented next.

Perceived Learning Outcomes

For all participants in this study the language data from interviews indicated that a storyline of personal fulfillment having consequences on their professional trajectory, and not the other way around, was taking precedence in their accounts of learning at university. But, interesting as it is on its own, for the understanding of the self-other dynamic that it prompts – the notion of self being understood as only deliberately, selectively and instrumentally engaging with the attributes of the professional practice – this general trend in my interviewees' storylines is marked by many twists and turns in participants' ways of positioning possible learning outcomes, worthy of equal attention.

P.F., 30 years old, was studying Religious Music at the university, after having completed a degree in Economics and having worked in an Orthodox church as a singer for more than a decade. When he explores expected outcomes for his presence at the arts university, learning appears to never be locked in a fixed set of expectations. By fluidly positioning both the learning outcomes and the learners' identity in the making, the learner constructs in his wording *an image of shifting identity facets being open for exploration, construction and reconstruction*: "In the beginning I only wanted to acquire some new knowledge about the Byzantine music. Now, even last year I said I like the other subjects, maybe I will go for teaching...is changing, nothing is set yet....it's not shifts, I see them interconnecting ...It's a feeling of uncertainty. I expected something, I found some little doors and other little ones behind these and they all could be opening and there is a temptation there". This example of language prompts evidence that *learning and identity* can be *understood as in the making and* are *of a situated nature*. To this insight contribute many examples of language interviewees have employed in their explorations of their experiences of learning at university.

For P.A., who came to the university at 36 to study Canto, after having been first going to the Popular School of Arts, a non-academic institution offering music training to participants of all ages, here is how she explains how she eventually decided to pursue Canto at university: "I've built my courage to try at the Conservatory for about two more years [after starting at the Popular School of Arts] because it seemed to me that I cannot have access there. It seemed unreachable, intangible by me who didn't go to the music school...because other than talent what else do I bring...I was wondering how will I make it through university aware that there are requirements at academic level, students come there with specialized training behind, having been to high-school or even in gymnasium [in music vocational schools]." The fragment illustrates a manner of juxtaposing the public (institutional) and personal (individual agency) chronotopes as in a mutually exclusive relation, as if the speaker and the institution are situated in completely separated worlds or spaces of reference. The link between the two chronotopes, positioned as what prevented the person to imagine it as an identity link, is explored as a possible explanation to why the two could not have merged: a gateway type of assessment propositions, positioning knowledge as *'academic requirements'* and the imagined identity of potential individual participants as a matter of schooling trajectory and specialization, the implicit being that *on certain learning trajectories specialized knowledge is accumulated* and *thus, legitimizes participation*.

In language, various forms of making cognitive concepts and ideas instrumental to portrayals of learning were framing the map with which students attempted to read the terrain of their learning experiences. Learning is explicitly explored as an enterprise of direct and to some extent guided and supervised confrontation with one's own personal limitations, primarily conceived as a deficit in "information", "skill" and "knowledge". This deficit and the related referential points for exploring their understanding of learning are prompted in how speakers are positioning knowledge, problems, people and institutions in their accounts of their histories of participation to learning.

In P.A's accounts of participation to the university based activities, learning outcomes are critically explored, with the positions towards academic knowledge playing an important, but not the only relevant role in the process of meaning making. In her language, in the course of structuring meaning of learning intentions and learning outcomes, P.A. is taking up an opportunity to legitimizing a personal position in forming an understanding of the learning *experience*, by deliberately and selectively juxtaposing personal and public chronotopes: "I thought I am willing to make any sacrifice and I brought my all into this, strength and patience, and there were some things, some situations which de-motivated me. Perhaps if I were weaker, I would have dropped out...the fact you don't know something makes other laugh...colleagues, sometimes even teachers [...]. Everyone is entitled to joke as they feel fit...maybe I was too tense and I took things too seriously [...] I am not trying to keep all the blame to myself, no way...there's

also my age which maybe....at forty you feel differently a joke...in many ways I could be a friend to some of my teachers, only that I don't know music...but my experience as a human being I think make me an equal to many people here, but they have the authority or the legitimate power to talk in any way they choose because they are teachers....it's nothing offensive and I don't mean to change anybody's behavior...is just that I came here so open...I think art has supremacy and I thought once they allowed me in, there will be so much learning here...". In the beginning of this speech sequence, P.A. accounts for a manner of positioning herself and her experience at the university as *engaged in a trajectory* taking her through various contexts impacting her differently: on one hand there is the explicit positioning of self-attributed qualities, namely "strength", "patience", "my all", and on the other, there are "things" and "situations" and a causal effect on the self-attributed to them "which de-motivated" her; the historicity of those events is presented by the speaker as available to be revisited; this is not necessarily implicit in the temporal dimension of the chronotope (past tense) as it is in the juxtaposition of the personal and public chronotopes: self –other – effects on self; it is opened a narrative perspective, anticipated in the tension created in the deliberate juxtaposition of chronotopes: self with "strength" and "patience" – "situations" and "things" – "de-motivated" self.

The reflective journey that follows takes an exploratory and identity affirming turn. As was the case in the other narratives analyzed, the outcomes and the experience of learning are positioned as a secondary discursive level, and only instrumental to the primary discursive level: that of explaining, affirming the learner (speaker)'s identity. The evidence of this claim in the speech sequence exemplified is in the manner of aligning chronotopes throughout the narrative: it starts of with an explicit positioning of the self, and it ends by a re-affirming the attributes of the self in a similar juxtaposition between self and others ("I came here so open"); in between an exploratory route unravels, in which by juxtaposing personal and public chronotopes the speaker is taking up opportunities to position herself and shape up the meaning of the implied tensions.

The novelty here is that the speaker is rather emphasizing what *learning should not be like, what it should not lead up to.* There are many planes that the speaker is bringing to the forefront of attention in positioning the many possible stances on what the nature of humor and use of language were in the evoked "times" and "situations". "Colleagues" and "teachers" are positioned as relevant actors in shaping through their use of language and "laughter" the quality of the experienced participation. The declared purpose of this explicit causal relationship the speaker is positioning her colleagues, some teachers and the quality of the learning experience, is first and foremost to (*re-*)claim legitimacy for pedagogical attention by virtue of *all attributes* invested by the learner with relevance for shaping up *her experience* of learning, her age and life experience being ones that are explicitly pointed out as significant: "in many ways I could be a friend to some of my teachers".

Learning outcomes are related to an equation of the self that is encompassing a larger horizon than that of academic participation. P.A's account of experiencing "de-motivation" revealed a manner of positioning herself through the situations of social participation in the university that was shaping up a multi-leveled, nuanced meaning of the learning experience. This expanded, complicated, full of tensions way of understanding experience is implied in the speaker's decision to position a restrictive, *gateway* function attributed to the *academic knowledge and related acquisition-perspective on learning outcomes,* only as a departing point in exploring what learning was like and what it led to, in her experience at the university. She explicitly positions this run for an expanded horizon in the end of the exemplified excerpt of language and further in a new speech act: "I think art has supremacy and I thought once they allowed me in, there will be so much learning here...[...] when you get out of a class and think "thank God it's over" I don't like it [...] when there's this, how should I name it, this army style, it blocks everything... you're thinking it's too difficult....there are ways to make things approachable because one comes here out of passion...just don't murder that passion because then it's just tragic". This last specific chronotope, juxtaposing learning-positions exploring *how approaches to learning are being experienced* helps introducing a second perspective taking, I thought holding exploratory merits of its' own – that of participants deliberately reflecting on how the perceived gains play in their views of what is needed/wanted in the learning experience.

Satisfaction with learning

The image over the satisfaction with learning the mature students participating in this study portrayed whilst engaging with making sense of their learning experiences throughout the various stages and contexts of learning at the university in no simple one. Satisfaction appears to be a multicolored or, in the relevant cases, a polyphonic position-set.

In exploring what they like and what they don't, what they find affording and what they find constraining their learning at the university, all interviewees have taken an exploratory route to making and expressing meaningful answers, a route made of exhibiting tensions, engaging with understanding sources of tension and positioning in the various phases of experiencing those tensions. There were no black and white answers.

When engaging with exploring their learning experiences, what differentiates the six trajectories of the participants in this studies are the linguistic, conceptual tools they employ in framing and constructing their answers. In each case tools pertaining to their past professional or educational experiences become visible in the manners in which they make sense of what is happening in the contexts of learning at the University of Arts. For example, in the language of P.B., who apart from being preoccupied with arts, had a 43 years long career in gas installations

engineering and management, the identity is a matter of constantly positioning along the lines of past and present contexts and situations of development, employing in the course of making sense of who he is, various tools, procedures and priorities relevant for the discursive practices informing those social situations of development: "I was expecting it to be like at polytechnics. It was a very serious job, military like, whereas here I found myself like...it was more bohemian this faculty, I mean no one was stressing over being late or sleeping in the lecture hall (...) because for me, being more rigid, coming from a technical background, we could not fail, or be late because for us this could have meant an explosion". Later in the interview, here is how he positions himself in the context of activity: "I've got colleagues who retired and they are like "we retired after forty years, we stay and vegetate now, we take care of the garden..." and I met a couple in the street, they regressed, they don't converse anymore....so the man if is not useful and is not given attention, he is reaching a limit, is falling in such a derive...even if he was a good man, important...and this woke me up even more". The use of a shared chronotope (signified in the manner of using the first person, plural pronoun *we*) to signify an identity affirming positioning towards the group of arts students at the university, and the group of peers who after retiring take different occupational routes with different noticeable impacts on the perceived quality of life is signalling a multi-faceted use of the semantic repertoire, making visible the multi-faceted understanding of who the learner is whilst engaged in learning at the university. Learning experiences can be both criticized and praised for a multitude of reasons, depicting a multi-coloured, multi-layered image of mature student's satisfaction with learning at the university.

Whilst maintaining a general frame of reference for conceiving learning in these parameters, what becomes evident in a situated, historically informed reading of the language interviewees are employing, is that learning is intertwining with searching for opportunities to prompt and affirm *historically consistent identities*. In the course of sorting out who they are as learners in the particular contexts at the university, speakers are engaging in exploring their motives, their ways of doing things and the ways in which these intersect with the tools, procedures and priorities proposed at the university. This makes up for a space and time in which speakers explore in language their agency as learners, an action which makes identities in the making visible.

Implications of researching and understanding learning in adult education

A growing body of literature is providing contextualized accounts of how interaction and participation in learning contexts mediate the construction of both knowledge and identity and their interconnection. In the analytical exercise presented here a socio-cultural perspective on understanding learning created

an opportunity to capture how language accounting for learning experiences is mediating understandings of how speakers place themselves as social actors within cultural worlds and whilst navigating through and expanding their understanding of these worlds, they shape up an expanding understanding of who they are in those worlds.

Thus understood, approaches to figuring out what matters in the learning experiences of mature students at an arts university, are proposed as means to fill in the blanks in constructing a comprehensive image of the complex dynamics of learning at the university. Psychological theories of learning and identity have been dominant in education for the past century. The underlying conceptions are mainly based on individual and cognitive models, prompting approaches to learning rooted in an "acquisition" metaphor, placing focus on actors' cognitive capacities and problem-solving abilities. Whilst informing on descriptive attributes of learning in a rather generalized and de-personalized manner, findings reported in traditional approaches to understanding the effects and measurements of learning outputs and learning conditions in adult education programs, scarcely provide any insight into *how* adults experience learning, its' various moments of tension, how they position in the specific contexts of learning and make sense of who they are, why and how they are doing things in a particular manner whilst engaged in learning endeavors alongside more or less experienced others. An analytical exercise prompting a few possible tools for understanding the learning trajectories of mature students at an arts university was presented here with emphasis on learning that is situated, personal and committed to an identity making process placing humanist values at its core.

There are a number of aspects to be considered. First, whilst traditional cognitive approaches to understanding and practicing learning ought to be questioned for running at the risk of promoting truncated images of learning, the approaches to research, valuing conceptual and methodological instruments for constructing meaning about learning inspired in post-modern criticism of research rhetoric appear to be equally susceptible for running at the risk of promoting images that are so fragmented and contextualized that can never offer a broad perspective on what adult education programs ought to aim for or how to recognize their getting there. The researcher is explicitly called to carefully weigh between the relevance and exploratory potential of the many possible ways to state, inquire, conduct analysis and report research in adult education.

What socio-cultural perspective taking – such as the one I exercised here – is affording the researcher are an introduction to the manifold notions of learning and experience and their relationship to the situated self. The self is construed as part of a larger narrative, opening up possibilities for speakers (in this case, adult learners) to adopt or adapt the various discursive practices shaping up their *reading* of their personal situation of development. What is also afforded in this approach to research is an understanding of how adult learners situate

(signal as important or not, express satisfaction with or not) their authorship of their perceived learning experience. Engaged in a hermeneutic dialogue (Usher, 1992) with the surrounding world and with the world within them, made explicit in their constant attempt for continuity and relevance in affirming their identity, adults engaged in explorations of how learning looks like at the university, position themselves as rather engaged in a quest for autonomy than in simply taking for granted scripted versions of their future selves, as perhaps a different manner of conducting research might have prompted us with.

This special positioning of autonomous meaning making is best reflected in Candy's description of the characteristics of constructivist thought, and proposed implications on the construction of self for educators, particularly adult educators. In summary, there are five implications, which seem to follow a sequence: self-constructing people tend towards autonomy; autonomy emerges in the 'dynamic' exercise of self-constructing; autonomy is therefore not given to learners, but claimed by them; such claims result from the 'inner life' or central beliefs around which self-constructions are organized, and which give intention and logic to behavior; finally, it behooves educators to enter into such individual learner perspectives as far as possible (1991, pp.259–262 apud. Beckett, 1995).

In doing so, what the particular analytical exercise presented here is informing practitioners and researchers with, is on the complex myriad of perspective taking and boundary crossing between discursive practices and the possible, and many times, contradictory subject-positions that adult learners take on, in understanding the significance of learning, its' outcomes and in positioning in matters of satisfaction with the learning experience in education programs. It is simply counterproductive when measuring, appreciating and raising the quality of adult education programs to overpass this kind of complex positioning and view on what is relevant and needed in learning, from the adult learners' perspectives. One first and minimal corrective step is, as Candy plainly put it, to encourage practitioners to immerse themselves as much and as far as possible into such individual learner perspectives. The other is to calibrate the instruments to assess quality to incorporate measurements of the diverse repertoires that learners employ in signifying experience and satisfaction with learning. In doing so, approaches to inquiry and research are to be revised too, and carefully calibrated with the scope and nature of the problem-space subjected to inquiry.

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CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR INNOVATIONS IN LEARNING CITY – REGION DEVELOPMENTS IN PÉCS, HUNGARY NEW PERSPECTIVES FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CO-OPERATIVE LEARNING

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Abstract

Accordingly, the Faculty of Adult Education and HRD of the University of Pécs initiated three local learning platforms in the Fall of 2014 as part of the Pécs Learning City-Region Forum, based on the initiative of UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning on the *Global Learning Cities Network,* as an umbrella network to get new collaborations started amongst learning organisations. These platforms collects and share best practices around the following themes: *Atypical/Non-formal Learning platform*; *School and Environment platform*; *Inclusion and Handicapped Situations platform*.

This paper will elaborate upon how the *Atypical/Non-formal Learning platform* generates specific adult learning and training of educators in local Hungary based on a global initiative of learning cities. Accordingly, it will examine the challenges and opportunities for the learning city model of Pécs, based on some concrete actions in museums, and other cultural organisations, in engaging more adults in learning and developing their own communities in atypical forms of co-operative learning within and across particular platform-based actions.

Key words: learning city – region, community, community development, co-operative learning

Global impacts on the learning city-region developments

The evolution of learning regions started right in 1972, when the OECD initiated a seven city project which it called *Educating Cities*. Vienna, Edinburgh,

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Kakegawa, Pittsburgh, Edmonton, Adelaide and Gothenburg would undertake to put education at the forefront of their strategies and policies with a view to developing economic performance. And that experience would then be translated into an example for other cities around the world. There have been many positive results from that project but perhaps it's a comment on the fate of all projects, or perhaps it's the nature of politics, that, in the 1990s, only in Gothenburg did the city officials even knew about the project 20 years later.

Surprisingly, it was in the early 1990s that things started to develop in a much broader (Longworth, 1999). Longworth labelled it the as *the age of innocence* – when researchers recognised that something was afoot but not quite what it was. A couple of accelerating conferences took place in the first half of the decade, both of them helping to push back the limits of knowledge and action. The Gothenburg gathering in 1992, also sponsored by OECD, was a follow-up from the *Educating Cities* project. It initiated the international association of educating cities, based in Kaunas, and now with a membership of more than 400 cities world-wide.

The Rome conference was organised by the *European Lifelong Learning Initiative* and the American Council for Education in 1996 and this, in its turn, created the *World Initiative on Lifelong Learning*. Sadly both ELLI and WILL are now defunct but they contributed a great deal to the advancement of learning city knowledge during the 1990s. ELLI was instrumental in developing some of the early *charters for learning regions* – charters that spelled out the commitment of a region to improving learning opportunities and methodologies for all its inhabitants It looked like this – the basis for a widespread discussion on improving the local culture of learning. Cities as far apart as Adelaide, Halifax in Canada, Espoo in Finland and Dublin took this charter template and adapted it for their own use.

And then the middle of the decade came with the European year of Lifelong Learning in 1996 – it was taken very seriously by ELLI and most universities – perhaps because there was a funding stream attached to it – yet, its significance was unfortunately largely ignored by many of the organisations that matter – cities, regions and schools and business and industry and most of the population of Europe. In spite of this, there can be no doubt that the provenance of today's work on learning cities and regions lies in the early work on lifelong learning given an impetus by the European Year. And 1996 did lead to a renewed awareness of the importance of education and more particularly to the idea that a world of rapid political, economic, technological and environmental change in turn leads to rapid changes in the practice and delivery of education.

Most critical thinkers on education and learning understood that the late 20th century world of education and training in which teacher's wisdom was delivered top-down to those who were thought worthy of it was giving way to a much more open lifelong learning world of personal learning continuous

throughout life, while most of the educational world was still immersed in its own version of the dark ages. Most of them believed that education was not available to all citizens but also with an imperative to persuade whole populations that learning is a good thing for their economic, social and intellectual health and well-being and for social stability in general.

This was a 180 degree change of focus from top-down education delivery – to a bottom-up satisfaction of the needs and demands of the learner. Using the tools and techniques of lifelong learning such as personal learning plans. One must also indicate, however, that advocates of adult learning and education have always supported bottom-up orientation so as to improve both learning and related skills! Moreover, the modern lifelong learning approach was also initiated by adult learning professionals in the United Kingdom declated in the famous 1919 Report. (Fieldhouse, 1996) The Report underlined that policies and development goals in adult education ought to be oriented to learners' needs and to their particular choices be expended through local and regional provisions either in formal or non-formal structures. The late rise of the lifelong learning approach of the 1990s in the EU was also promoted by adult education advocate groups and communities so as to generate bottom-up directed policies concentrated through EU-principles and common actions, programmes to step forward. The emphasis upon the improvement od basic skills, the accreditation/validation of prior learning and, also, the development of learning spaces/cities and regions clearly reflected a bottom-up focus in connection with realities dominating learning capacities of individuals and their communities.

Requirements audits, mentors, coaches and guides and access to electronic networks. The cynical view of course is that it hasn't lasted – that politicians, in their search for measurable indicators to persuade the voters that education is improving, would take the easy top-down utilitarian option – and so it has proved in some countries, but there are still some idealists who see learning cities and regions as the natural location for the practical application of lifelong learning, transforming it from a vague concept into a workable reality and who still think that it will be possible to see people of all ages indulging happily in – to quote the title of the Finnish National Lifelong Learning Policy Document – the joy of learning, what an excellent title for a Government paper.

Unfortunately, by ignoring a great number of excellent initiatives, the process moved on to *the age of experimentation.* In the later part of the 1990s National Learning City networks began to appear – firstly in the United Kingdom and followed later by those Finland and Sweden. The North European focus by the way reflects very much the centre of gravity of lifelong learning and learning city interest.

With several notable exceptions Southern, Central and Eastern Europe have taken much longer to embrace the very real benefits of creating learning cities and regions. In this new age of experimentation, Learning Region projects began

to be funded – 16. one of them 'TELS Towards a European Learning Society' developed what it called a Learning Cities Audit Tool and studied the performance of 80 European municipalities. In ten domains of learning activity from access to participation, from leadership to commitment, from wealth creation and employability to celebration and social inclusion.

Unsurprisingly, it found that the words 'Learning City' and 'Learning Region' were not well known – indeed in more than two thirds of those 80 cities, they were completely unknown – but the surprise is this – once the audit tool had been used and the concept had become known, a large number of them asked themselves why they were not more active in these domains, and became converts to the cause. Perhaps this was the first recorded use of an academic questionnaire as an evangelical tool. At this time too, there were conferences and learning city launches – places like Liverpool, Espoo, Edinburgh and Glasgow and several other cities, many of them in the UK came out, as it were. *Learning Festivals* celebrated the joy of learning in Glasgow and in Sapporo, Japan.

And so Europe drifted into the new millennium and what may be called *the age of advance* propelled principally by the European Commission's Lisbon agenda, which has put lifelong learning at the forefront of European policy. The development of learning cities and regions was one key strategy of that policy – and so the European policy paper on the local and regional dimension of lifelong learning was born in 2001. This important document was based on the results of TELS and written by Norman Longworth. The document clearly stated that 'Cities and regions in a globalized world cannot afford not to become learning cities and regions. It is a matter of prosperity, stability, employability and the personal development of all citizens' They were clear and forward looking words indeed, and a striking challenge to every local and regional authority that has read – them – which, because of the nature of information transmission, is unfortunately, very few.

But later, the OECD also geared up the process in 2001 with its learning regions project in 5 European regions – Jena in Germany, Oresund in Sweden and Denmark, Vienne in France, Kent in UK and Andalusia. Among its findings was the perhaps surprising statement that secondary education appears to be the most important for regional development and the more predictable one that there is a need to encourage creativity at all levels of education. And that's a theme that crops up time and time again in learning region folklore – *creativity, innovation, vision* at all levels of education – Would that it were so in reality.

CEDEFOP, the European Vocational Training Agency also joined in the party in 2001. The results of its own project between regions of Europe and USA urged regional management to develop a means by which educational and other organizations have a common purpose – each one learning from each other and each one learning with each other – in planning and implementing social and economic innovations. Those are significant words – because now we seemed to be making a real advance in our understanding of what a learning region is – co-operative, multi-faceted, creative, innovative, communicative, – different.

And despite the fact that many cities and regions are still well behind the mark in the new millennium, the movement to create learning cities and regions threatened to become an avalanche – as a couple of examples among many, Germany established around 76 learning regions, while every city, town and municipality in Victoria Australia became a learning entity.

On the one hand, we also have to stay realistic today and indicate that the German example of Learning Regions provided a short rise and fall as most Learning Regions/Lernende Regionen faded away when the ESF (European Social Fund) support came to an end after the 2006 close to the financing period. That fall was well-reflected in the overall BMBF-report having evaluated the social impact of learning regions in Germany.

On the other, it is worth watching that the Chinese government has recently decreed that every large city in China should become a learning city by 2010 and beyond. Not too late from this, the IDEOPOLIS was born, described by Tom Cannon and his collaborators as 'A City or Region whose economy is driven by the creative search for, and the application of, new ideas, thinking and knowledge, and which is firmly rooted to the creative transfer of ideas, to opportunities, to innovation, and eventually to production.'

There are those words again – *creative, innovation, new ideas and thinking*. These initiatives moved most researchers into what might be called *the age of understanding* – and many of them finally thought they got it – or knew, or thought they knew – what being a learning region entails and, simultaneously, the number of European projects increased. From every part of the Commission – Learning Cities and Regions are now included in the Framework research programmes and a lifelong learning element now has to be included in the vast majority of the Commission's Social and development Funding. There became a great need for tools and materials that would help cities and regions to get that understanding. Therefore, particular Socrates projects developed those learning tools for city and regional management and learning materials to help them propagate the message to others. And yet the OECD would have you believe that *all regions seek to sustain economic activity through various combinations of lifelong learning, innovation and creative uses of information and communication technologies.* (OECD, Learning Regions project – 2003). One can find more on learning cities and regions at www.eurolocal.info

Some theoretical frames on learning and the learning economy

In order to promote an understanding of the concept of learning cities, learning regions, it is worth indicating that there are four major related but different impact for the idea itself. The first impact for the reconceptualisation of learning and learning economy (and indeed learning organizations) can be

traced to what now must be seen as a seminal paper by Lundvall and Johnson (1994) on the *learning economy*. Its importance of different types of learning and the difference between codified and tacit learning is well articulated – something not new to those in the fields of education and adult learning. What is of special interest however in the paper by Lundvall and Johnson is the explicit connections made to economy. While *the role of learning in production and work is not new,* generally it was largely 'assumed' and occurred invisibly (Razavi, 1997). What Lundvall and Johnson (1994) and others (Edquist, 1997; OECD 2000) have identified and stressed *in newly emerging knowledge economy is that learning is now a fundamental process and resource.*

A second impact for learning cities, learning regions arrives from *the application of learning within and across organisations* (Senge, 1990). Economic geographers too, have underlined in what forms *the transfer and sharing of knowledge and ideas across informal networks within industry clusters* (sometimes referred to as collective learning) *seems to be a critical aspect of creativity and innovation* (Keeble et al, 1999).

Since innovation is a basic element in the knowledge economy, ways to promote, support and enhance innovation are important (Edquist, 1997). As for *case studies of technopoles and industrial complexes in Europe* (Cooke and Morgan, 1998), the United Kingdom (UK) and the USA and Canada (Wolfe and Gertler, 2001) there is growing evidence and awareness that *learning is the fundamental process at work in the new knowledge economy*. Far from a presumed and hidden force, it needs to be made explicit, strengthened and backed up.

Apart from matching clusters and communities of practice *the work of economic geographers signalled* a third important aspect for the conceptualisation of learning cities, learning regions – *the spatial context.* Florida (1995) set the idea of learning regions and others (Bokema et al, 2000) described as the basis of *regional innovation systems*. A very special idea was framed here that in particular locales learning, which was fostered and supported through *good learning infrastructure* (i.e. a regional innovation system) *enabled the locality to compete in a global economy.* This recognition of the regional scale provides *an important link to local economic development and the importance of learning, social capital and human capital in community development.* By setting this link, it is open, thereby, to move beyond a potentially narrowly defined regional innovation system which watches on business and industry alone *to take a wider whole-of-community approach where increasingly learning and learning processes can be the vehicle to equip and empower whole communities* (Amin, 1999). Allison (2001) has broadened the spheres of activities and influence for learning *to underline a learning communities approach to local economic development*. In this approach *an explicit link between learning initiatives, partnerships and governance, social capital and building local capacity together with capabilities and economic prosperity* is developed.

This lies at the centre of local economic development and several community case studies in urban and rural areas demonstrate how this approach may promote local economic development. Parallel to this special approach to local economic development is the work of scholars in the field of education research. Tooke (2000), for example, argues that the broader value of learning has been recognised by those who work in and focus on education, lifelong learning, adult and community education. Obviously, this scholarly tradition brings in *a timely and useful critique to the concept of learning regions provoking an effort to embrace wider social and community development issues.* The TELS (Towards a European Learning Society) Project (Longworth, 1999) and the UK Learning Towns Project (Yarnit, 2000) clearly present *four critical objectives for learning and learning initiatives which encompass (i) economic prosperity; (ii) social inclusion; (iii) sustainability; and (iv) governance.*

These objectives resemble with those most frequently indicated in local economic development strategies. It is the interconnection of these *different dimensions of "learning" which result in a framework for a whole-of-community approach to learning cities, learning regions* to underline the economic and social life of communities in the global economy. In this *broader conceptualisation,* the scope of actions and *value of learning goes well beyond a limited definition of industry clusters and issues of competitiveness, innovation* (as important as these are). As the flow of learning initiatives by Yarnit (2000), Longworth (1999), Longworth and Franson (2001), Allison (2001) and others describe, learning makes its way through the community in many ways.

With each of these activities, the community may learn and develop sustainably. Learning enables communities to face change, adapt and transform on their own. *When the concept of learning cities, learning regions is understood in a broader framework, it opens up exciting potential and possibilities for many communities, particularly, when considered against reductionist narratives on exclusively economy-centred structure, by turning to more balanced models.*

European Background of the Lifelong Learning Initiative

It is essential to look back upon the European starting steps in the theme of lifelong learning to have been influencing the scope of new roles for higher education. The first step towards lifelong learning within the context of the European Union was taken through the European Lifelong Learning Initiative (ELLI) in Rome in 1995, when researchers in education opened a public forum at a conference for promoting learning and the development of quality of content, process of education. (ELLI, 1995)

The emerging role of higher education institutions in the development of lifelong learning is obviously essential for making lifelong learning a reality as

universities and colleges, since the late 1990s, contribute to the realisation of that initiative and Lisbon-goals, together with the aims of the *Education and training 2010* working programme. The latest document clearly pointed out the role of higher education. (EC, 2003) Also, the working programme was strongly attached to the goals outlined in the concrete future objectives of the education and training systems of the member states of the European Union and reflected three strategic dimensions which explain the roles of higher education in developing lifelong learning:

These are:

1) The development of the quality and efficiency of the education and training systems within the European Union;
2) The development of opportunities and access to the education and training systems;

   (The two points are both reflected in the well-known *Bologna-process* to highlight the steps forward the European Area of Higher Education)
3) The development of forms external partnership of education and training systems.

   (This point was embedded into the framing of *learning cities and regions of lifelong learning* initiatives in and after 2001, namely, into the development of learning cities, regions and related good practice in some of the member states.)

The third point of the working programme explains that higher education, as part of the education and training system, must be open and act as a partner in local and regional partnerships to develop communities! The indicated points underline the initiative of the European Commission which, since 2002, has been supporting the establishment or change and modernisation of local and regional spaces of lifelong learning. The aim is so as to get formal, non-formal and informal learning closer to each other, referring to the partnership of public administration, higher education, chambers of commerce and industry, sectors of economy, culture and civic society by forming regions of lifelong learning (EC, 2002).

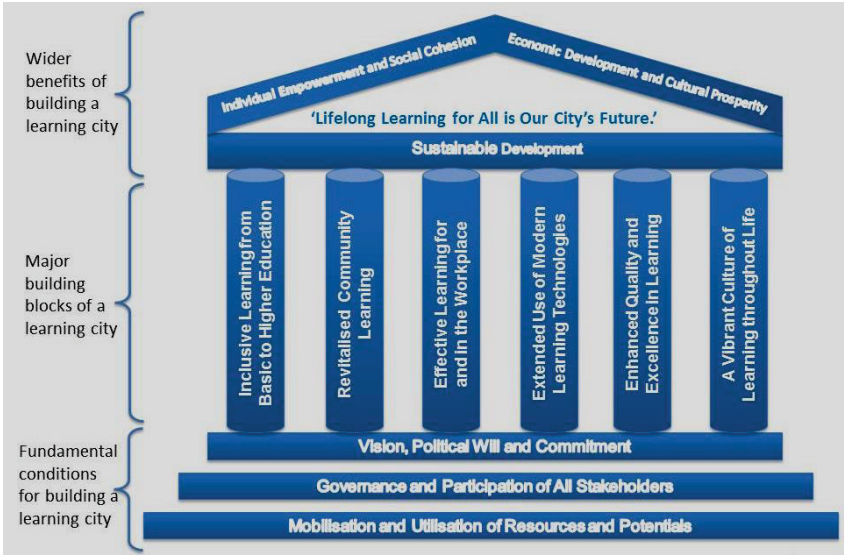
UNESCO's Recent Global Learning City Initiative

More than 1000 cities in the world have developed into or are building Learning/Educating cities. This obviously shows that the building of cities which put learning at the forefront of their policies and strategies has become a significant world-wide phenomenon. Cities rarely work in isolation and practical examples have reflected that those cities that are members of a dynamic network of local authorities at national, regional and international levels, have accelerated their growth and competitiveness as learning cities.

Most of these national, regional and international networks, while playing important roles in spreading the concept of learning cities, also have need of expertise networks or research organizations involved in developing tools and materials promoting and expanding the concept, and in establishing creative ongoing working links between cities. There are also many cities still unaware or uncertain of the benefits that a truly global network of learning cities can bring to the development of lifelong learning and the learning society. For these reasons and more this initiative is timely.

As UNESCO's centre of excellence for promoting lifelong learning, and in response to Member States' call to adopt a more pragmatic and instrumental approach to building a learning society, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) has recently proposed the establishment of the *UNESCO Global Learning Cities Network (UNESCO GLCN)* to enhance and accelerate the practice of lifelong learning in the world's conurbations.

The overall aim of the establishment of the UNESCO GLCN is to create a global platform to mobilise cities and demonstrate how to use their resources effectively in every sector to develop and enrich all their human potential for fostering lifelong personal growth, for developing equality and social justice, for maintaining harmonious social cohesion, and for creating sustainable prosperity. The UNESCO GLCN is intended to be a timely and innovative initiative to offer appropriate means by which cities can develop themselves into learning cities and create better environment – for themselves and for their citizens. (UNESCO, 2013)



Graphics 1: The Framework of the UNESCO Global Learning City Index.
Source: www.uil.unesco.org

Local Responses to Global Initiatives with the Aim of Community Development: The Pécs Learning City-Region Forum

Based on a decade-old international project partnership, to deal with the Learning City-Region model in cooperation with PASCAL Observatory, UNESCO Institute for LLL, the University of Pécs and its Faculty of Adult Education and HRD initiated, in 2013, the establishment of the Pécs Learning City Region Forum in order to develop a direct tool in certain areas of pedagogical/andragogical work targeting training trainers, educators and facilitators of learning. The project was incorporated into the project of the University of Pécs financed by the Hungarian Government's Social Renewal Operative Programme (TÁMOP 4.1.2.B – Developing Teachers-Educators/Pedagógusfejlesztés) focusing on the Development of Teachers. Its so called K4 project sub-group decided to develop structural models for collecting and sharing good knowledge and experience for teachers, trainers, mentors and facilitators engaged in the promotion of quality learning and skills-development in formal, non-formal and informal settings.

Therefore, the Pécs Learning City-Region Forum started its activities in the Fall of 2014 in three majors fields by accelerating partnerships and dialogues:

- *Atypical/Non-formal Learning platform* (This platform tries to help cultural organisers, curators, managers be more successful with their educational programmes organised for adults and also for school-teachers engaged in the development of cultural programmes for children) Such a collaborative frame involves more than 8 organisation/institutions and their representatives in order to identify innovative learning methods, tools, methodologies with atypical contexts.
- *School and Environment platform* (This platform supports dialogue amongst professionals developing specific environment-oriented programmes for local youth and their parents so as to become Nature-friendly, and conscious in protecting their environment. There is a specific focus to help school-teachers as adult learners building such orientations in the classroom and use available sources, programmes and curricula, etc. to achieve that goal based on collected best practises) Around nine member organisations/institutions work actively in the Forum through delegates, professional experts by providing platform-based exchange of ideas upon bringing closer school –pupils, their families to environment and environment-friendly, green thinking, actions and change-management with attention to interdisciplinary thinking and human behaviour.
- *Inclusion and Handicapped Situations platform* (This platform helps teachers to engage in collaborative actions providing dialogue to understand problems emerging from working with young children with learning difficulties, e.g. autists)

Atypical/Non-formal Learning Platform

This platform tried to collect and organise specific events with the participation of major institutions and organisations working with culture and culture-related knowledge transfer in museums, libraries, and other cultural formations, local community centres and other particular NGOs.

The platform generated a thorough discussion over innovative actions to help promoting participation by emphasizing collaborative forms of learning in atypical environments and various learning communities around culture, arts, information and library science and elderly education and learning in senior academy frames.

The Faculty of Adult Education and HRD promoted such a platform-building in order get this special focus of learning be integrated into the Learning City-Region Forum of Pécs and, moreover, into the development of teachers/educators through project-based networking amongst some relevant stakeholders in the field.

The programme of the platform enabled participants to get acquainted with some recent developments related to atypical learning and supported a series of rather professional dialogue which has been one aim of the collaborative approach behind the Learning City-Region initiative. These constructive dialogues were mostly built on the circulating events of the Platform which provided a good occasion to introduce the host organisation's activities and practice-oriented approach towards promoting atypical/non-formal learning. At these events, partners of the platform and other invited guests, participants could reflect to the practice of atypical learning and to widening participation in learning.

At the same time, atypical learning as such was discussed and approaches of many kinds demonstrated challenges to learning in non-formal ways and constructions. The platform partners indicated several times that the ways and methods they provide learning activities for different age-groups have been challenged by the drastically changing learning environment and learning customs and needs. Atypical learning has recently been changing and affected by new technologies, the impact of social media and intergenerational alienations. However, regular participation in cultural programmes are heavily influenced by falling financial resources and the lack of leasure-time for many adults who, at the same time, would have some significant personal need and desire to learn, to expand knowledge and develop skills through lifelong learning.

Examples of the practice of partners have been collected as good practices and demonstrated in an additional publications of the TÁMOP/Social renewal project 4.1.2B.

School and Environment Platform

This Platform aimed at bringing providers of environmental educations and specific learning environments to allow school-pupils and their families to learn about environment, environmental protections, nature, energy save and green

thinking with sustainable aspects could demonstrate and show their practices which could be labelled and recognised as good practice. Also, partners of the Platform could learn from each other and, at the same time, collect and share some key issues, experience on the subject matter.

Partners organised the events of the Platform in the logics of rotating the meetings which enabled them to visit one another group member and to learn about their special approaches and practices on environmental oriented educational activities, programmes, publications, web-based materials, etc. This way of organising the platform-meetings generated unusual levels of interest and helped partners to recognise the general approach to the Learning City-Region Forum, namely, that learners will always have the power to shape and form activities by their own obvious claims and orientations.

It became evident and clear that there was a strong and very rich learning opportunity at all those platform events hosted by platform members/partners, which actually demonstrated a particular reality about who would be interested in forming a networking amongst experts and practitioners of environment-oriented education, nature-oriented field-focused learning with young kids and their class, parents or both.

The participation and engagement of invited partners showed a great responsibility and, at the same time, concrete claim for a platform based dialogue in order to collect and share good and relevant practices which would demonstrate quality learning and educational aspirations. Moreover, the establishment and development of such a platform has also signalled an attention to the claim that people who sustain such environment oriented approaches and get young generations involved in action and experimental learning need something of a good-practice reservoir/archive where later followers of the field can take inspiring ideas from.

Another momentum has been the development of the website of the Learning City-Region Forum where the Platform, amongst the other two, has got an electronic site for uploading events, programme summaries, blogs, and further elaborative writing on and around environmental protection and environmental education of young people, and other intergenerational groups.

A serious challenge towards the Platform has been how to raise the attention of some more firms being engaged in sustainable development, energy save, and other forms of environmental protection. It might raise the problem of better communication and several direct contacting towards those potential partners in the Pécs region and beyond. This issue, however, needs further planning and systematic networking with better demonstration of what the Platform has so far achieved.

Inclusion and Handicapped Situations platform

This Platform of the Learning City-Region Forum decided to emphasize concrete dialogue for educators, teachers helping young children with learning difficulties caused by serious mental handicapped status by being autists. This ap-

proach signalled the necessity of providing a living platform in order to activate relevant school teachers and developers trying to raise the further perspectives.

The Platform organised several meetings where professional teachers have been mentoring such young children. Some particular good practices have been collected into the Good Practice collection of TÁMOP 4.1.2.B project and, also, have been uploaded to the website of the Learning City-Region Forum.

But one may argue, what impact such a platform can provide in the development of skills and methodological performance of such professional teachers to deal with young children with learning difficulties? The response would come from participating teachers who themselves had indicated a need for a good and viable networking in order to exchange experience-based knowledge upon how to better help the learning of autist young children. This need was well incorporated into the planning and organisation of the sessions of the Platform by enabling engaged teachers to form the programme and orientations of the sessions by reflecting to upcoming problems and trying to articulate some specific approaches and responses to occurring challenges in practical teaching and learning situations.

Another key element of this Platform was the way and methods of identifying good practices around inclusive pedagogies. It became a particularly interesting process how inclusive approaches to pedagogy was explained and used in the work of the Platform, how some arguments signalled the difficulty of a formally easy label be used upon concrete educational situations and formats. Members of the Platform demonstrated a rather humanistic approach where it turned out to be an alpha principle of labelling a practice as good one directly to helping a learner with learning difficulties recognising the help through the joy of learning and participating situational learning processes.

In a reflecting way, the Platform also turned into a hub for teachers engaged in voluntary work for young children with learning difficulties and also for some specific professionals providing help for those young children whose parents, for example, need specific assistance in bringing those wonderful minds and souls towards adulthood by becoming better in reflecting to their responses to the world and to their emotions expressed accordingly.

The three dimensions of the Forum's platforms have enabled us to recognise *some key barriers to collect and share good practices* upon particular development works of partner organisations and institutions, which are:

- low levels of culture of mutual partnerships and collaborative actions to share experience and to develop professional skills, competence of educators/teachers, trainers and facilitators;
- limited time available for educators/teachers, trainers and facilitators to develop skills and share exchange knowledge, experience.
- small resources to constrain participation in programmes of the forum and, at the same time, heavy working load dominating majority of working time.

Choices for the development of learning in a learning city-region model:

- Growing interest amongst decision-makers and stakeholders so as to develop and maintain new and effective ways and methods for useful and problem-based knowledge transfer amongst institutions/organisations in the school sector, labour market, cultural organisations and institutions and other respected informal learning grounds and environments.
- European funds available through the European Social Fund for collaborative actions amongst educational, cultural and environmental organisations for raising participation and providing counselling for better performance in learning.
- Need for Common Identification of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for learning city-region development.
- Necessary improvement of learning conditions and collaborative spaces for young people with learning difficulties through inclusive learning environment.

The main tool of the development of the Forum was the organisation of platform-based sessions for collecting and sharing good knowledge, another key element is the website of the Forum where good practices are collected and documented for further distribution and developments in quality learning with key attempt for local and regional recognition and attention both by stakeholders, decision makers and by the local citizens.

Which ways forward?

The Pécs Learning City-Region Forum has been established in order to push forward the concept of networking around knowledge transfer for the sake of better trends in local and regional performance in learning and skills-development.

The Forum has started as an overall partnership in 2010 supported by all major stakeholders who had established some sort of links and affiliation towards education, training and, on the other hand, development of learning. Therefore, it was set as an umbrella network so as to promote learning in formal, non-formal and informal contexts. The original networking plan was, however, difficult to be emphasized and promoted amongst partners for the difficult national and political and social changes to come in the midst of 2010. That climate did not help further partnership building and exchange of ideas. We have to be rather happy to have been able to find an interest of the University of Pécs and its Institute of Educational Science at the Faculty of Humanities to broaden its EU co-funded programme on "Teacher Training" in the Social Renewal Operative Programme (TÁM OP) 4.1.2.B and its K4 programme division.

This programme has not only invited the Pécs Learning City– Region Forum to provide specific platform based actions in order to support the skills developments of school teachers in Pécs and its region, also in Kaposvár, but also to allow the Forum to start growing in its knowledge-transfer networking in local and regional dimensions especially in three identical scopes which may be complemented with other particular orientations later on.

Future orientations has to be framed and settled around some distinguished principles and initiatives based on both local and global calls. This means the continuation of recent platforms with potentially growing partnerships based on headquartering the Forum to the House of Civil Society Groups (NGO Communities – Civil Közösségek Háza in Hungarian). This civil society group has stated that it would host activities and potential actions of the Forum in partnership with the Faculty of Cultural Science of the University of Pécs.

Another important dimension is the website of the Forum that needs serious improvement and expand both in content and relevant collection of information referring to learning cities and regions in local, national and global contexts. This improvement needs, however, a significant input from the University of Pécs in back-up from web-edition through the use of project resources be applied for with direct intentions so as to well-organise the Forum in its virtual aspects so as to be able to reach potential users and, at the same time, so as to raise attention of those users through regular visits to the website of the Forum.

It must also be underlined that local and regional development funds must be targeted by partners in order to develop the Forum and incorporate further services of dissemination and exploitation of results of either on-going or closed projects of partners related to skills development, learning, community development, HR development, etc.

Let us indicate here that the current platforms need further developments and have to prepare for further directions around which they can involve their members to discuss and reflect to some concrete problems affecting their own activities, and the other way round, how their work may influence such scenarios and trends.

The development of the Forum has to reflect, additionally, to some new trends and issues being represented by some distinguished international institutions and organisations, like the UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning, (UIL-Hamburg), the European Centre for VET Development and Research (CEDEFOP), the OECD and organisations as PASCAL Observatory and EUCEN – European Universities Lifelong Learning Network, the latest one in the aspect of the social dimension of higher education.

We presume that new perspectives of the Learning-City Region Forum is to make the City Council of Pécs and the County Council of Baranya to recognise the innovative potential behind this networking of learning providers and professionals and support future activities both by joining the stakeholder group

of the Forum and by demonstrating social and community need for a specific event in order to celebrate learning and learning performance through inviting all educators for a day into main square Pécs dedicated to Celebrating Learning/ Learning Festival.

Finally, the Form should work as a disseminating filter in between its locality and the global initiative of learning cities (GLCN) of UNESCO. This initiative might enable us to make use of other good practices of networking around learning by collecting and sharing good knowledge for the good of people and their communities. Likewise, the Forum should also demonstrate the aim and struggle to stock good local and regional practices of learning in community formats either in formal, non-formal or in informal ways.

A further aspect of the Forum could be the development of web-based exchange of information amongst Learning City-Region providers in the platforms and get their practical work be blogged on the website by participants enrolling to their public events so as to raise knowledge, competence and skills around the themes and topics of their programme.

Learning City development, for this reason, may also need a concentrated actions and input from higher education so as to raise research and innovation around the focus, contents and methodologies used in the promotion of local and regional partnerships for quality learning and education – trainings.

We believe that the impact of the three platforms and the synergic effect generated amongst them could be of potential use and reflection. At the same, these platforms will, in our understanding and expectations, influence education, training and other valuable forms of knowledge transfer in local and regional settings by providing a specific feedback upon such activities and generate some more public attention towards the quality of teaching and learning itself.

It is necessary to promote the improvement of dissemination and exploitation of results through several channels, like local and regional media, social media, community places, public events, etc. through which one can obtain and reach reliable information on activities, programmes and actions. We presume that the Pécs Learning City-Region Forum can be involved into the international platform of PASCAL Observatory where some distinguished actors and promoters of the learning city-region initiative discuss recent challenges and opportunities for learning in urban contexts, especially learning in and through communities.

We, finally, need to think of how to enlarge the platforms and the Forum itself. In order to reach a wider and more frequently engaged community in the work of the Forum, people must be able to recognise the mutual benefit in this initiative and process of knowledge transfer. Therefore, they have to get involved not only in the planning and achievement, formation of platform meetings, lectures and discussions. Another successful way of getting more people involved in such actions, platform engagement must be connected with open societal movements as demonstrations for lifelong learning in urban structures

Conclusions

The European adult learning initiatives may incorporate actions for inclusive and more tolerant community actions to involve individual and group work for development by collecting and sharing quality knowledge and skills which, we believe, is in the interest of city-region programmes to rise participation and performance both in economic production and social terrains. We do hope that dominant economic orientations will need a more sophisticated community vision by which stability, open society and development may be given priority in the locality of Pécs, Hungary with a strong attempt to develop community development in partnerships and dialogue based on collected and shared knowledge and experience. That is what the Learning City-Region Forum is for.

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'Lifelong Learning in the City-Region' PASCAL Conference at: http://www.pascal2007conf.pte.hu/

Please find more on PASCAL Observatory, an international network to promote place management, social capital and lifelong learning at: http://pascalobservatory.org/

UNESCO Conference on Learning Cities in Beijing 2013: http://learningcities2013.org/xwen/home/index.jhtml

PASCALObservatory Conference on Cities Learning together and Regions in Hong Kong 2013: http://conference.pascalobservatory.org/sites/default/files/general-programme-131113.pdf

Pécs Learning City-Region Forum is available at: http://learning-city-region-pecs.hu

HOW DO WE LEARN LEISURE MEANING? – LEISURE EDUCATION RESEARCH AND MODELS

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Abstract

The paper addresses key issues in leisure meaning research from the viewpoint of leisure education of adults. With the intent of both, demonstrating positivist approach limitations and pointing a way beyond them, the alternative to positivist leisure meaning inquiry is found in hermeneutically-based depth interpretation. Furthermore; the analysis of different leisure meaning is located within the discourse of learning theory. Limitations of diverse paradigms to explain the nature of learning about leisure show the need for alternative paradigm – experientialism, and the research methodology – phenomenography, to studying multiple meanings of leisure. Finally, implications of leisure meaning research are considered within the framework of leisure education design for adult participants. The project-based leisure education has been proposed as the model to foster exploration, learning and creating the different leisure meanings, as a way of improving the quality of leisure education in adults.

Key words: leisure meaning(s), experientialist research paradigm, phenomenography, leisure education models, project-based leisure education

"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways. The point, however, is to change it."
(Karl Marx)

Leisure education is one of the growing field of education and learning of adults in the past decades. What is usually meant by leisure education within the growing body of literature is that it is a form of organized or institutionalized learning concerning participant's leisure. It is that participants either join edu-

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cational processes where they learn about leisure (education for leisure) or they choose education as one or their leisure activities (education as leisure). In the first case, leisure is the content of learning, and in the second, leisure is considered to be a learning process taking place in leisure. Within this study, the focus is on both, and from the point of view of leisure meaning awareness and learning the leisure meaning.

Within leisure studies, there is general agreement among researchers, that key attributes of leisure, such as perceived freedom, intrinsic motivation and positive affect, represent general and essential characteristics for defining and perceiving leisure experience. At the same time, there are researchers (Watkins, 2010) who recognize the need to take into account the differences in the meaning of leisure. Moreover, this need represents a continual challenge, and the complexity of this challenge is perhaps best stated in the claim of Freysinger (1987: Watkins, 2010; 2002), that "leisure can mean the same thing to different people, different things to different people and different things to the same person".

In relation to this, I have come to believe that perceived freedom, intrinsic motivation and positive affect are the structural components and essential conditions for leisure to be experienced or perceived, however it is seen or perceived as such, because it has been socially created in a given space and time. In other words, we learned that leisure is associated with freedom, personal choice and self-enjoyment. Therefore, as many people we ask what leisure means to them, the description almost always falls to these elements, and this conclusion has been largely supported by research (Spector, 2007). To go further in the field of leisure study, we must take into account the fact that its meaning is linked to the discourse within which it was created.

In addition to that, one of the major influences on how we perceive leisure and give it meaning, is the way leisure has been studied within our culture. The Western scientific thought has been largely influenced and based upon positivist claim for rigorous scientific measurement of objective reality and extracting universal features of the studied phenomena. Consequently, empirically based research methods grounded in logical positivism that have been dominant in leisure studies' development seem to reduce leisure inquiry to what is objective reality, thus separating the research process from the research phenomena. Therefore, leisure is widely regarded as a phenomenon that objectively exists and its meaning is relatively fixed and innate. The question then should extend from what is the meaning of leisure to how people learn the meaning of leisure.

Acknowledging that presented epistemological stance can significantly limit what we can know and find out about leisure, Watkins (2010; 2008; 2002; Hales and Watkins, 2004) devoted himself to studying the variety of ways in which leisure has a different meaning to people. While most research on leisure meaning has been based in four well known theoretical paradigms: behaviorism, cognitivism, individual and social constructivism, Watkins (2000) argues that "the four

paradigms provide only partial explanations of how people learn about leisure" (94). Namely, behaviorism portrays individuals as passive and compliant recipients who simply absorb ideas obtained from external sources, and respond uncritically to them. Similarly, the essence of the cognitivist claim seems to be that leisure meanings are largely innate and fixed. On the other hand, the limitations of individual constructivism appear to be visible in difficulties when answering the question of how can any individual truly know what another individual means, as it treats knowledge of phenomenon as a product of an individual's unique interpretation. Finally, the limitation of social constructivism can be observed in a fact that individual meanings tend to disappear in favor of collective meanings. Due to above mentioned limitations of diverse paradigms to explain the nature of learning about leisure meaning, Watkins (2002, 2000) saw the need for alternative paradigm – experientialism. In his view, experientialist paradigm explains the source of an individual's knowledge or experience of a phenomenon as gained through participating in the constitution of situations in which the phenomenon is present.

The experientialist paradigm draws on this idea to represent different meanings of a phenomenon as different ways of experiencing the individual–world relationship and of reflecting variations in both the content and the structure of the relationship at a particular point in time. According to Watkins (2002) learning of leisure meaning occurs when individuals experience change in the content and structure of the internal relations formed between themselves and the phenomenon of leisure.

As studying multiple meanings of leisure required different type of research methodology and thus, Watkins (2000) used a descriptive and interpretive research approach called phenomenography (Marton & Booth, 1997: Watkins, 2002). The author describes phenomenography as an approach for mapping the qualitatively different ways that people experience the meaning of phenomena in their world and for interpreting experience as an interrelated and hierarchically arranged continuum of meanings. As he further explains, phenomenography describes a way of experiencing something using two interrelated components: first, a referential aspect focuses on what is being experienced and describes the overall meaning assigned to the experience, and second, a structural aspect deals with how the referential aspect is understood.

While many researchers have used the same or similar attributes to categorize different types of leisure meaning given by their respondents, Watkins and his colleagues (Watkins & Bond, 2007: Watkins, 2008; Hales & Watkins, 2004) in series of research found that all meanings are composed of different aspects, which together form a specific way of experiencing leisure, and that these aspects can be conceptualized as dimensions that include different ways of relating to leisure including the context, intentions, temporality, emotion and outcomes of that meaning. Four qualitatively different categories of experiencing leisure, which came to be the most prominent in the descriptions of leisure experiences of respondents, are the following (Watkins, 2002):

1) *Leisure as Passing Time:* Leisure is the time spent in a satisfactory manner when there is nothing more important what can be done. A person is focused on the use of leisure. The structure of leisure experience consists of several elements which are linked in a linear sequence, and individuals divide their life in several aspects (sleep, work, recreation, leisure ...) and rank each according to the perceived degree of importance. In comparison to other aspects, leisure is assigned a lower priority. The performance in leisure is marked by "nothing more significant to do" and it's perceived as a time that is "free". Thus, individuals refer to leisure as the remaining time, which occurs in short intervals, usually between activities that they treat as a priority, or at longer intervals that come "after everything else." The time is "used" to relax, have fun, and in overcoming boredom.
2) *Leisure as Exercising Choice:* Leisure means to have time available, or have time which is free, in which an individual can do what he or she wants to do and enjoy doing it. Here, the choice is a central element and focus of one's awareness of leisure. The elements that form the experience point to the dual linear form of awareness of leisure based on the variation in the apparent meaning of elements and may be described as the two subcategories. Within the first subcategory, leisure is perceived as different from paid work or domestic obligations. Leisure activities are seen as expectations are not as imposed from outside. Accordingly, leisure means exercising choice and control over one's life. In the second subcategory, obligations represent personal responsibility and are accepted as necessary component of life. Thus, leisure means a possibility of being independent.
3) *Leisure as Escaping Pressure:* Leisure represents an escape from the pressures of life through withdrawal, relaxation and revitalization. This experience is focused on the need to restore feelings of well-being and includes several elements arranged in circular pattern of awareness about leisure. It is seen as a deliberate response in relation to aspects of life that are about pressure and stress (such as paying bills, obligations to family, etc.). In the context of pressure, the need to escape and change situation by means of physical or psychological disengagement with respect to pressure source, is seen as a priority. This is accomplished through making the choice to take a break or a moment in activities that are mainly experienced as passive, relaxing and solely. These activities can be also physically active and socially oriented if help eliminate pressure.
4) *Leisure as Achieving Fulfillment:* Leisure means to feel happy and satisfied. This way of experiencing leisure is understood as an emotional response associated with fulfillment and happiness. Fulfillment is described in terms of having positive emotions and a feeling of being in harmony

> with one's self. Respondents report that they are actively searching for opportunities that allow achieving happiness in various aspects of life, and therefore the differences between leisure and other aspects do not make much sense for them. Achieving fulfillment is spontaneous reaction to reflection in relation to themselves alone or in interaction with others. At the same time, leisure is perceived as independent of time (as timelessness), as well as independent of the specific activity, and is often associated with feelings of being absorbed or being in flow in specific situation. Other emotions to contributing to the fulfillment are satisfaction, pleasure, relaxation (physical, mental and spiritual), choice, achievement and self-esteem. These feelings vary in presence and while neither of them is predominant, their presence is characterized by a deep sense of intensity.

Based on these findings, Schulz and Watkins (2007) created an inventory of the leisure meaning (LMI – Leisure Meanings Inventory) with which it is possible to determine the dominant leisure meaning of the four proposed. Further contribution of these researchers is reflected in the conceptualizing these four different leisure meanings as a continuum of the development of leisure meaning. In other words, comparing the meanings and using interpretations of these meanings, they were able to conclude that one of them are more complex compared to the other, as they show greater diversity in relationships between the dimensions, greater flexibility in the organization of these dimensions in relation to the awareness of leisure, more levels of integration with other aspects of life and greater inclusiveness in the overall leisure meaning (Watkins, 2008). On this basis, they were able to conclude that the order of meanings, from simple to more complex ones, moves from passing time to exercising choice, then escaping pressure to achieving fulfillment.

Not of less importance are longitudinal studies by Watkins and Bond (2007: Watkins, 2008), concerning changes in the leisure meaning during a period of eight years. During the course of this period, the researchers were using four separate interviews with the students: first, when enrolling the study of leisure studies, then at the end of the second and third years of study, and finally, after five years that they have finished their study. Thus, they were able to come to the conclusion that the leisure meaning changes in the order that they assumed. This data seems very important from the point of leisure education (especially in terms of education for leisure) because it provides direct evidence that educational interventions (due to a fact that research subject were students of leisure studies) lead to the positive change in meaning. The more we educate for leisure, the more it will have for us more complex and deeper meaning, as Watkins (2010:374) stated: "to the extent this knowledge would further our ability to enhance individual well-being, the longitudinal research used in the present study provides empirical evidence that individuals can learn to acquire more developed ways of experiencing leisure than they were hitherto capable of understanding".

Acknowledging that leisure meanings change for individuals has significant consequences for leisure education. As noted, in the study of Watkins (2008) the simple exposure to leisure education can lead to higher levels of meaning. However, his longitudinal study involved the students of leisure studies over the period of eight years. On the contrary, the resent research study on education as a factor in the quality of leisure of adults (Nikolic Maksic, 2015), conducted on 520 respondents who engaged in various forms of educational activities in their leisure, indicate that respondents experience their leisure mostly as exercising choice and escaping pressure that is, in the middle categories on the proposed meaning continuum. Although respondents were engaged in leisure education, by making a choice of engaging themselves in education activities during leisure, their awareness of leisure was at significantly low level, as none of these adult education programs was offering even the least of education for leisure. From that, an argument can be drawn that even though in theoretical sense, education for leisure and education in leisure are inseparable, the significant effort should be made in educational practice towards bringing the two together. That is, if we want the aim of improving the quality of life to be achieved.

The question of education for leisure, however, is the question of educational design and programming, and in regard to leisure meanings, it is a question of finding most adequate ways in which participants are able to explore leisure meanings, to perceive differences in meanings and to engage in creating new meanings.

Up until now, how people perceive leisure and what meaning they attach to it, was a significant concern of most of the existing leisure education programs. It can be stated that concern for leisure meaning draws from leisure education itself, its' definitions and concepts, as leisure education is usually defined as a "developmental process through which an individual develops an understanding of leisure, of self in relation to leisure, and of the relationship among leisure, lifestyle, and society" (Mundy & Odum, 1979). In other words, to educate for leisure would mean to learn to understand what leisure is. Most of the leisure education models were developed and expanded during the 1980s. One of the most widely recognized leisure education models, Peterson and Gunn's (1984: Deiser, 2013; Stumbo & Thompson, 1986) model, placed leisure awareness as one of the four most important components in learning about leisure, among social interaction skills, leisure activity skills and leisure resources. The authors argued that leisure education should focus on the "development and acquisition of various leisure related skills, attitudes and knowledge" (Peterson and Gunn, 1984:22 according to Deiser, 2013). Accordingly, leisure awareness was consistent of: knowledge of leisure, self-awareness, leisure and play attitudes, and related participatory and decision-making skills. Similar trend was noticeable in the leisure education models during the 1990s and 2000s. Leisure perception and meaning was consequently often structural component of leisure education models over the years, under the aim of increasing leisure awareness and under-

standing. Drawing from Dieser's analysis (2013) leisure meaning can be found as: leisure values, explaining leisure, leisure philosophy, leisure awareness, leisure attitudes, and leisure values, concepts of leisure, leisure definitions, leisure appreciation, or leisure understanding.

Dieser (2013) calls such models person-centered models, as majority of components are focused on fostering personal change in order to experience leisure, and rarely at only a few focused on changing environmental factors. In his opinion, such models can lead to oversimplified and inaccurate explanations to complex social and human problems and neglect people from collectivistic cultures. However, during the new millennium there has been greater attention directed at system-directed leisure education (Deiser, 2013). One of those cross-cultural models is project-based leisure education (Deiser, 2013; Kahakalau, Fox & Deiser, 2002), with both, person-centered and ecological underpinnings, developed in the early part of 2000. "Project-based leisure is education is a comprehensive learning perspective focused on teaching leisure by engaging students in a collaborative process or investigation via an in-depth study of a particular leisure experience" (Deiser, 2013:110). As the experientialist paradigm proposes, that individuals need to experience different situations in relation to leisure, using a project-based leisure education allows the leisure professionals to collaboratively explore how leisure may be defined, framed and comprehended within different cultural groups, thus providing the collective exploration of the shared meanings of the lived experience. Moreover, new meanings can be examined, created and re-created. Namely, project-based leisure education "moves the learning process away from a leisure expert teaching participants about leisure to a leisure professional learning about and constructing leisure with group participants" (Deiser, 2013:110). In traditional leisure education, facilitator is an expert of leisure that would select learning activities, with little or no student involvement, using their willingness to work as a source of their motivation, and thus is being completely accountable for learning leisure meaning.

As opposed to that, project-based leisure education has three broad stages (Edginton, Hudson, Dieser, & Edginton, 2004: Desier, 2013). The first stage focuses on designing and planning a leisure project or experience, where initial ideas are developed and appropriate actions are planned by the group. The second stage is oriented toward implementation of further development, where discussion and deciding on future actions is a paramount activity. The third stage is concluding the project, the stage in which participants experience leisure activity. Thus, project-based model of leisure education, has significantly different characteristics compared to former models, in relation to the roles of the participants of leisure education, responsibility for learning content, the educational process and its evaluation (Kahakalau, Fox & Deiser, 2002). Therefore, the role of leisure professionals is no longer the role of expert and the one who conveys knowledge, or the one who makes assessments and gives directions and guidelines, but rather the role of traveler at the same path, and with the same

responsibilities as the learner. It is the one who listens and explores the meaning of leisure with individuals or group of people. This is a practitioner or facilitator of learning engaged together with the participants in the process of discovery of different meanings of leisure and its importance for a particular community. Additionally, the role of adult educator can also be in assisting participants to critically assess existing models of leisure education and to pointing out the difference between them and those which they created on their own. Consequently, leisure education does not represent a kind of educational intervention, resulting with the development of certain knowledge or skills relevant to solving problems in relation to leisure. Rather, it is a complex process of exploring the historical and societal meanings of leisure practices, cultural differences in meanings, power structures and repression and other relevant topics of importance for a group. In this respect, the practitioner in the field of leisure participants share the responsibility in regard to teaching, learning and demonstrating leisure knowledge and skills. For example, both are responsible for stopping and preventing repressive ways of practicing leisure, developing skills for specific activities and collecting information on different approaches, perspectives and showing critical stand towards leisure. Accordingly, the leisure education participant is also someone who discovers, integrates and presents ideas. He or she is the one who participates in shaping the work tasks and their performance. In this way, participant and facilitator seek strategies from which both sides benefit and draw the best out of each other. This means that you can explore together history, family relations, community relations, philosophy, values and community norms, with a view to developing specific leisure education program. Thus, the educational content is collectively created through shared activities in collecting data and primary sources, conducting interviews and field work. Gathered information is being collaboratively evaluated, organized, presented and developed further. Given that the learning process requires collaboration, construction and synthesizing information, as well as performance of collected knowledge, skills and wisdom, the learning process can be performed with groups communities and associations. Finally, the evaluation refers to the process, as well as to the products which are created by joint action of the participants and facilitators of leisure education. Evaluation includes tangible achievements, public presentations and demonstrations of skills and leisure understanding.

Project-based learning offers a different strategy for creating and organizing leisure education program, which includes examining the power relations in society, cultural diversity and differences in values in relation to leisure and self-determination in leisure activities. In relation to the facilitators, this approach allows disembodying "the leisure monoculture" that prescribes unique and universal standards of learning, education and understanding leisure which are true and valid for all people. This means that this model draws beyond the positivist premises, both in the area of leisure, and in adult education.

Conclusion

One could argue that experientialist paradigm is just another way of asking people what leisure is. It is a fact that approach proposed by Watkins and others (2010, 2008, 2002, 2000; Schulz & Watkins, 2007) uses quantitative measurement grounded in logical positivism as any other of prevailing inquiries of leisure meaning. The main influence of positivism on leisure research can be found in one simple consequence that much of the leisure meaning studies relate to leisure as an objectively existing phenomena outside of a subject. This stance provides relatively fixed meanings of leisure, primarily found in perceived freedom, intrinsic motivation and positive feelings. This means that leisure is widely seen in terms of time, activity and/or as a state of mind (Nikolic Maksic, 2015). Experiencing leisure as one of these, or as a combination of two or all of them combined, has its roots in Western thought and the philosophy of life, organized mainly on the basis of work-leisure dichotomy. Within this article, I argue that leisure meaning was thought to us by our culture. Conceiving leisure in relation to work (reflecting features of leisure as opposed to working hours, human´s non-free and obligated time, for which motivation is extrinsic and is marked with considerably less satisfaction), we learned to look at leisure as freely chosen, non-obligated time, that brings us joy and satisfaction. Although Watkins´s research treats leisure as an existing phenomena, the difference, however, is that it puts focus on how the leisure meaning was learned, as opposed to what leisure means. Experientialist paradigm, that he proposed, allows us to experience phenomenon by participating in situations where phenomenon is present, and those situations allow us new experience e.g. new knowledge of phenomenon itself. Accordingly, these allow changes in meanings. Looking from the point of leisure education, I also argue that being learned, leisure meaning can be re-learned. Namely, seeing the world consistent of outside realities, we have a tendency, as we do in research, to note and record considered phenomena as they are. This is how we got to treat understanding of leisure within the leisure education, as a problem of presenting to students what leisure means, or exploring with them their meanings, in a mutual effort of finding the most desirable meaning of leisure, that leads us to enhanced quality of life. As opposed to that, the third and main point I make is that, rather of finding out what leisure means, I propose leisure to be created. I see educational process as an opportunity for people to exercise their agency in a shared creation of mutual meanings. For that reason, I draw on the work of Deiser (2013) who proposed project-based learning as a different strategy for organizing leisure education process.

To conclude, given the presented example, it can be stated that system-directed and project-based models promote experiential learning of leisure when compared to previous person-centered models. As Heidegger (1962: Watkins, 2000) argued that knowledge is acquired through being in the world, project-

based leisure education seems to represent the learning environment in which one can be, while learning about the phenomenon. This makes the process of learning and creating leisure meaning as the important as the learning outcome, in this case – learning about leisure or change in leisure meaning. Being in the process of creating meaning, also allows becoming (of something new and different from what it is), it fosters new meanings. Consequently, being in the process of leisure education is having the opportunity of being (and becoming) an active creator of leisure meaning(s).

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PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH AND LEARNING IN A COMMUNITY: TWO SIDES OF THE SAME PROCESS?

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Abstract

This paper investigates the advantages and challenges of participatory research and learning with the aim of improving the quality of education and cooperation of actors at a local community level. It puts special emphasis on the role of andragogist in study and improvement of these processes.

The relation between learning, research and participation in a community in the context of the participatory approach is observed by analyzing literature, as well as practical example as part of the project "Strengthening the capacities of Aarhus Centres in disaster risk reduction (DRR) in order to enhance awareness of local communities", which has been realized in Novi Sad, Serbia.

Acquired experiences in the application of the participatory planning methodology within the Project, illustrate that it can be considered a model of action research. The application of interactive methods, of problem-based and project-based approaches to learning, contributes to learning becoming a research process and research becoming a learning process.

Key words: participatory action planning, research, learning, andragogist, local community.

Participation in community and learning

Modern society and global policies shape the development of an active citizen whose participation in the local environment has multiple and tight connections with involvement in the processes of education and learning. The "informed" and "aware" citizen are just some of the traits that fit such an ideal.

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An active role implies that we "be informed" and "strengthen our capacities" and take on our share of risks and responsibilities.

Newer trends show a general increase in the participation of adults in programs of formal and informal education and learning, starting from the seventies and up to this point. (Bellanger, according to: Ricardo, 2015). Today, thanks to a series of studies, we know that these trends vary depending on the macro, mezzo and micro characteristics and that they are greatly impacted by previous experiences (in general, and educational experiences in particular), gender and social environment (Ibid.). Observing the factors of adult participation in education and learning, the authors, based on the results of multiple research studies, point out six following: social connections, external expectations, social wellbeing, career advancement, escape-stimulation and cognitive interest (Cross, according to Savicevic, 1998). As we can see, two out of six are about social relations. One, dealing with creation and expansion of social connections and the other, especially interesting to us, interpreted as "improvement of the ability to serve mankind; preparations to serve the community; improving capability and involvement in community work." (Ibid: 189). If we start with the premise that participation in some process of learning and education, is actually a realization of educational needs, we can conclude that one of its key sources lies in our need to be better citizens, more prepared to become involved in the community and also contribute to its betterment, and not just our own.

The aim of our contribution is twofold: first to observe the relation between research and learning of adults in a participatory process and then to observe the relation between the processes of planning and action in a community. The main research question dealing with these relations is then followed with a series of specific once: Which methodological repertoire represents a good and sound choice for the successful course of mutual learning and discovery of meaning, "co-construction" of knowledge and an increase in activity when it comes to improving life in a community? Can these aspects of strengthening the participatory capacities even be separated?

In search for answers, that is, in search for a possible role of andragogist in research and improvement of these processes, we will proceed with analyzing the literature, i.e. theoretically-conceptual and methodological reviews and then analyze practical example, i.e. the course and results of action planning and learning in a community within the framework of the project "Strengthening the capacities of Aarhus Centres in disaster risk reduction (DRR) in order to enhance awareness of local communities", realized in Novi Sad, Serbia during 2015.

Theoretically-conceptual and policy framework

Investigating the participation of adults in learning, research and involvement in a local community has been a point of interest for researchers from various scientific backgrounds, discourses and frameworks. The terminologi-

cal variety ("community learning", "participatory learning", "community based learning", "action learning", etc.) that we often encounter is evidence enough of this diversity (Hal et al, 2015).

The orientation of educational and learning processes towards solving practical social issues, and not just satisfying cognitive or professional and individual needs, is largely based on the principles of critical theory, most of all on the principle of interconnectivity between theory and practice and the necessary social equality in the process of learning and education. An obvious influence on the authors dealing with these issues comes from the well known Brazilian andragogist, Paolo Freire. In the process of learning and education that emancipates and leads to action, understanding and reflection aren't enough per se: "...reflection—true reflection—leads to action. On the other hand, when the situation calls for action, that action will constitute an authentic praxis only if its consequences become the object of critical reflection."(Freire, 2005:64). In this process of critical understanding of reality, the one who teaches and those who learn appear as subjects: "... As they attain this knowledge of reality through common reflection and action, they discover themselves as its permanent re-creators"; that way the entire process becomes just what it is supposed to be to all participants: "... not pseudo-participation, but committed involvement" (Ibid.:69). A well helmed process of such enlightenment should contribute to transformation, that is, by authors, described as an important aspect of the participatory processes of learning and research (Baum, MacDougall, Smith, 2006).

Apart from reflectivity in critical theory, the influence of constructivist conceptions is notable in newer works dedicated to the education of adults in a community, that discuss issues such as "knowledge democracy" and "co-construction of knowledge". "Science is not a bag of tricks that one learns by being trained to remove oneself even further from reality. We have created an illusion and we have come to believe in it – namely, that only those with sophisticated techniques can create knowledge." (Hall et al, 2015:98). "Further from reality" also, implicitly, means "further from practice". In critical reviews, authors point out that it is necessary that knowledge correlates with the real and practical and that it is also necessary to include well matched participants in the process, that not only have the right, but also the ability to create knowledge during mutual interaction.

Within such a framework, communication and experiential learning are naturally seen as being of high importance for community participation and partnerships. Under the influence of Habermas and his concept of public sphere, authors develop a construct of communicative action, seen as "...the way in which citizens can deliberately discuss issues and problems, formulate solutions to benefit the whole and transfer through laws to the systems" (Hara, according to: Mc Bride, Paula, 2015:192). Further on, Wenger creates his concept of "community of practice", as "social fabric of learning", dedicated to the preservation and creation

of knowledge (Ibid.). Community of practice is defined as a "...learning space of experiential learning...serving as a bridge between system and community"; it can be intentionally created to serve as "environments for learning", with the following attributes: "1) group of practitioners, 2) development of a shared meaning, 3) informal networks, 4) supportive culture and trust, 5) engagement in knowledge building" (Hara, 2000, according to: Mc Bride, Paula, 2015:192).

Analysis of scientific contributions to four well established journals in the field of adult education and research (Adult Education Quarterly, European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults, Studies in Continuing Education and Studies in the Education of Adults), which were published in 2011, also illustrates the impacts of above briefly mentioned trends: result of this analysis shows that in the respective period, the dominant theoretical approaches are critical pedagogy, poststructuralist and socio cultural and situated perspectives of learning, while qualitative studies dominate applied methodology. (Fejes, Nicoll, 2013).

When considering the participation of adults in learning and education, the discussion on the assumptions and implications of power is also important and in that context, there is obvious influence of Focault, especially his interpretation of power as "...something that results from the interactions between people, from the practices of institutions" i.e. "... as exercise of different forms of knowledge." (Baum, MacDougall, Smith, 2006).

When discussing the application of participatory approaches, the authors talk not only about action research, but also action learning, actually considering both as forms of learning. For example, Michael Gregory defines 'action research' and 'action learning' as "...forms of emancipatory and democratic learning...which empowers the individual as both learner and critically reflective social researcher". (Gregory, 1994:41). Some other authors view participatory learning and action (PLA), as an approach comprising "...learning about communities which place equal value on the knowledge and experience of local people and their capacity to come up with solutions to problems that affect them."(IIED, 2000).

Strengthening the capacities of the community to participate in democratic processes, "right to know, to decision making process and to justice" (REC,2002:7), are some of the basic postulates of international documents and especially the Convention on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters (Aarhus Convention). The recently adopted Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 is a key instrument of international policies in the field of disaster risk reduction and management, "focused on preventing new and reducing existing risks", while "... strengthening resilience through wide engagement of all states and all actors in communities" (UN, 2015). The project and the action planning that we analyze in this work is a contributor to the application of the principles of global policies, defined by previously mentioned and related instruments.

Agreeing with the authors who view adult education itself as one of the main mechanisms "...to revitalize active and participative democracy" (Boyte, 2005; Mc Bride, Paula, 2015), we approach this paper and project by viewing "participatory research and learning" as two dimensions of the same process, in which not only 'learning about communities' occurs but also 'learning with a community', which should not end just on reflection but also lead to practical changes.

Methodological framework

Main objective of the project is to strengthen the capacities and roles of the civilian population and communities in disaster risk reduction (DRR) and contribute to raising awareness using Aarhus Centers as a platform, while the specific one was to develop an Action plan for raising community awareness on DRR.

Starting from the set objectives we used a repertoire of action research and participatory planning techniques, when selecting methodological steps and activities. Careful planning of the process demanded the analysis of different models of action research, so that we could chose the one most appropriate for the situation, needs and goals.

With the notable differences in determination, the common denominator of action researches is the orientation towards solving practical problems, i.e. initiating change in a certain social context. According to Halmi's definition, this is actually a "...specific type of qualitative methodology strategies, which basic aim is to apply research results to practically solve problems in different social situations, in order to improve the quality of action within, which involves the cooperation of all participants of the research process: researchers, practitioners and subjects of the research." (Halmi, 2005:271).

The orientation toward praxis, a concrete problem in a defined context, more than towards "...development of scientific knowledge that generates itself" (Ibid.), implies that the research paradigm, which is the basis of this methodological strategy, originated from critically based science. From an epistemological point of view, critical theory, as a paradigm of action researches, accepts the constructivist views on gaining knowledge as a "construction and deconstruction of theory and practice" (Pesic et al, 1998:17).

The role of the researcher and the participant is frequent point of discussion and an important aspect of defining action research. When talking about action research in the most strict sense of the word, it is expected that all participants are completely equal in the process, i.e. that they take the role of 'action researchers', while in the models of participatory research it is expected to at least introduce a 'layman' to the process (Yasam, according to Adam, 1984:44). Despite the different models of action research, non-existence of standardized, "subject/object of research" relation, i.e. the 'deobjectivization' of researchers is actually

viewed as a *diferentia specifica* compared to the applicative research approaches. The issue of "deobjectivization" is seen as a "deconstruction of the relation subject-object in such a way of increasing power to the latter that we deal with the relation subject-subject...", during which the researcher becomes a partner to the participants who are 'reflective teammates' (Habermas, according to Adam, 1984: 77). The deobjectivization starts with the forming of mutual discourse between participants and this is what Moser considers as their 'symmetrical communication' (Pesic et al, Adam, Gili).

The principle of "value neutrality" of the researcher is also one of the often discussed issues. Authors believe that, in action research, value neutrality is replaced by active participation (Halmi, 2005, 279); neutrality is very hard, if not impossible, to achieve, especially in models in which the researcher participates in every phase of the research. The assumption of value neutrality itself, also, implicates the comprehension of reality as 'objectively conceivable', which is not a characteristic of interpretative, i.e. constructivist paradigm.

There is high agreement that there is no single model of action research and no instructions for the application. It always comes down to different environments, differences in starting epistemological bases and orientation towards specific goals. Something that could also connect the different models, along with the orientation towards change and the characteristic position of the researcher and the participant, are the following characteristics: pluralism of methods; the findings of action research are not considered a final product, but a material for the next phase of research and reflection (Pesic, 1998); "emancipatory intervention" is preceded by good preparation of the researcher and the securing of knowledge and data, which has to be, at least partially, collected in cooperation with the representatives of a specific community (Adam, 1984).

Having all of the above-mentioned in mind, in order to achieve a task set by a short project – the development of an action plan – we chose the Participatory Action Plan Development (PAPD) methodology. It is being used in many variations, as a "consensus building tool", and has proved its effectiveness in projects related to natural resources management as well as projects related to dealing with hazards and causes of disasters at the local level.

Usually, it comprises the following stages or steps:

1. Preparation
2. Problem prioritization
3. Information gathering
4. Analysis of solutions
5. Public feedback
6. Action plan development and implementation (Taha et al, 2010).

The steps and tools used were slightly modified and adopted for the purpose and the timeline (month of March 2015) of our project, specific geographic

area (Novi Sad and surrounding communities) and the central issue – raising awareness on DRR in a specific local community.

During the preparation phase, the researcher and the members of local NGO in charge of the project (Aarhus center), were involved in obtaining necessary information and knowledge, applying the following methods: Internet research, collecting of secondary data, documentation analysis, interviews with decision makers and local stakeholders.

Other phases were performed during the workshop, as well as the follow up activities which are going to be described in the following chapter, putting special emphasis on the role of learning and of the researcher-facilitator in the process.

Process and results of participatory action planning

In accordance with the principles of action research, the emphasis of our work was put not on the production of the document but rather on the process itself, which involved the representatives of the local community during all phases. One of the main results of the first, preparation phase was actually obtaining an all-encompassing list of stakeholders, which would include people from the Novi Sad area with experience in disaster risk reduction (DRR) and emergency management from different sectors and professional areas.

After the preparation phase, next steps (phases 2–4) were performed during the planning workshop. Out of 18 stakeholders recognized and invited to participate in the process of creating the Action plan, 12 people participated in the first workshop, representing the state bodies/institutions, academic and nongovernmental sector, municipal and local government level, as well as media representatives. Despite the motivation and commitment of participants, the absence of representatives from some key state institutions (City and District headquarters for emergency management, public enterprises in charge of waters and forests) was not the best signal they could receive in terms of perspectives for future cooperation and implementation of the Plan. However, despite the diversity of the group in terms of experience with DRR, all the participants were very active, showing enthusiasm and willingness to contribute both to development and potential implementation of measures to be incorporated in the Plan.

The main objectives of the workshop were the following:

- To introduce participants (with researcher/facilitator and among themselves);
- To introduce them with the Project and the recent results of studies and global/national trends and concepts in raising awareness on DRR;
- To jointly identify local issues and priorities to work on during DRR awareness raising.

All the teaching/learning and research activities were driven by the concept of community resilience as the main goal of raising awareness and development of the capacity of citizens.

Table 1: Teaching/learning and research activities and role of participants in the Action planning

Phases (2–4) of the planning process	**Teaching/learning activities and methods/techniques (consultant)**	**Learning and research activities/ methods/techniques (participants)**
Problem prioritization	Introduction of concepts/ presentation Summary of results of previous studies/presentation Brain storming Small group work facilitation Moderation of discussion	Active listening Discussion Prioritizing Team work Risk analysis and problem identification Discussion
Information gathering	Facilitation of small groups Provision of learning sources	Internet research Analysis of documentation
Analysis of solutions	Facilitation of small group work Active listening Moderation of discussion Facilitation Summarizing	Analysis of solutions Presentation Discussion Formulation of goals Action plan development

Therefore, educational activities were oriented towards learning outcomes, which cannot be just summed up by recognizing modern trends in DDR or by participants' ability to define the concept of resilience, but by accepting the paradigm according to which disasters aren't natural (risks can eventually become that) and just external, and according to which the resilience of the community also depends on the responsibility and activity of its members.

Within the PAPD methodology applied, the following research tools were used: "the problem tree", "the goals tree" and the action plan matrix. These are instruments that help groups to perform problem analysis (visualizing relations between causes and effects of a problem) in the participatory planning process, and then to project goals and measures to be taken in order to bring desirable changes in the community. Problem and solution analysis products were presented by each of the groups and suggested measures discussed. Participants were then asked to transfer their suggestions into the tasks of the common Action Plan.

As can be seen from the table, in each phase of the PAPD, teaching/learning, as well as research activities are present. After the preparation phase, the introductory presentations and the discussing of the results of the research, the consultant actually, first and foremost, becomes a facilitator of the process by "handing over" the role of researcher to participants mostly, while supporting

the process and entering inputs when necessary. In all the phases, participants are learners as well as people who share knowledge and who participate in research in order to achieve mutual priorities, solutions and tasks for the Action plan. In all the phases, the consultant also has the role of one who learns– most of all when it comes to getting to know the local issues, characteristics and needs in the field being researched – then the one who researches and the one who supports the process.

As a result of a planning process designed in such a way, the individual action plans for the following recognized priorities have been developed:

1) Establishing of the local Network of partners for DRR awareness raising
2) Developing the practical manual for behavior in emergencies
3) Cleaning up of river banks and developing capacities of local people for advocacy
4) Developing of journalists' competencies in dealing with crisis reporting related to DRR
5) Developing awareness of people and managers on role of nature protection areas in DRR.

Within the public feedback, as the next stage according to PADP, the draft of the Action plan was sent to participants and to the stakeholders who couldn't attend the workshop who all had the opportunity to make changes and give comments.

The implementation of an Action plan that was created in this way is a process that is still ongoing. Among the most important tangible steps in applying the plan, we highlight the official foundation of the Network for disaster risk reduction in Novi Sad (first priority) and the starting of the project that will develop the practical Guide for the prevention of natural disasters (second priority). As part of the two workshops for the members of the Network, the activities of learning and planning, which also include the other defined priorities of the Action plan, were continued.

Conclusions and discussion

The influence of constructivist conceptions, critical theory and the research paradigms based on them is obvious in the newer works in the field of adult education and learning and especially when it comes to community participation and learning. On these bases, the approaches to action research, appearing in different models, are being developed; as the common denominator of different approaches, one can recognize the orientation towards changes and practical solutions in a community, with the aim of emancipating and making all the participants of this process equal.

The application of the participatory planning methodology in the above described process, illustrates that it can be considered a model of action research: it doesn't start from hypotheses and problems set in advance, but actually searches for them during the process; different methods, especially those of qualitative research, are applied; members of the local community that aren't just 'objects', neither of learning nor of research, take part in it; the achieved results are not the final product but a material for further work, reflection and application in practice. Having in mind existing classifications, we could say that, as a model of action research, PAPD can be categorized as participatory (the researcher takes part in action planning and diagnosis), (Adam, 1984), i.e. 'practical' (the researcher works with a group on defining problems and meanings but doesn't participate in the realization of the action itself, he is more of a consultant) (Pesic et al, 1998).

Despite their active involvement in defining problems, goals and tasks of the Action plan, as well as formulating later project drafts, the participants don't achieve complete independence and the status of "action researcher" during this process. Such a transformation is naturally a result of time and further learning and work. However, considering that the process of planning and further strengthening of the capacity of the Network members was a cycle that took place over a period of several months of work, a clear improvement in the areas of independence and cooperation can be seen. That also includes overcoming at least parts of the initial challenges, such as difference in experience, professional engagement, desire for domination and application of power by the representatives of 'key players', etc.

What contributed to that? Firstly, after the initial "assuming of position" in an interactive teamwork and in an environment of open communication, the participants were given equal status regarding their responsibility towards the process, while taking into full consideration the experience of some members, but also the desire to learn of the less experienced members. From the very start, the role of the consultant as just someone who facilitates the work of Network members – the Network, as the process itself, being the 'ownership' of the participants – was also clearly defined. The persistence of the Aarhus center activists (as the main implementer) in carrying out this project, as well as the support of (at least some) local decision-makers and international project donors, contributed to the feeling of trust as well.

The repertoire of used methods of interactive teaching also undoubtedly contributed to the participants becoming more active during the process itself. The participants, as well as the consultant during the process, could, as we have previously illustrated, change their roles multiple times. The application of interactive methods, of problem-based and project-based approaches to learning, actually contributes to learning becoming a research process and research becoming a learning process. Such knowledge of concepts and reflecting on them is followed by research of their practical aspects, while new insights lead to better choices of priorities and practical solutions.

Results of verbal evaluations organized at the end of each of the workshops, show that participants involved – in the participatory action planning, learning and project planning activities – are satisfied with the process, most of all with the opportunity to bring their experience to group work and to produce proposals which might be implemented in the near future. The opportunity to learn from one another was particularly emphasized, as well as a very pleasant and friendly working atmosphere.

Apart from the expressed satisfaction of participants, the following facts also speak of their motivation for concrete action and the continuation of the process: the number of participants at events and organized workshops is growing compared to the initial session, even though it doesn't include some of the most important actors when it comes to reducing risks of disasters at a city level; Network members intensively cooperate when organizing or participating in events that were organized by one of them; there is a willingness to develop and apply the projects in the future. Expert, as well as financial, support is of the utmost importance to these projects, so that that willingness can survive and get stronger, and so that they can create these and similar 'communities of practice'.

This willingness, according to the participants' statements, but also the results of the research, is in relation with the need for both further learning and transfer of knowledge. This is evident by the findings of the survey of educational needs and capacities of participants. The survey was carried out during the second workshop using the questionnaire prepared and the qualitative analysis of data. As in the other phases, the findings here were also used as material for further work – by being compiled and presented to all the Network members as a guideline to their further planning of activities.

From an adult education point of view, the entire course of participatory planning can be characterized as a process of facilitation of learning. The leader of this process is expected to, apart from knowing the principles and methods of adult teaching and having experience in research, know about the specific issues that are present, so that he/she can create space for quality communication, active learning and searching for solutions. The openness to learning from local actors and the mutual development of best solutions to apply in practice are of great importance to achieve, if not the completely equal status then, partnerships in planning changes in a certain community. As is rightly highlighted, the value and style of the experts on adult education and research themselves are of great importance to the process' success: if he/she practices participation in his own work, it is more likely that he/she will be able to facilitate participation of other people in research/learning process (Tandon, according to Hall et al, 2015).

Judging by our and other similar experiences in applying participatory methodologies, it seems that such an approach encourages participants to act and not just 'reflect' and exchange knowledge during the process. Despite the challenges in application, the creation of these 'learning environments' could

lead to more motivated members for a better life in a community. Working on securing and improving the quality of learning in them, therefore continues to be an ever growing professional challenge for the experts on adult education.

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EMPIRICAL RESEARCHES IN THE HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT – QUALITY IMPROVEMENT OF THE FIELD[1]

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Abstract

In this paper, we present results of content analysis of fully peer–reviewed empirical researches published in three journals, aimed to emphasize their contribution to the field of human resource development (HRD). Main research focus was on three issues: frequency and types of empirical researches in HRD, key research themes in these researches, and different methodological characteristics in these empirical researches. Our analysis encompassed 175 articles published in 2002/2003, and 2012/2013 in three journals: Management Learning, **Advances in Developing Human Resources** and Human Resource Development Quarterly. For data collection, we developed protocol for content analysis of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods researches. The findings imply the increase of number of empirical researches in HRD, and the enhancement of research interests for the themes related to andragogy. Results of analysis have been interpreted in the context of research trends in HRD, with tendency to indicate possibility of further development of researches in this domain.

Key words: human resource development, empirical researches in HRD, quantitative researches, qualitative researches, mixed methods researches

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Problem Statement

In the last decade, the field of Human Resource Development (HRD) as a constantly evolving discipline faces important changes. Trends of „embracing" and „reformulation" of knowledge developed in other disciplines, trials to customize "examples of good practice" in theory building of discipline, which was evident in the field of HRD during 1970's and 1980's are rare nowadays. The scope and intensity of ideas about mosaic, complex, "multiple theoretical perspectives" of HRD, with predominance of combination of economic theories, psychological theories, and system theory (Swanson & Holton, 2001) are decreasing.

In literature relevant for social sciences, especially for the field of HRD, concepts about integrative, synergetic influence of disciplines that form the foundation of the body of theoretical knowledge of HRD – theory of adult education and learning (andragogy), psychology, system theories (with emphasis on theories about complexity and chaos), management and leadership related theories (including organizational culture) are increasing (Chalofsky, Rocco & Morris, 2014; Sofo, 1999; Woodall, Lee & Stewart, 2004). On the one hand, conceptions about strong theoretical connections between HRD and theory of adult education and learning, especially featured by US authors in 1990's (Lee, 2004), influence empirical researches in the field of HRD. On the other hand, pretensions of UK related authors to consider HRD a human resources management (HRM) domain, or as the field/discipline strongly intertwined with HRM are almost completely rejected (McGoldrick, Stewart & Watson, 2002; Sofo, 1999). A distinctive stimulus to these concepts are given by:

- indications of importance of theory of adult education and learning (andragogy) for the foundation of the body of theoretical knowledge of HRD (Chalofsky, Rocco & Morris, 2014; Dirkx, 1996; Sofo, 1999; Swanson & Holton, 2001),
- moving focus from learning as individual to learning as social process in andragogy (Marsick & Neaman, 1996),
- growing body of theoretical knowledge about different andragogical interventions in organization (Kessels & Poell, 2004),
- learning organization concepts developed in andragogy(Watkins & Marsick, 1993),
- development of knowledge related to different types of learning in organization – organizational learning (OL), individual learning, group/collaborative learning, self–directed learning, transformative learning, workplace learning, narrative learning, action learning, problem–based learning, just–in–time learning, just–in–case learning (Brandenburg & Ellinger, 2003; Marquardt, 2011; Ovesni & Alibabić, 2013, etc.).

Moreover, while analyzing relevant literature, we found the rationale for our research in absence of analysis of empirical researches, their role in theory building and in quality improvement of the field of HRD. Trends in discussions about necessity of solid methodological foundation of HRD, instead of application of "atheoretical" approach, still is common in HRM (which emphasize singular, descriptive, methodologically ungrounded examples of practice – "cases" as a means for theory building) are very rare. Only a few studies in the field of HRD have explored similar problems. Lynham (2002) highlighted strategies commonly used in building HRD theory – research–to–theory strategy and theory–to–research strategy. Jeung et al. (2011), researched the most frequently cited (most contributive) journal articles and key research themes of the journal articles in the field of HRD and tried to identify how human resource development (HRD) research has contributed to the knowledge base across social science disciplines during the 1990's and 2000's. Jo, et al. (2009) performed citation network analysis among HRD publications to explore main themes and trends in HRD. Besides, Wasti and Poell (2006) analyzed 125 texts from two HRD journals – Human Resource Development Quarterly and Human Resource Development International, and compared them to articles published in ten „mainstream" SSCI journals across a six–year timeframe. Focus of their research was to give an answer to two questions – to what extent do HRD journals and mainstream journals use different theoretical perspectives and different methodological approaches in studying HRD, and to what extent do US and European journals differ in these respects.

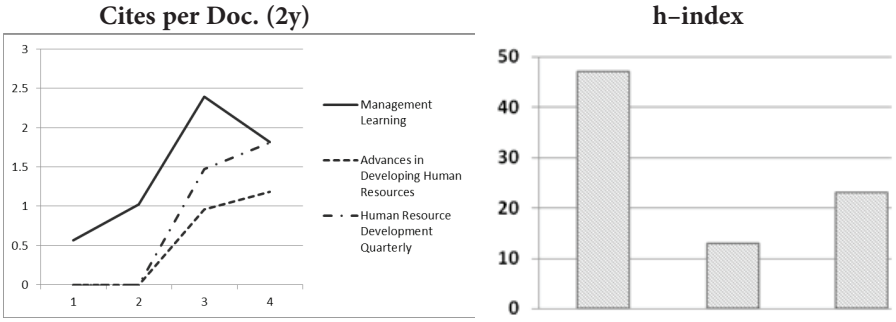
The present study provides a content analysis of empirical researches published in three leading HRD journals, undertaken to determine the sources of quality improvement in the field of HRD during the last decade. This study is aimed at answering three questions related: to frequency and types of empirical researches in the field of HRD, to key research themes in these researches, and to different methodological characteristics in empirical researches in the field of HRD.

Methodology

In this analysis we included papers published in three international journals, fully peer–reviewed, that publishes original research and review articles: *Management Learning* and ***Advances in Developing Human Resources***, both published by Sage Publications Ltd. and *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, published by Jossey–Bass Inc., an imprint of Wiley Periodicals Inc., Publishers. Our decision to choose these journals has been based on few criteria:

1. *Combination of theoretical and empirical research orientation* of published articles.
2. *Numerical value of impact factor (IF) at Thomson Reuter's list* related to the field of human resource development for 2013. These three journals have

highest rank at Thomson Reuter's list in the field of human resource development (which is included in the subject category management): Management Learning (IF: 1.245), Human Resource Development Quarterly (IF: 0.854), and Advances in Developing Human Resources (IF: 0.491)[2].



Based on Cites per Doc. (2y):	2002	2003	2012	2013
Management Learning	0.565	1.023	2.389	1.815
Advances in Developing Human Resources	0.000	0.000	0.959	1.186
Human Resource Development Quarterly	0.000	0.000	1.469	1.809
SJR indicator for:	**2002**	**2003**	**2012**	**2013**
Management Learning	0.352	0.433	1.115	0.913
Advances in Developing Human Resources	0.101	0.000	0.513	0.456
Human Resource Development Quarterly	0.000	0.000	0.63	0.754

Figure 1. The calculated numerical value of: SJR indicator Cites per Doc. (2y) measures and h–index for selected journals

3. *The calculated numerical value of SJR indicator*[3] (Figure 1), a size–independent metric aimed at measuring the current "average prestige per paper" of journals for use in research evaluation processes (González–Pereira, Guerrero–Bote & Moya–Anegón, 2010: 381).
4. *The calculated numerical value of Cites per Doc. (2y) measures* (Figure 1), the scientific impact of an average article published in the journal is one of relevant numerical measures for computing Thomson Reuter's Journal Impact Factor[4].

2 Data sets about numerical value of impact factor at Thomson Reuter's Journal list in the field of HRD for 2013 available from http://ip–science.thomsonreuters.com/cgi–bin/jrnlst/jloptions.cgi?PC=SS .

3 Data sets about numerical value of SJR indicator available from http://www.scimagojr.com/compare.php?j1=Management+Learning&j2=Advances+in+Developing+Human+Resources&j3=Human+Resource+Development+Quarterly&j4=&un=journals&inj=0 .

4 Data sets about numerical value of Cites per Doc. (2y) measures available from http://www.scimagojr.com/compare.php?un=journals&j1=Management%20Learning&j2=Advances%20in%20Developing%20Human%20Resources&j3=Human%20Resource%20Development%20Quarterly&j4=&inj=9

5. *The calculated numerical value of The Hirsch "h–index"* (Figure 1), an author–level metric that attempts to measure publication (quantity) and citation (quality or visibility) scores; it is "the (unique) highest number of papers that received h or more citations" (Egghe, 2006: 8)[5].

The analysis included findings of empirical researches published in journal articles during 2002/2003 and 2012/2013. The timeframe for the research was January 2002 through December 2003, and January 2012 through December 2013; it was determined to represent the whole decade, which formed platform to consider relation of time perspective and research questions. Our analysis included 175 published refereed HRD research articles. Most of them were published in *Human Resource Development Quarterly* (40.6%), *Management Learning* (32.0%), and *Advances in Developing Human Resources* (27.4%), respectively. During these periods similar number of HRD research articles were published: 2002/2003 (46.9%), 2012/2013 (53.1%).

For obtaining data we used content analysis. Related to common differentiation among empirical researches to quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods research – protocol for content analysis (an instrument designed for the purpose of our research) had three parts.

In accordance with research questions, we extracted a few units of analysis, i.e. for each group of researches we collected data about: types of research designs, key research themes, type of sample, methods of obtaining data, and procedures in processing data. Accordingly, as units of context in which we identified units of analysis we considered an article. Although qualitative analysis encompassed whole papers, we made special efforts to examine parts of texts related to research questions and used methodology. Overall, papers emphasized methodology in a separate chapter, but in a remarkable number of articles we had to discuss the quality of some units of analysis and to draw the indirect conclusion, while in certain papers some units of analysis were missed. For processing obtained data we also used descriptive statistics, chi–square test, and Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test.

Results

Frequencies and types of empirical researches – Frequencies of empirical researches in the field of HRD could be considered regarding different criteria, i.e. from different standpoints. In this paper we analyzed them based on relations of number of theoretical and empirical researches, and based on representation of different types of empirical researches, respectively.

5 Data sets about numerical value of h–index available from http://www.scimagojr.com/compare.php?un=journals&j1=Management%20Learning&j2=Advances%20in%20Developing%20Human%20Resources&j3=Human%20Resource%20Development%20Quarterly&j4=&inj=11

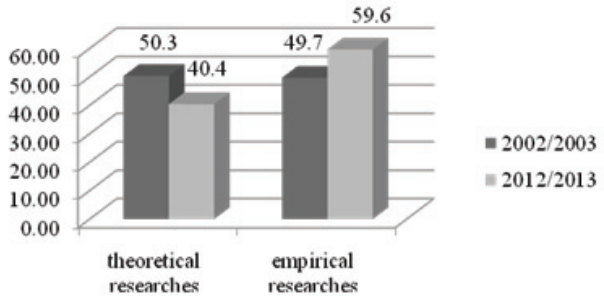


Figure 2 Frequencies of empirical and theoretical researches according to the time of publishing

Results of analysis showed that empirical researches are represented a bit more (54.5%) than theoretical researches (45.5%)[6]. Besides, during 2002/2003, the percent of represented empirical and theoretical researches was almost identical. During 2012/2013 this relation changed in favor of empirical researches (Figure 2). Nevertheless, the described differences, recorded on this sample of articles, are not statistically significant (χ^2=3.181, df=1, p=0.074).

There was some evidence of dissimilarities between different types of empirical researches, in relation to result of analysis. More than half of all are qualitative researches (53.7%), while about 10% less are quantitative researches (42.9%), while mixed methods researches were very rare (3.4%). Representations of these types of researches vary according to the time of publishing (Figure 3). In the period 2002/2003 percent of represented quantitative and qualitative researches were almost the same. During 2012/2013 we found about 10% less represented quantitative researches, and about 10% more represented qualitative researches, respectively. In same period, we found more mixed methods researches. Still, no statistically significant differences emerged between frequencies of qualitative and quantitative empirical researches in chosen timeframe (χ^2=1.945, df=1, p=0.163).

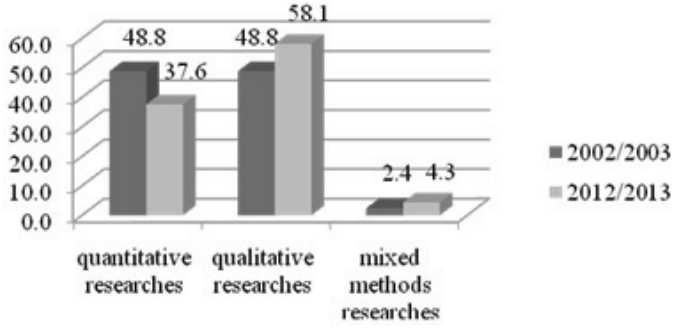


Figure 3 Frequencies of different types of empirical researches according to the time of publishing

6 Only for this part of our analysis sample encompassed all articles published in included journals in a chosen timeframe , i.e. 321 research paper.

In order to differentiate distinctive types of quantitative empirical researches, we added new coding dimension drawing from two criteria, in which involved two variants: (1) experimental versus nonexperimental researches, and (2) traditional paper–and–pencil versus online researches. Our analysis showed that nonexperimental researches (85.0%) dominate over experimental researches (14.7%). Percent of experimental researches in 2002/2003 (20.0%) decreased in 2012/2013, when experimental researches have been represented in 8.6% of cases, while percent of nonexperimental researches increased from 80.0% in 2002/2003 to 91.4% in 2012/2013. Even though described differences seems evident, we found that they are not statistically significant (χ^2=1.948, df=1, p=0.163). According to the second criterion, traditional paper–and–pencil researches (80.0%) dominate over online researches (20.0%). Based on results of the analysis, we found statistically significant differences in frequencies of these two types of quantitative empirical researches according to the time of publishing articles (χ^2=12.054, df=1, p=0.001). During 2012/2013 the number of online researches increased (37.1%), while the number of traditional paper–and–pencil researches decreased (62.9%), compared with number of online (5.0%) and traditional paper–and–pencil researches (95.0%) in period 2002/2003.

In the field of HRD, different types of qualitative researches are represented, too. In this group of empirical researches case studies dominate (61.3%). Among analyzed articles, a few models of case studies have been distinguished: qualitative singular case study, multiple qualitative case study, exploratory qualitative case study, longitudinal case study approach, comparative case study, descriptive qualitative case study. During the encompassed periods, representations of case studies in the field of HRD were almost same (51.0% in 2002/2003, 49.0% in 2012/2013). All other types of qualitative researches were represented in less than 10.0% of published papers: grounded theory research, ethnographic research, narrative research, phenomenological research, action research, qualitative content analysis, discourse analysis, qualitative feminist research, qualitative metaanalysis, etc.

Among all empirical researches in the field of HRD, mixed methods research is less common. It is not surprising that decisions to choose mixed methods are rare among researchers, for the reason that implementation of this research design started at the end of 1980's. From different models of mixed methods designs, in the group of analyzed researches, only explanatory sequential design has been used. This design is a typical model of mixed methods research. The main purpose for employment of explanatory sequential design is to provide explanation of initial quantitative results obtained in the first phase, by implementation of qualitative follow–up in the second phase (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Key research themes – Results of analysis showed that in encompassed empirical researches the following key research themes dominate: different HRD/andragogic practices and interventions (25.1%), psychological issues in HRD

(11.4%), diversity issues in HRD (10.3%), professionalization of the HRD field (9.7%), learning in organization and OL (8.6%), Learning Organization (LO) concept (8.0%), different HRM practices (7.4%), organizational culture (6.9%), knowledge management (5.1%), HRD theory (3.4%), HRD and social development (2.3%), Human capital theory (1.1%), and Virtual HRD (0.6%).

The difference between the two periods (Figure 4) was statistically significant using a Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test regarding following key research themes: different HRD/andragogic practices and interventions (Z=–5.978, p=0.000), psychological issues in HRD (Z=–4.472, p=0.000), diversity issues in HRD (Z=–3.947, p=0.000), professionalization of the HRD field (Z=–3.787, p=0.000), learning in organization and OL (Z=–3.542, p=0.000), different HRM practices (Z=–3.419, p=0.001), LO concept (Z=–3.397, p=0.001), organizational culture (Z=–3.176, p=0.001), knowledge management (Z=–2.762, p=0.006), HRD theory (Z=–2.333, p=0.020), and HRD and social development (Z=–2.000, p=0.046).

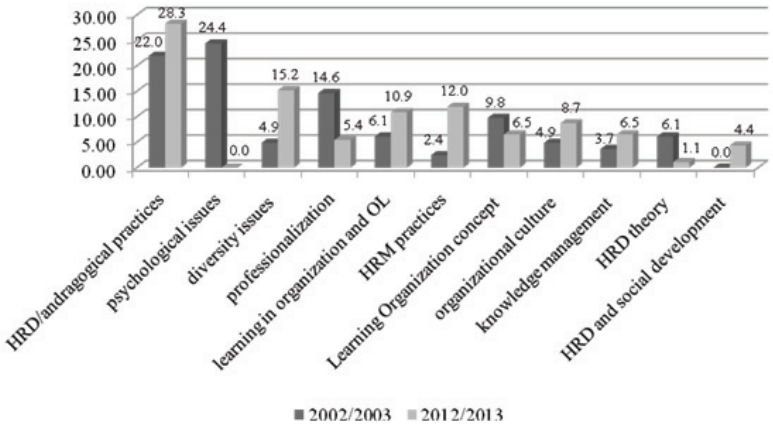


Figure 4 Frequencies of key research themes
in empirical researches by the time of publishing

Methodological characteristics of empirical researches – In this paper we focused on a few issues related to methodological characteristics of empirical researches: sampling strategies, methods of data collection, and methods of data analysis.

Results of our analysis showed that only in limited scope of papers information about decisions about from whom data will be collected, who is included, how they are included, i.e. description of sampling strategies were given (27.4%). In most of empirical researches simple random sampling (20[7]), purposeful sam-

7 Because in only 48 research articles authors described sampling strategies, we provided information about frequencies, instead about percent.

pling (11), and convenience sampling (9) have been employed. In the group of analyzed researches snowball sampling (4), and stratified sampling (3), etc. have been applied. The respondents who entered samples were: managers, leaders, employees, employees in different organizations, teachers and students, participants of some programs, organizations, study programs, papers presented and published at conferences proceedings, papers published in journals, etc.

Based on results of analysis, in the field of HRD, percent of empirical researches in which one (47.6%) or two (43.5%) different methods of data collection were used, while three or more different methods of data collection were used in very limited number of researches (8.9%). The scaling (46.3%), interviewing (45.6%) and surveying (38.1%) alone or in combination with other methods of data collection were included. In a limited number of researches content analysis were employed (21.8%), while observation (8.2%) and test (1.4%) occurrence were seldom. The methods of data collection which were applied independently (as the exclusive methods of data collection in a research) were: interviewing (23.1%) and scaling (15.0%). All other methods of data collection – content analysis, surveys, observation, and tests – were employed solely in less than 5.0% of articles. The most frequently used combination of methods of data collection applied in the researches was composed of surveys and scales (26.5%). All other combinations of methods of data collection were employed in less than 10.0% of researches separately – content analysis and interviews, interviews and surveys, content analysis and scales, observation and interviews, content analysis, observation and interviews, observation, interviews and surveys, content analysis, surveys and scales, etc. In the group of the most frequently employed methods of data collection – scaling and interviewing – dominate Likert–type scales and semi structured interview protocol.

In the group of quantitative researches, the results of analysis of used methods showed that for data collection a combination of two methods is the most common (58.7%), while researches in which only one method (37.3%), or three or more methods was employed (4.0%) are seldom. In most cases alone or in combination with other methods, scaling (89.3%) and surveying (60.0%) were used. Other methods (interviewing, content analysis, testing, observing) were applied in less than 7.0% of researches. If only one method was applied in quantitative research, then in the most cases it was scaling (29.3%); if combination of methods were applied then in the most cases it was composed from surveys and scales (52.0%).

In the group of qualitative researches, researches in which only one method for data collection were applied are the most frequent (58.3%), while combinations of two (27.8%), or three and more methods (13.9%) are seldom. Used alone or in combination with other methods for data collection interviewing is the most common (86.1%), than content analysis (37.5%), surveying (15.3%) and observation (12.5%), respectively. When only one method was applied, then interviewing dominates (45.8%), while in the case of combination of two or more

methods combinations of content analysis and interviewing (16.7%), and content analysis, observation and interviewing (11.1%) dominate.

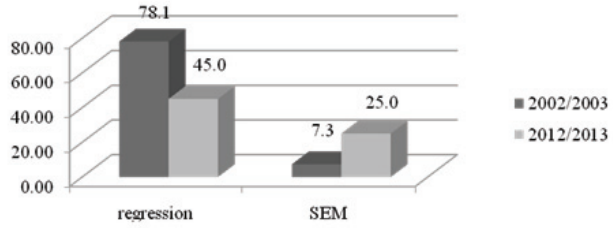


Figure 5 Frequencies of different regression models and structural equation modeling (SEM) in empirical researches according to the time of publishing

Results of analysis for methods of data analysis showed that in the group of quantitative researches the most frequent are: descriptive statistics (81.5%), different regression models – linear, general linear, multiple, nonlinear, etc. (61.7%), correlations (38.3%), different t–tests (27.2%), exploratory factor analysis (EFA) or principal component analysis (PCA) (18.5%), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) (16.1%), and structural equation modeling (SEM) (16.1%). Application of methods of data analysis is almost the same for determined periods when observe: descriptive statistics, correlations, t–tests, CFA, EFA and PCA. However, statistically significant differences for a determined period were found regarding usage (Figure 5) of different regression models (χ^2=3.763, df=1, p=0.037) and structural equation modeling (SEM) (χ^2=4.351, df=1, p=0.034).

Based on results of analysis in the group of qualitative researches regarding the methods of data analysis the most frequent is "integrative approach" usually consisting of: narrative researches methods (50.5%), grounded theory related methods (34.4%), content analysis methods (34.4%), ethnomethodology methods (24.7%), phenomenological methods (23.7%), and feminist methods (5.4%).

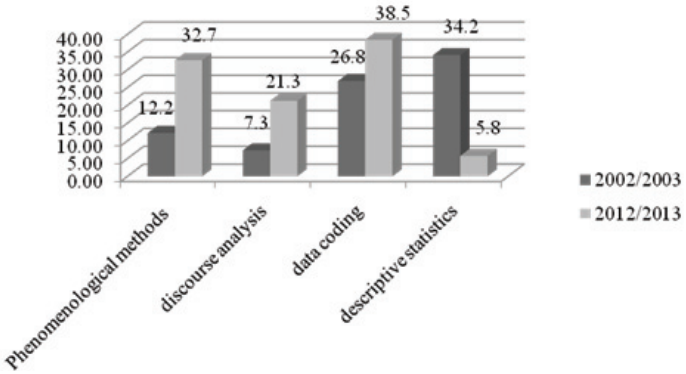


Figure 6 Frequencies of some methods of data analysis for the group of qualitative researches according to the time of publishing

Besides, in analyzed group of quantitative researches in description of the methods of data analysis sometimes are emphasized: explanations/interpretations (69.9%), organization of data (48.4%), comparison (45.2%), data coding (33.3%), analytic memo (18.3%), descriptive statistics (18.3%), discourse analysis (15.1%), validation/triangulation of data (11.8%), and other techniques (10.8%). Statistically significant differences for a determined period were found for: phenomenological methods (χ^2=7.865, df=1, p=0.004), discourse analysis (χ^2=5.323, df=1, p=0.020), and data coding (χ^2=3.553, df=1, p=0.045). Employment of these methods of data analysis (Figure 6) were statistically significantly higher in period 2012/2013, while in same period we found statistically significant decrease of application of descriptive statistics in data analysis (χ^2=6.815, df=1, p=0.008).

Discussion and Conclusions

Representation of theoretical and empirical researches in articles encompassed in our research, and different types of empirical researches showed that key topics in the field of HRD, on one hand, are discussed at different levels, and on other hand, through usage of different methodology. Diversity of researches contributes and ensures a condition for holistic and comprehensive study of problems in this field. Moreover, through the intertwining of their specific qualities, improvement to such comprehensiveness comes from different sides of interactive continuum formed by different types of researches.

Regarding representation of some types of researches, results of analysis showed increase of empirical versus theoretical researches. We hold that such tendency contribute to usage of empirical data as base for testing of existing knowledge, their further development, and as foundation for new theories in HRD. An illustration is that in quantitative empirical researches we noticed certain improvement regarding quality of applied methods of data analysis, i.e. very complex mathematical techniques and procedures (structural equation modeling), designed to test a conceptual or theoretical model, were employed more often at the end of determined timeframe, which imply tendency of increase application of theory–to–research strategy in theory building of the field of HRD. Besides, escalation of empirical researches could improve methodology used in HRD, e.g. by development of instruments for data collection about different phenomena.

Very important changes were noticed regarding key research themes in the field of HRD, too. On the one hand, research interests directly connected to psychological issues in HRD decreased (related to: emotional intelligence, emotions, factors of cognitive ability, burnout, job satisfaction, personality, affectivity, job behavior, mental models, stress at work, etc.). Research interests connected to economy, or based in Human capital theory (human resources expertise; psychological capital; intellectual capital; social capital; Real Options Theory; shareholder value) were rare, while after adoption of code of ethics in

major HRD professional associations in 1990's and 2000's (e.g. AHRD Standards of Ethics and Integrity, 2001; 22nd Revision of ODI International Code of Ethics, 1999; ISPI Code of Ethics, 2007; ASTD Code of Ethics, 2007) and intensive discourses about professionalization of the field of HRD in the same period, empirical researches about these topics diminished. On the other hand, research interests are more focused to themes related to andragogy: *different HRD/andragogic practices and interventions* (identification of training needs, facilitation of different learning processes, facilitation of multisource feedback, evaluation of the training outcomes, spirituality and work, professional development, participation of employees in a particular external/internal HRD program, etc.), *learning in organization and organizational learning* (transformative learning, experiential learning, problem–based learning, formal workplace learning, incidental workplace learning, informal workplace learning, 'double–loop' learning, situated learning, action learning, just–in–time learning, etc.), *diversity issues in HRD* (related to: African Americans, women, LGBT, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and transgender issues, women and leadership, etc.), *learning supportive organizational climate and culture* (related to: organizational changes, organizational values, engagement, organizational commitment, organizational ethics, etc.), *knowledge management* (related to: knowledge retention, transfer of knowledge, feedback, practice–based approach, reflection, knowledge–sharing, innovative knowledge, etc.), and *HRD and social development*. Such findings imply trends for independence from some traditional scientific disciplines, i.e. psychology and economy, and at the same time a closer intertwining with theory of adult education and learning (andragogy), and a tendency for advances in theoretical foundation of the field of HRD, and autonomy of HRD as scientific discipline.

A few results of analysis designate that researchers in the field of HRD are acquainted with current trends in methodology, and that they made efforts to adjust and to apply new ideas and knowledge, e.g. enlargement in number of qualitative researches, which is compatible with changes notable since 1970's, when application of qualitative researches increased in social sciences in general. Moreover, mixed methods researches and online researches escalate. From the perspective that quality and development of methodology are essential for advances of social sciences, openness and readiness of researchers for application of new methods and techniques in the field of HRD is of great importance.

Even this research were among few systematic attempts to analyze empirical researches in the field of HRD, regarding that limited number of journals were included and regarding narrow timeframe, we were very careful in our conclusions and especially in our generalization of findings. Although we provided a number of interesting results, similar researches could be expanded with the inclusion of more journals and a broader timeframe. Therefore, obtained results would be tested and approved, and new challenges for advances in the field of HRD would emerge.

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ON ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION VIA RESEARCH INTO EDUCATIONAL NEEDS[1]

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Abstract

Starting from the understanding of adult educational needs as a relation between acquired and required knowledge, skills, competences, personality traits and value attitudes, along with relating this definition to the three selected levels of occurence of adult educational and learning needs, the paper has analysed four approaches to research into adult educational needs. As approaches were considered: research into educational needs as a desire to acquire certain contents; then as a motive for engagement into the educational activity; as a discrepancy between the acquired and required in terms of knowledge, skills, etc. and preferences of certain characteristics of different elements of the educational activity. The approaches have been analysed from the point of the informative value they have in relation to the organised educational activity. The insight gained points to the high informative value of the approaches, especially when it comes to combining different approaches. The informative value is also linked to opportunities to improve adult education quality.

Key words: adult education, educational needs, individual educational needs, reserach into educational needs, adult education quality

The importance and complexity of research into educational needs

Adult educational needs, in terms of needs for learning and needs for adult education alike, represent both the problem and the topic for all time in the field of andragogy. We would say that they have imposed themselves as such by their

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very nature, that is, by some of their basic characteristics. Firstly, on this occasion, it is about their "never-being-completed", that is, satisfied, and about their continuous satisfaction. Thus, they are always in the process we can describe, using Abraham Maslow's words, as a "one-step-to-the-path" (Maslow, A, 1982, p. 84). Along that path an elusive number of needs is met, while at the same time new needs arise, in parallel with re-occurence of the old and constantly different ones, all of which comes about as a result of previous satisfaction of (educational) needs.

The next characteristic we would also like to single out is the subjective-objective nature of needs. Such nature suggests multi-layeredness of their structure. Thus, the need consists of a *sense* of need the individual has and *a relation* he/she establishes with the *object* by which the need can be satisfied. Meeting the needs takes place within the relation established, so in this way we talk about the *process*, too (Savićević, D, 1992, p. 23–24). All these elements are powerful drivers of human activities and choices they make, as well as of relations they establish. By getting to know the man's needs we can hence understand his/her behaviour, which means that by getting to know adult educational needs we can learn a lot about adult education, so much to the extent that we could hardly find a problem in the field of adult learning and education which is not either directly or indirectly related to the needs of the learner or the one involved in the educational activity.

In addition to the fact that the importance and complexity of research into educational needs stem from the very nature and scope of the construct of needs, they are at the same time, as the author Simona Sava points out, conditioned with "...the contexts and factors producing them" (Sava, S, 2012, p. 29). By placing the general context, to which individuals should adjust, between the globalisation process and the dynamism of knowledge-based society, the author points to sociological, economic, psychological and educational connotations of challenges and characteristics of the general context. In this way, within the projected matrix, in the process of research into educational needs numerous elements to be taken into account are actualised, such as: "the division of work, social mobility ...social changes and their implications at the macro and/or micro levels (e.g. ...supranational structures such as the European Union, etc.), social discourse (e.g. equality of opportunity in accessing education)... the demographic structure of participation in continuing education, the profile and organisational identity of adult education provision....the demand for continuing education include the changing competency profile in relation to the dynamic of (labour) market needs, the financial support put in place by certain policy measures, the efficient use of resources, ...the development of human capital, the attitude of employers towards workplace and organisational learning.... support for explaining and understanding the way adults learn; their motivation, interests, expectations, and attitudes towards learning and personal development; their perspectives on and constructions of reality; and their psychological profile as a

basis for understanding their learning behaviour... the goals and to the 'out-to be' level of competence an adult has set for him/herself... being aware of the benefits of learning for improving" individuals "life condition, and supporting them in reflecting on what they already know and are able to do, and on what they still have to learn to reach their professional and personal goals" (Ibid, p. 28–29).

The listed elements through which doings are demonstrated, and which concurrently constitute them at the global social level, then micro-social level, individual level and in the (social and personal) educational space, cover all those places where needs emerge, from the external environment where objects can satisfy their (educational) needs to the sense of need an individual has, by getting into all their mutual relations. If we link the presented consideration of the mutual relations of needs and context in which they are formed, met and developed, with the previously outlined internal structure of the construct of (educational) needs, it becomes clear how complex and demanding the task of research into educational needs is. It has to take into account considering their "multi-dimensionality", following the internal structure of needs, as well as "multi-determination", including their dependence on interaction of numerous factors (Despotović, M, 2000, p. 15–20). It is therefore not surprising that research into educational needs look as if they take the form of their own nature, that is, the nature of their satisfaction, thus becoming "one-step-to-the-path" of their cognition.

It is clear that engaging in research into adult educational needs represents engaging in the analysis of several elements or aspects of educational needs. Even then, the research does not lose complexity. So, even though we are going to deal in this paper with research into adult educational needs, that is, with some of the research approaches to adult educational needs, with a short overview of part of results as illustrations, we will also see how much we learn about adult education via the empirical research. All these findings are further used to open space for evaluation of adult education quality and designing models of continuous development and quality management of adult education.

The aim of the undertaken analysis of the approach to research into individual educational needs

The analysis of different approaches to research into individual adult educational needs, the results of which are presented in this paper, has been conducted with the aim to compare the informative value particular approaches entail, that is, to consider quantity and types of information on educational needs of adults we come to by applying the particular approach. Besides the main stated aim of the analysis, one more has been set, which is oriented towards considering the role of the information received on educational needs of adults in improvement and management of adult education quality.

We have conducted the overall analysis by grouping the approaches on the basis of, on one hand, our understanding of educational needs, represented by their definitions, and on the other hand, by grouping educational needs with regard to three levels of their occurrence.

By educational needs in this paper we imply the relation (which is most often represented by the difference) between the knowledge, skills, attitudes and characteristics the man (or social groups) possesses and the knowledge, skills, attitudes and characteristics he/she needs to successfully play various roles in many areas of life (Pejatović, A, 1994, p. 56). As can be noticed, the stronghold of our definition is set in relation, or in other words, in the space where meeting the needs takes place.

Furthermore, by taking as a criterion levels of generality at which needs occur and where they can be examined, we distinguish between three categories of (adult) educational needs. At the first, most general level, learning needs and educational needs can be linked to each of other types of human needs. Seen in this way, learning needs and educational needs become an element of other human needs and at the same time they contribute to different quality of meeting those needs. For example, within the need for food the person also has the need to learn how to eat more healthily, more economically, more tastily, etc. The individual may want to satisfy these and similar learning needs in a more systematic and organised way, so he/she may undertake various learning projects, or he/she may take part in some of the organised educational activities, as well as he/she may opt for professional development in occupations related to human nutrition (Ibid, p. 51).

At the second level we are also faced by needs which are not educational by their nature, but they become such by the selected method of satisfying them. As examples for this type we can use the need for socialising, meeting people of similar interests, belonging, designed leasure activities, escape from everyday life, increasing self-confidence, preparing for travelling and many others. Thus listed, they do not resemble educational needs. Nevertheless, they can become such by the way in which the person has decided to meet them, which is by taking part in organised educational activities. Educational needs observed at this level can largely be linked to motives and/or reasons for participation in various educational opportunities intended for adults.

At the third level we can observe educational needs as a special, specific type of needs adults have. In this group we can include needs which refer to various elements of the educational activity, such as the need for: educational contents, organisational forms, a certain type of provider that implements some of the programmes or the concrete provider, the method of implementation of the educational activity, its duration, the way in which the educational activity is implemented, the staff that implements it, the type of certificates obtained at the end of the programme, etc. Practically, we can say that each element of the edu-

cational activity can be linked to certain educational needs, which can further have a large impact on the person's participation in a certain educational activity.

By mutually relating our definition of educational needs, where the main emphasis for further understanding of educational needs is placed on the relation, that is, the process of satisfying these needs within the specified relation, to the three levels of occurence of educational needs, that is, two contexts in which those relations are established (the first two levels) and in which the process of satisfying them is shaped (the third level), we have actually outlined the framework within which we will be going through the analysis of some of the approaches to research into educational needs.

Approaches to research into adult educational needs

Adult educational needs as a desire for acquisition of educational contents

A very common way of researching adult educational needs which occurs in literature is an attempt to comprehend them as a desire, or a degree of the expressed desire, for acquisition of certain educational contents, represented at different levels of generality (from entire areas of education, over linking the contents to certain life roles and activities of adults, to more detailed specified contents with regard to the target group of potential participants, like, for example, the offer of contents directly related to someone's job description). In these cases, respondents actually show their preferences in relation to the series of offered contents. Results of some research designed in this way (conducted dominantly during the last decades of the XX century and in the XXI century in different countries) lead us to the data which indicate two tendencies. The first indicates that educational contents related to the job the respondents do occur most often as the most desirable ones. The second points to redirecting preferences and to the growing desire to acquire contents which refer to: social life, recreation, individual development, family, foreign languages, household, cultural and aesthetical and socio-political contents, digital literacy, communication skills, etc (Advisory Council for Adult and Continuing Education, 1982; Savićević, D, 1983; Kačavenda Radić, N, 1983; Savićević, D, 1986; Oljača, M, 1992; Pejatović, A, 1994; Pejatović, A, Orlović Lovren, V, 2014).

Bearing in mind the amount and type of information we obtain by applying the described approach to research into adult educational needs, which are relevant to understanding these needs, as well as to adult education in general, it is clear that in this way we come to one type of information, the one which points to educational contents for which certain adult groups express the need (desire). The level of generality of educational contents in different specific cases varies,

from the level of entire educational areas and life areas to fully specified contents, if, for example, the analysis of job or certain activity has been previously done. The identified contents, for which there are desires expressed, may form the basis for training or education programme development, most often with the necessity for conducting an additional analysis. Anyway, the expressed desires of adults do not guarantee their participation in educational activities, not even in those based on the preferences shown. Such our belief gains foothold, among other things, in the conclusions of the theoretical and empirical reseach conducted by Ranko Bulatović, according to which "the attitude to educaton and willingness to engage in it are not the 'same' things, but willingness largely depends on the attitude, that is, the attitude explains approximately one quarter of the variance of results on the index of willingness to engage, whereas the other three quarters are conditioned by some other factors..." (Bulatović, R, 1983, p. 181–182). Our assumption is that a similar relation exists between the expressed desire for mastering certain contents and willingness to participate in a certain educational activity.

Adult educational needs as a motive to engage in an educational activity

Access to educational needs as motives, that is reasons, to engage in organised educational activities, represents that part of our understanding of needs, where we place them on the second level of occurrence, as needs which, by their nature, most often are not educational, but become such by the chosen way of satisfying them, that is, by education. However, needs which would be difficult to satisfy in a different way may occur among motives, such as, for example, those which relate to needs for more successful job performance, for practising a new job, mastering innovations and the like.

Research by various authors show us that motives to engage in educational activities intended for adults may be very different. Thus, the following are cited: material gain, change of jobs, transition to a better job, better job performance in a position where they are (Johnstone and Rivera, according to: Savićević, D, 1983), broadening the educational horizon and cultural level, upgrading qualifications, improving work quality, continuing education, equalising the educational level with other family members, assisting children in learning (E. P. Tonkonogoja, according to Ibid), establishing social contacts, social stimulation, professional advancement, service to community, external expectations, cognitive interest (R. Boshier, according to: Savićević, D, 1989), promotion at work, escape from everyday life, learning enjoyment, meeting new people, service to community and society, meeting the expectations of "important" people and more (Pejatović, A, 1994), socialising and making new friends, maintaining physcho-physical fitness, acquiring new knowledge, catching up with what has been

missed, filling the gaps, lessening the feeling of uselessness, personality enrichment, etc (Pejatović, A, Živanić, S, 2006).

As might be expected, the data obtained from the research into motives of adults to engage in educational activities to a large extent resemble the data obtained in the research into preference of educational contents. In both of them the area of working life and professional development are expressed very often as, but, of course, not as the only starting point of desires and motives for education.

Just like the research into acquiring educational contents, the research into motives can tell us a lot about the contents for which the respondents are in need. But it seems to us that we find out much more about the expected effects of educational activities by the participants on the basis of participants' motives. If we have those desirable effects in mind, then they are certainly reflected in the projected aim of the educational activity, that is, in our intention with which we initiate the activity, as well as in the outcomes we want to achieve by education. Some of the motives, such as, for example, the need for social stimulation or learning enjoyment, refer us to ways of implementing the educational process, and at the same time to the expected participants' behaviour. Based on the above mentioned, it seems that by getting to know the motives of potential participants for participation, we can find out many important things about the specific learning activity.

Educational needs as a discrepancy

The approach to the research into individual educational needs by considering the gap, disharmony, difference, discrepancy and the like between the possessed level of specific knowledge, skills, competences, value attitude towards something and personality traits and the required or desired level of these elements for the most part refers to our, but not only to our definition of educational needs. Defining the acquired and the required levels in the research varies from self-assessments, based on personal impressions and standards, to more objectively standards set, which, for example, may represent the required level to enter a particular occupation or obtain a work licence.

Although within this approach we are referring to the acquired and the required levels, we actually have three measures, and they are: defining the acquired level, defining the required level, and based on the previous two measures, defining the discrepancy. In this case "measuring" is usually performed by applying two parallel scales, the "it-is scale" and the "should-be scale", on the constituent elements of the particular wider entity (work in the specific workplace, parental role, communication skills) and then by considering the mutual relation of the results obtained via the two mentioned scales. In literature we come across to so different and yet so similar terms for the acquired level and the required level. Knowles talks about "the present and the required level of

competence", and in his later papers he talks about "competences defined in the model and their present level of development in students" (Knowles, according to: Despotović, M, 2000, p. 14). In one of our research we called these two series of data "self-assessment of the amount of the acquired knowledge" and "expression of the desire to further acquire knowledge" (Pejatović, A, 1994, p. 92). While searching for answers to various questions related to (educational) needs seen as deficiency, Miomir Despotović distinguishes between the level of (non) satisfaction (the extent to which the need is (not) satisfied – it-is state), then the level of aspiration (the extent to which it would be desirable or to which the need should be satisfied, which actually represents the anticipated, desired amount of satisfaction – the should-be state) and the level of imbalance – deficiency, which represents the difference between the existing and the desired (between it-is and should-be states) (Despotović, M, 2000, p. 51).

Based on the space for research into adult educational needs opened up by the three measures, we certainly expand options for discovering, at least in part, the way in which they operate. For example, in our already mentioned research into needs as the relation, it has been shown, among other things, that: persons who stated that they had considerable knowledge of some areas mostly want to further improve the knowledge; the desire to acquire further knowledge has been also expressed to a lesser extent in the respondents who stated that they had little knowledge about certain areas; the persons from the sample who think that they had extensive knowledge of certain areas expressed the slightest desire to acquire further knowledge. By generalising the presented findings we could say that "the educational need whose satisfaction has been initiated aspires to be further satisfied", as well as that "one's own impression about extensive knowledge of certain areas in a way "closes" the educational need (Pejatović, A, 1994, p. 119). Partly similar conclusions were reached by Miomir Despotović, who thinks that "operation and development of needs in adults takes place... via the mechanism of (self)transcendence (a higher level of satisfaction implies a higher level of desires, that is, the more you have the more you want and vice versa)" (Despotović, M, 2000, p. 128).

Based on the examples given, it is obvious that when doing the research into educational needs on the basis of the discrepancy, in comparison to other approaches, we learn most about the way in which (educational) needs themselves operate. The perceived trends in the way in which educational needs seem to operate point to us who we can expect first and foremost to engage in a specific educational activity. In addition, the "it-is" level tells us about the extent to which the person has acquired certain knowledge or mastered a specific skill, and it can also tell us a lot about the previous need satisfaction. The "should-be" level is most closely connected to setting standards of various levels. The result of mutual relating of "it-is" and "should-be" certainly and largerly represents the specified basis for the educational activity programme development than it is the case when participants' educational needs are examined only through statements

of their desires. These bases of the programming process for a specific group of participants also allow for individualisation of the teaching process, as well as work on reducing heterogeneity of the educational group, as a response to differences in the expressed needs, obtained as a result of discrepancies for each particular participant.

Educational needs in regard to different elements of the educational activity

Educational needs which (potential) participants express in regard to different elements of the educational activity (organisers, content, institution which implements the programme, organisational form, staff delivering the activity, venue, time, method of work and many others) correspond to our understanding of educational needs as a special type of human needs, which we placed on the third level of occurence of adult educational needs. This approach to examining educational needs is quite common in research studies in the field of andragogy, and even in those studies the subject of which do not directly deal with educational needs.

The data we obtain in this way are fully abundant. Thus, for example, according to the data obtained by Dusan Savicević regarding the way in which knowledge is acquired, the adults included in his research sample in most cases opted for lectures in classical teaching at regular school as a place, followed by an enterprise chosen by men and home chosen by women (Savićević, D, 1989, p. 206–207). The preferred duration with most of the respondents was more than four years. (Ibid, p. 208). In our later research study, regular school retains primacy (though not so evidently) as the optimal place for knowledge acquisition, participation in discussion groups occurs as the most dominant way, while several months was preferred by the largest number of respondents as the duration of the educational activity (Pejatović, A, 1994, p. 110–111). When we asked the respondents from the other sample the same set of questions some ten years later, we were given the following answers: independent knowledge acquisition and engagement in practical work in an appropriate institution were most often chosen as a form, or a way of acquiring knowledge; participation in guided discussions, discussion groups and workshops, as well as self-education, lead as ways; two and a half years was most often chosen as the duration of the educational activity (Pejatović, A, 2006, p. 229). And yet again, some other respondents, of fifty years of age and more who were unemployed in the research conducted a little over a year ago, opted for ways, that is, organisational forms of educational activities. On that occasion, the contribution of an accredited certified training course was estimated to be the highest in increase of employability and employment opportunities, and also the greatest willingness was expressed for engagement in this type of training course. After this type of training course, in regard to all three observed aspects, the most common choice was "verification of

previously acquired knowledge and skills – exam taking" (Pejatović, A, Orlović Lovren, V, 2014, p. 186).

Based only on these segments listed on the results from several research studies presented chronologically, significant changes are visible in expressing the respondents' educational needs in regard to the extracted elements of educational activities. Those changes move from abandoning more passive ways of knowledge and skills acquisition of longer duration in institutions of the formal system, to selecting forms of work which imply participants' activity at a high level, most often as self-organised or learning via direct performance of the activity of shorter duration (for example: learning-on-the-job). Based on the insights gained, it seems reasonable to us to conclude that the presented overview within the considered approach to research into educational needs points to numerous qualitative changes related to adult learning and education. Furthermore, this conclusion we have come to indicates the high informative value of the presented approach. In addition to the recorded changes, we could say that the approach to research into educational needs in regard to different elements of the educational activity provides the most information on numerous individual elements comprising the entire "internal structure" of each educational activity. This type of data can, therefore, greatly assist in planning certain educational activity.

The informative value of different approaches to research into adult educational needs in the context of adult education quality – towards concluding remarks

It would be hard not to agree with the attitude that "understanding learner needs is essential for providing quality education" (Sockalingam, N, 2012). Numerous opportunities to improve adult education quality are certainly made by the labour market needs analysis, as well as by research into individual adult educational needs. In this paper we have dominantly focussed on educational needs of individuals, potential participants, as well as of those who, at the time of the research studies mentioned, were engaged in some of the organised educational activities.

On the basis, on the one hand, of understanding of adult educational needs as a relation between the acquired and required in terms of knowledge, skills, competences, characteristics and value attitudes, and on the other hand, of considering educational needs and needs for adult learning on the three levels of occurence: as the element of various human needs; as a way of satisfying (in the educational activity) needs which are not essentially educational; and as a special type of human needs, we have selected and considered four approaches to research into adult educational needs. Among them are the following approaches: research into adult educational needs as a desire to acquire educational contents

(the first level of occurence of educational needs), as a motive for engagement in the educational activity (the first and the second levels of occurence of educational needs), as a discrepancy (understanding needs as a relation, relationship), as well as preference in regard to different elements of the educational activity (the third level of occurence of educational needs). It should be noted that this series does not cover all possible approaches to research into adult education and learning needs. For example, one of the approaches we are applying in the ongoing research is obtaining data on adult educational needs in the context of outcomes of the adult learning process.

In this paper we were particularly interested in the informative value in relation to adult education in each of the four approaches presented aimed at adult education quality improvement. For the sake of visibility, we are going to present the information we can reach within each of the approaches in the form of a table.

Table 1: Approaches to research into adult educational needs and potential information relevant to the adult education process

Approach to research into adult educational needs	Potential information on adult education
Research into adult educational needs as a desire for acquisition of educational contents	Educational contents specified at different levels of generality, as a basis for the programming process.
Research into adult educational needs as a motive for engagement in the educational activity	Functions of adult education; Aim of the educational activity; Outcomes of the educational activity; Expected effects of the educational activity; To some degree – expected behaviour of participants in the educational activity.
Research into adult educational needs as a discrepancy (relation)	Previously satisfied needs; Standards of achievements of participants; Discrepancy – more details on the contents of the educational activity; The way educational needs operate; Group heterogeneity; Possibility of work individualisation; Probability of participation (who is the most probable participant).
Research into adult educational needs as preference for different elements of the educational activity	Elements of the educational activity which constitute its "internal" structure (part of the syllabus).

All the items concisely listed in Table 1 lead us to the conclusion that many highly relevant things to adult education can indeed be learned on the basis of the research into adult educational needs. By comparing the four approaches to research into adult educational needs, we can say that each of them provides very important information on different aspects and elements, which is

necessary when studying, planning, programming, implementing and evaluating educational activities intended for adults, as well as information on ways in which adult educational needs operate. We think that at the end of this paper the attempt to answer the question of which of the approaches has the greatest informative value in relation to others should not result into selecting the one which has the greatest value of this kind, but more into the suggestion that, when doing research into adult educational needs, several different approaches should be combined. The selection of the approaches and their combination will depend on the data we want to obtain on adult education or on the concrete educational activity.

All the above listed points to the significant connection between the usage of combination of different approaches to research into adult educational needs and data sources for adult education quality improvement. If we concurrently understand quality both as the characteristic and as the value, that is, evaluation (as a further or resulting property of the characteristic), then we can say that the data we obtain via research into educational needs (either by the individual or combined approach) refer to: aspects and elements of the educational activity as agents of numerous characteristics, then to the characteristics themselves, as well as to the possibility of setting indicators for evaluation of characteristics. All of them are necessary elements for planning activities in order to gain insights into the existing qualities, as well as to improve the quality of educational activities or, shall we say, adult education.

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LIFELINE METHOD IN RESEARCH OF ADULT LEARNING AND CAREER: TOWARDS THE QUALITY

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Abstract

The paper discusses results of the research conducted with double aim. First aim was to examine the relation between education and learning and career of adults, through research of key periods in line of career, line of education and learning, and research of overlaps and gaps between these lines. All these periods are indicators of certain quality of adult education and learning. Second goal was examination of the quality of the lifeline method which is used in this empirical research, a method known for its application in various career guidance and counseling interventions but with insufficient use in scientific research. The research results show that the line of career is saturated with career transition periods, while the line of education and learning is dominated by formal education. Education is often perceived as important for entry into the profession, but is not perceived as support in critical points in career.

Key words: adult education, adult learning, career development, lifeline method, quality.

Introduction

At the very beginning, it seems important that we single out a few constituents, integral elements that have significantly influenced the conception of

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our research. These constituents that have been an integral part in building a conceptual, theoretical and methodological framework of this study are: career, lifeline method and education and learning.

The first of these constituents is certainly a career. The concept of career changes significantly in the last few decades (Arnold, 2005; Amundson, 2010; Athanasou & Esbroeck, 2008). For summing up what careers are nowadays, we'll use certain characteristics that were given by the authors Mihajlović and Popović, who believe that we can make a distinction between the traditional concept of career and the concept of modern career that has "... an expanded scope. On the one hand, it implies a whole set of different situations related to employment. Thus, among other things, these include unemployment and volunteering. On the other hand, careers have extended time duration. They are already starting with selecting schools, and are followed by the last transfer, a transfer from the world of work to retirement" (Mihajlović, Popović, 2012: 29). In that sense, careers now have more elements which even go beyond employment and work, so we can say that careers more and more present individualized paths.

In the relevant scientific literature which is focused on the study of careers and career development of adults, it can be noticed that the career of adults became more difficult to understand as a series of clearly (usually by age) separated stages that are common to most people. Of course, the contribution of developmental theories that explain career in this way is immeasurable and it is hardly overcome. They are important because at least they offer explanations and classifications for previously "unapproachable" periods through which ones passes on his or hers career path. Careers can nowadays often be seen as a series of individual trajectories that go into the unknown and non-anticipated directions. These directions are marked by ups and downs. It is unlikely that these trajectories follow the pattern that implies "completion of education, first employment, advancement within a single business or working within a single organization by the known rules and finally retirement. This in turn means that individuals must acquire the knowledge, skills, that is competencies that will be required in order to manage their own careers; there is a shift from "giving final solutions' towards activities which aim to support the individual to independently builds his own career "(Mihajlović, 2014: 126).

In practice of career guidance and counseling, there are a large number of interventions that seek to help individuals. We will not go into the taxonomy of career intervention, nor to outline a variety of methods and instruments that are used in these interventions, but, for the purposes of this study, we singled out one of them, known as a lifeline method. Lifeline method makes the second important constituent of our research. As a method that comes from the practice of career guidance and counseling, we tried to incorporate it into scientific research context. A more detailed consideration of the lifeline method (as a research method) can be found in a separate section of this paper.

The third important constituent of our work is education and learning. It seems to us that, as never before, education and learning and career as well as career guidance and counseling are so connected. Increasing in the complexity of these connections can be illustrated by these words: "In contrast to the time when studying mostly presented the flat line leading to the next key point – employment, students today are faced with much greater possibilities, but also with the challenges related to planning and developing career "(Pejatović, Mihajlović, Kecap, 2014: 38). Although the authors speak about specific group – students, it seems to us that this is not their "differentia specifica", but can be applied to different target groups. There are various ways in which we can approach to this relationship – education and learning can be seen as part of one's career, and also, education can be seen as part of certain activities of career guidance and counseling.

Through our research we attempted to identify the lines of education and learning and the lines of career (or more precisely – education and learning as a part of one's career) by applying the method that is commonly used in the activities of career guidance and counseling. In this article we are oriented towards to: 1) the identification of some (new) qualities of adult education, observed both as the characteristics of adult education, and also as the extent in which these characteristics are present in adult education (Pejatović, 2005: 6) viewed as part of one's career, and towards to 2) consideration of the quality of the lifeline method, in particular its strengths and weaknesses when used in scientific research.

Methodological framework of research

Research goal and tasks

Our research goal is twofold: on the one hand, it is to examine the relationship between education and learning and career development of adults, and on the other hand, it is testing the lifeline method applied to a research of adult education and learning and career development. The first part of our research goal is divided into four research tasks and they are:

1. To identify key periods in the career development of individuals (line of career);
2. To identify key periods in the learning and education of individuals (line of learning and education);
3. To identify key periods in which there is an overlap between the line of career and line of learning and education;
4. To identify key periods in which there is a gap between the line of career and line of learning and education.

Designing the instrument – initial idea and modifications

Our idea for the use of the lifeline method came from the realization of other studies which have investigated certain aspects of careers, education and learning and the relationship between career development and adult education and learning (Career Management – institutional and organizational framework, The transition from higher education to the world of work, Professional development of teachers as an aspect of the professionalization of secondary vocational education etc.), in which we participated either as authors of the research or as contributors to the realization of certain phases of research. When analyzing the results and the instruments used in previous studies, we found to despite the implementation of complex questionnaires which contained a large number of items, there are a number of questions that have no answer. Then, we asked: What could we obtain as a result, if we could say the respondents to draw us their career path as they see it?

Analyzing relevant literature, we came across the study that in methodological point of view was similar to our ideas. This is a research of career development that uses the lifeline method and lifeline technique within, carried out in Japan and implemented by Shimomura (2011). Shimomura states that "lifeline method is one of the qualitative assessment techniques that are currently becoming the focus of attention in careers guidance research" (2011: 90). Lifeline method is often used in the practice of career guidance and counseling, because it represents a good initial resource and provides a good insight into the career for both sides involved in process: the advisor and the client. However, its use in scientific terms has not yet been sufficiently explored. We believe that the area of career development and counseling for now is leading a battle in three, unfortunately, not so close fields: theory, research and practice. In that sense, it seems to us as an excellent idea that certain products of practice could be transferred in the scientific field, and maybe, the lifeline is a step closer towards these reconciliations.

How does it looks like, both the lifeline technique and application of lifeline technique in scientific research? Key elements of the lifeline technique which had been used in the study conducted in Japan were years (ages of the respondents) and the value that they attributed to their career (plus and minus). Using the plus on the upper part of the graph and minus on the lower part, the respondents were given space to mark a certain point of career. These points are defined as the ups and downs, as they perceive them (Figure 1).

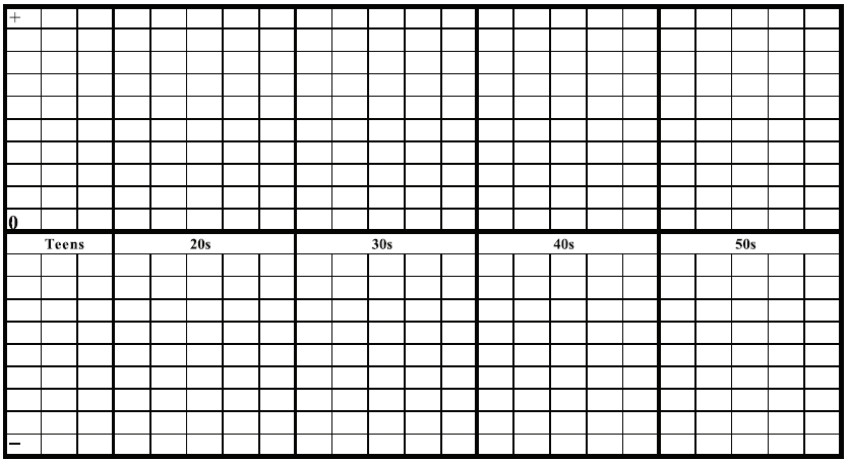

Figure 1. Explanation of Lifeline Method
Used in Survey in Japan (Shimomura, 2011: 90)

We found that this method of constructing the chart is very good because it allows two things important for enquire: on the one hand, enables researchers to obtain comparative reviews of their subject's answers, and on the other hand, gives to the respondents generally accepted framework within which to place their career paths.

Nevertheless, we have opted for a slightly different application the lifeline techniques. The reason for the different design lies in the fact that during the pilot phase of this study (N = 15), we have received a negative reaction to the instrument and the reason is probably to cultural differences between Japan and Serbia. The greatest resistance from respondents appeared about the "minus" phase because almost none of the subjects in the pilot study want to draw a curve in the lower part of the graph (lines are not descended to minus phase).

Finally, the instrument that was designed for the purpose of this research has three parts. The first part is the graphic part (Figure 2). On the graph provided, which horizontal line was indicating the year or, to be more precisely, periods of life, and vertical line was indicating career development, respondents were asked to draw a line of their career and a line of learning and education. In addition, it was necessary that respondents mark key points or periods in their career development, but also to explain what those points are. Also, respondents had a task that, next to the each key point, they add a "speech balloon" and to explain what these points represented. The second part of the instrument was supposed to give us some more information from respondents about their drawings, but also about the instrument itself. The first question was about asking respondents to reflect on their drawings (lines of career and lines of education and learning) and to explain the relationship between these lines (to explain how they see periods where these lines intersect, overlap or diverge). The sec-

ond question was about asking respondents to explain how they felt in this way of testing ("drawing" their responses instead of writing) and how they saw the questionnaire. The third part of the questionnaire included a set of questions about biosocial characteristics of respondents.

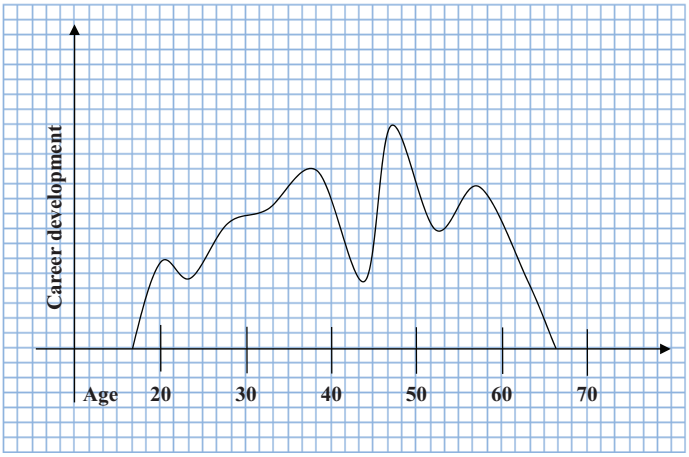

Figure 2. Application of Lifeline Method in Serbia – Design of the Instrument

Conducting research and research sample

The research was conducted in two phases. The pilot study, which had a total of 15 respondents (N = 15), was conducted in July 2015. It was very important for the researchers because it pointed out some significant elements which should be modified in the instrument (these changes are described in the section related to the instrument design). After the pilot phase, we started with the realization of the main research. The survey was carried out from July to September 2015. During that period we manage to collect 40 questionnaires.

A sample of this study consisted of 40 respondents (N = 40) from the territory of Belgrade, Serbia. Of these, women (N = 21) and men (N = 19) are almost equally distributed in the sample.

Research Results

The research results will be presented according to the four main research tasks.

Key periods in the career development

Our first research task was aimed at identifying key periods within the career development of our respondents. When talking about the key periods in

their career, respondents singled out first employment (27). First employment is most frequently occurred among almost all subjects, as (just) the first employment, the first employment with a permanent contract, or the first employment within their profession. The first employment is often the first item that appears at the beginning of their careers, that is, on the graph – as the beginning of the line of career. Changing job was also frequently noted by our respondents as one of the key points in their career (18). By changing the employment, respondents often mentioned change of the organization, job rotation and change of their occupation or profession. It is interesting that these changes often have a positive sign on the graph (growth curve), so it is very possible that these changes were initiated by our respondents.

Promotion on the job is often occurred as another focal point within the career of our subjects (15). Logically, in our graph it is always presented as growth curve. Losing of employment (firing or quit from a job) occurred in 18 cases. Regarded the line of career of our subjects, job loss was usually the lowest point within career of our respondents, but it is often seen as the point from which the line shows the rapid growth – which usually presents the search for a new employment or, in some cases, indicates that respondents, after quitting a job or being fired, decided to start their own business.

Regarding key points or periods in their career, respondents also mentioned the following: reducing wages, worsening of conditions at work, maternity (absence from a job), sickness (long absence), military service, employment in a worse position (regression), pension, relocation, launching independent business and working abroad. When we look at these elements, we can see that there is a domination of those elements that are in close connection with the employment. To a lower extent, elements appear to be distant from a professional domain (maternity, military service). Finally, we can see that their answers are closer to the traditional understanding of career. Also, the answers of our respondents are always associated with some objective change, while only two subjective reflections, the feeling of job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction, are listed only in a few cases.

Generally speaking, looking at the graphs and explanations provided, three models of career paths can be observed:

1) The first model is a model with many ups and downs of varying intensity (alternation between periods of changes in employment, firing, stabilization within one employment);
2) The second model is a model of straight line (the first employment, working at one workplace where respondents do not indicate a particular promotion, retirement);
3) The third model is a model of constant growth line (first employment, promotion, moving to higher positions and retirement).

Key periods in the learning and education

Our second research task was related to the identification of the key periods in education and learning. Our respondents frequently mentioned the following key periods in their "line" of education and learning: completion of secondary school (initial education), completion of graduate studies ("faculty diploma"), magister degree, doctorate, specialization, "a bunch of seminars", courses, foreign languages, computers, self-directed learning of computer skills, acquisition of different licenses needed for working in the field etc.

Results indicate that respondents from the key periods in the education and learning primarily referred to those in the field of formal education. In this sense, it is evident that they are leading elements that serve more for preparing ones for a future career, than elements that are happening in parallel with career, or as a part of career. Also, what is interesting is that often as a focal point, a crucial period in education and learning, states the completion of the initial (secondary or tertiary) education. More specifically, the respondents largely referred to diplomas, certificates and licenses as some of key points, than they referred to (or describe) the process of learning and education itself, that is, some of that process which left a mark on one's career.

Almost nowhere starting a new course, or a decision to enroll in a course, has not been seen as a key point or turning point in the course of one's education. Only in two cases the "decision to seriously deal with magister or doctoral studies" is seen as one of the key points. Also, within a description of the lines, we have not met with describing the process of learning and education and/or any changes that it causes. Why is this so? Answers to this question can be found at two places: in the structure and possible unintended suggestiveness of the instrument itself, constructed for the purpose of this study; and in something that we as researchers, theorists and practitioners in the field of adult education, should pay more attention to – in the reasons of participation in education, which raises more questions about the quality of adult education.

When we consider education just by looking at the lines on the graph provided, and when we analyze relationship between the lines of education and the age of our respondents, it reveals two regularities. Education occurs either as a straight line throughout the whole life, or as a straight line until a certain moment in life. In some cases, the line of education rises, pointing out that there has been a positive career development, but usually it rises only up to the age of 30. When we analyze previous information together with the data about character of that education, most often we see that it is, again, a formal education. In some cases, the line of education goes beyond the age of 40, but this is case for respondents who gained higher levels of education, magister degree and doctorate.

Based on the lines of education provided by the subjects of the research, we can notice two models:

1) Within the first model the line of education appears as a straight line through the whole life, from a key point which states for the completion of the initial (secondary or tertiary) education;
2) Within the second model the line of education appears as a curve which goes up, but, in most cases, it goes up to the age of 30 or 40 and it is connected with the formal education (these "ups" are frequently associated with higher levels of education).

Of course, the line of education is not "unconstrained" line because it is, by the questionnaire itself, related to career and to observing education in relation to career.

Key periods – overlap between the line of career and line of learning and education

Our third research task is related to the identification of periods when there is an overlap between the lines of education and learning and career lines. Periods with overlap should be viewed as those periods when education and learning played a supportive role in career development of the individual. These periods, given by respondents, are as follows:

1) Employment in the profession,
2) Changing employment which requires new knowledge,
3) Return to work after an absence – mastering new tasks,
4) Prequalification,
5) Specialization at the workplace,
6) Training for additional job and promotion.

From the analysis of graphs and the respondents' answers it is evident that education and learning more frequently appear as important in the beginning of a career in the field, as well as in certain turbulent times related to the employment or career. All of these changes regarding ones career are often called transitions. Discussing the quality, Pekeč noted that "transition from (higher) education to employment could be seen as an indicator of quality in (higher) education", where success in transition implies higher quality in education (2014: 191). Education and learning are here to answer a change induced in the world of work, or they represent useful tool that helps the individual to cope with the changes. Unfortunately, according to results of our study, education and learning to a small extent emerge as factor that supports continuous growth and progress of individuals' career. Improving in quality of initial and further (lifelong) education could "secure or at least make easier" for young adults to enter first employment, but also to help with all the other steps on the path of career of an adult (Pekeč, 2014: 198).

In addition, education is seen as important for entering the profession. This data is consistent with the information that, although in the instrument we used the phrase adult education *and* learning, respondents refer mainly to education – especially in formal education. In general overview, the lines of education are poorer than the lines of their career. Besides formal education, we failed in an attempt to record all learning activities undertaken by adults during their career. It can be argued that learning activities related to career are not present, because in conversation with respondents we've got the information that they often learn while working in order to keep to date with changes in the world of work. Awareness of these activities is what's missing. In our opinion respondents do not recognize the activities associated with learning on the job and within a job. Thus, we dare to say that our participants, during the career development, undertaken learning activities related to work to a greater frequency than the results of our overview showed.

Key periods – gap between the line of career and line of learning and education

The results show that there are several key period in which the respondents identify the gap between the lines of education and learning and career lines. The first is the period when one overcomes all that was new related to job. It is commonly followed by period of stagnation in terms of education and learning. Respondents were referring to this period as not intellectually stimulating or challenging in any way, which suggested that, for learning to happen, it is usually needed something from the world of work that will directly provoke it, for example a new task or a job assignment, because just "being bored", still or secure in one place will not create the need to engage in an educational activity. This brings about the important question, and that is what education can do to overcome this gap and to raise awareness of its existence?

Another important period that respondents mentioned is the period of unemployment. This period is viewed as a place where education can and should be located as a support to career development of adults. However, from respondents' answers, it is observed as a situation where there is a gap between education and their career development. First reason for this can be found in how respondents perceive education as a support to career development, as well as how they perceive career itself. It is possible that they see the function of education in career development just as direct support to mastering tasks and demands in specific workplace. It narrows conception of education as a support to career development and narrows understanding of career; but it also seems logical that, during the period when they are unemployed, education has nothing (no career) to support. On the other hand, second reason for such results could be lying in the fact that adults believe that education and learning can be found as sup-

port in finding a new job and get involved in educational programs that could help them, but that they evaluate its effects – in the sense that education does not help them to find a new employment and therefore they perceive a gap between education and career. The third reason opens a possibility that, in period of unemployment, our respondents attended different educational programs, but which are not related to career.

Return to work after an absence is another period that our respondents suggested as a period of the gap between education and learning and career. Nevertheless, they perceive that they are now lacking specific knowledge and skills they need in order to perform tasks on the job. It is interesting that returning to work after a long absence was identified, from our subject's answers, as the period when education is supporting the career development of adults, but also as a situation when educational support is missing.

Considering other results, it is surprising that the respondents perceive gap between education and learning in those periods in career when they are employed outside their profession or when they are starting their own business. We think that the reason for this perception of the relationship between education and learning and career of adults comes from believing that main purpose of education is in preparation for the profession or occupation. However, the entry into a profession that differs from ours, seeks acquisition of new knowledge and skills, regardless of what kind of job it is.

All these findings indicate that the education as a support to the career development of adults lacks in some important points of one's career. Future research should reveal why such results were obtained, and in which ways education can act to reduce this gap.

Concluding remarks

At the beginning of this article, we underlined that we had two aims; on one side, it was to search for a new qualities in adult education related to career development and, on the other side, it was to explore and reflect the quality of the lifeline method when used in scientific researches. Starting from the first, and by reviewing at the results of our research, we came across a couple of answers as well as questions that are important for the further consideration of the quality of adult education.

Looking at the line of adult education and learning, we realized that in respondents' answers dominates formal education and main purpose of it is in obtaining diplomas and certificates. The process of education is almost never described as important for their career. Respondents rarely refer to specific knowledge and skills that were significant. Only in a few cases subjects reported evidence or statement of self-directed learning. In this regard, we believe that

further research should focus more about the learning process. Also, results indicated that decline of the line of education occurs around age 30 or 40. Education as a support to career usually occurs in periods around the first employment, but appears to be lack at critical periods of career (unemployment, long absence, changing in employment). This finding is considered perhaps the most important finding of our study. According to previous, the key questions for future considerations of quality in adult education are: What are possible educational activities intended to support adults in critical points of their career? In what extent can adults have access to these activities? And which categories of adults have the access? Whether and how to assess these activities and evaluate effects?

The second aim of this paper was consideration of the quality of the lifeline method when used in scientific studies in the field of adult education and learning and career development. Quality of the lifeline method will be presented through strengths and weaknesses of its application. Strengths of using lifeline method are as follows: 1) *Comparable and overall picture* – it reveals on how one sees the important periods in their life related to education, how they value certain elements related to education, and also provides access to comparable picture of education and career; 2) *It cannot be done superficially* – lifeline truly engage respondents and leaves them no space to answer a questionnaire without thinking about it; 3) *Provides new insights to the respondents* – as they reported, with overlooking at their graphs, they now they are thinking differently about their careers and education. Particularly interesting are statements of feeling sorry about earlier decisions regarding education or because they are no longer engaged in educational process; 4) *Encourages reflection and discussion* – among the respondents, but also with researchers; 5) *Provides freedom* – and, quite unpretentious, this instrument presents sort of a journey through the professional domain of life; 6) *Allows for data to be read repeatedly* – respecting on somewhat limited methodological framework of research, data become very inspiring bearing ways in which researchers can "follow" the lines.

Despite numerous values, from the experience in our research, there are some weaknesses of lifeline method which are affecting its quality. These weaknesses are as follows: 1) *May cause fear among respondents* – which proved to be a major problem and was first spotted in the pilot research. Given the fact that the instrument in its first form was different by appearance (consisted of boxes and "plus" and "minus" sections on graph), respondents said that they had problems with completing a task, that it seemed "like a math problem", and had impression that they must fill in each cell or box on the graph provided; 2) *Requires to set a common frame of reference* – and because it is not an easy task for respondents, requires the presence of researcher; 3) *Requires time to be done well* – for lifeline doesn't contain items that one can just check, scratched off or fill out; 4) *Provides freedom* – having no pre-set categories is both an advantage and a disadvantage; 5) *Can simplify data* – simplifying data is not in itself the lack of

this instrument, but as such may become when interpreting the data. In this regard, an important question is how researchers interpret and measure the value of ups and downs of the lines?

Reflecting on all the above, we have many reasons to argue that lifeline method has its imperfections, but is also a method rich in its potential and can and should be use to improve the quality of researches of adult learning and education, as well as researches of career development of adults. Also, regarding findings of this study, there is space for improving in quality of education, which could be to a greater extent recognized among the adults as a factor that supports their career and their personal growth.

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CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS IN ADULT EDUCATION. WHAT WE MEAN WHEN WE TALK ABOUT LIFELONG LEARNING?

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Abstract

The aim of the paper is to outline basic postulates of critical discourse analysis, as well as to clarify important concepts and their multiple meanings – language, ideology, and discourse. Some current dilemmas surrounding critical discourse analysis are presented, and an example of the application of this research methodology on the example of lifelong learning will be given. The concept of lifelong learning has been analyzed in the context of power relations on a global level and benefits of this dominant political discourse to adult education profession are questioned. Critical discourse analysis has been applied in order to identify naturalised assumptions, and the research methodology is enriched with historical approach in order to offer a better understanding of the dominant ideologies that shaped development of lifelong learning and to map the influence of the concept on current educational policies.

Key words: critical discourse analysis, power relations, ideologies, lifelong learning, neoliberalism.

Brief introduction to the critical discourse analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) has a long tradition in the social science, but only since the late nighties educational researchers have begun to use it in order to deconstruct given assumptions and discover often invisible relationships between language and power. However, within the Serbian academic discourse

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this methodological approach has not been widely used, although there is a need to question and analyse policy documents and, above all, to look at the educational policy not as a reality of practices, but also through the discursive lenses.

Globalisation and economic crises brought up the changes in public policies in various fields, including educational policy. One of the important consequences is the domination of neo-liberal discourse in the political debate about educational issues. Neoliberal principles are conditioning the socio-economic context of educational initiatives and reforms, conquering educational space – the principles, concepts, language and finally, educational practices. As Fairclough pointed out, it is critical discourse analysis that aims to explore the relationships between discursive practices, events, and texts; and wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes. In a globalised world where dominating paradigm, created as an outcome of power relations, try to be the only one having legitimacy in educational field, it is of utmost importance to reveal the nature of educational paradigms and concepts with critical discourse analysis and to show how educational practices and texts are ideologically shaped by relations of power.

What contributes to the difficulty, but at the same time, the beauty of critical discourse analysis is a widely held belief that there are no set procedures and key steps to be taken in the analysis (Fairclough, 1992; 1995; 2003; Gee, 1999, 2005; Rogers, 2004; Wodak, 2001; Woodside-Jiron, 2004). 'There are no "mainstream" definitions of discourse within social sciences, nor a universally accepted understanding of what discourse analysis is or what methods researchers should use' (Pedersen, 2009, str. 1). Foucault in particular was an advocate of freedom and autonomy in research and he did not produce any defined regulations for discourse deconstruction, or, as he calls his methodology – genealogy.

Foucault did not leave clearly defined steps or formulated recommendations for conducting a genealogic analysis. It is not simple to use genealogic analysis, because there are no handy algorithms that a beginner could follow without difficulties. It does not mean that there is one correct way to use this analysis, instead each author is to develop their own style, in respect of general principles and postulates (Džinović, 2010, p. 35).

There are no formulas for applying critical discourse analysis; its basis lies in critical theory, in the relationships between language and discourse in constructing and representing social reality, and the methodology which enables description, interpretation, and explanation of these relationships (Rogers, 2004). However, there are fortunately some postulates and assumptions to follow, and questions on which to focus.

One of the basic dilemmas that occurs with critical discourse analysis is whether it is an approach, a methodology, or a research method. Van Dijk holds that the basic misconception about critical discourse analysis is a belief that it is a method of analysis: 'CDA is primarily an academic movement formed by a group of socially and politically active scientists, or even a critical view of the society'

(van Dijk, 2012). It is a methodology interested in and motivated by current social issues best understood through discourse analysis (van Dijk, 2012). Rogers states that CDA is a research paradigm of social activism, and that the 'critical' in 'critical discourse analysis' is related to power relations. Critical research is a rejection of naturalism (the idea that social practice reflects reality) and neutrality (an assumption that truth does not reflect anyone's interests) (Rogers, 2004). Corson (2000) points out that researchers' intentions are not neutral, and that the aim of CDA is to reveal the hidden power between a certain discourse and wider social and cultural forms. The assumption is that unveiling the power relations in the area of analysis disturbs these in the social context (Corson, 2000). However, by analysing existing educational research that has CDA as its basic approach (Rogers, 2004a; Row, 2004; Sarrouh, 2004; Lewis and Ketter, 2004), we can reach the conclusion that there are clear theoretical assumptions that colour and shape the research method.

Basic principles of critical discourse analysis

What is discourse?

In order to give an adequate explanation of critical discourse analysis, it is essential to describe some of the meanings of the concept of discourse. Norman Fairclough defines discourse both as language used in speech and writing and as a form of social practice (Fairclough, 1995; 2003). Describing discourse as social practice implies a dialectic relationship between a certain discursive event and the situation, institutions, and social structures that frame it. Dialectic relationship is two-directional: discursive event is shaped by situations, institutions and social structures, but it also determines these. Discourse reflects and constructs the social reality at the same time, and is not only a product, but a set of consumer, productive, distributive, and reproductive processes that maintain a relationship with the social reality (Rogers, 2004). They classify people, things, places, events (Fairclough, 2000). There is an interesting metaphor that Fairclough uses for discourse – *social magic* (Fairclough, 2000).

Gee (1999, 2004), who performs critical discourse analysis in the area of education, differentiates between two meanings of this concept – discourse and Discourse. The former denotes linguistic units and the grammatical backdrop to utterances. 'Discourse' is a manner of representations, beliefs, values, and participation in these linguistic units, and it includes identities and meanings. Gee (2004) offers the following as specific qualities of Discourse:

1. Discourses incorporate a set of values and perspectives about the relationship between people and the distribution of social goods, and essentially about who is and is not an insider, who and what is normal.

2. Discourses are often resistant to internal criticism and introspection because the perspectives that could undermine Discourse are outside of it. Discourse defines what counts as appropriate criticism.
3. Any Discourse attends to certain objects and favours certain concepts, perspectives, and values at the expense of others. In this way, it marginalises perspectives and values central to another Discourse.
4. Discourses are intimately connected to the distribution of social power and the hierarchical social structures, which means that they are always ideological. Control over certain discourses leads to the acquisition of social goods (money, power, status).

A unit often encountered in defining the concept of discourse is language, not only with Fairclough and Gee, but with other authors as well (Wodak, 2001; van Dijk, 2012), however it is doubtful whether discourse can be reduced to language. It seems to us that discourse is more than that – it can be expressed in doubt, headache, anxiety, lowered gaze, and many other emotional and bodily reactions. The question is what lies beyond language, what Gee identified as identities and meanings. The recognition of the social, psychological, and political significance of discourse has usually been attributed to Foucault's study of Western institutions, including sexuality, madness, and clinic (Newman and Holzman, 1997). Discourse is thus not a description of naturally occurring phenomena, nor is it simply a way in which we speak the already established sociopolitical frames (Neman and Holzman, 1997). Discourses are ways of representing different aspects of reality – processes and relationships within the material, psychological, and social structures (Fairclough, 2003). They are projected, imaginary, the represent possible realities and define our positionality, thus reproducing power relations. Carabine, relying on Foucault's understanding of discourse, describes this concept as 'historically changeable ways of determining knowledge and truth, where knowledge is socially constructed, produced through the effects of power, and equated with truth' (in Taylor, 2001, p. 317).

Language and power

Critical discourse analysis enables description, interpretation, and clarification of the relationship between language and important educational issues (Rogers, 2004). The goal of discourse analysis is to reveal the ontological and epistemological premises incorporated in language (Pedersen, 2009). It enables the deconstruction of the various aspects of practice that are often naturalised and thus difficult to spot (Woodside Jiron, 2004), as well as the illumination of linguistic practices that naturalise relations of power and domination (Rogers, 2004). The goal of CDA is to study the relationship between language (form and function) and explain why certain forms have privilege over others, which is essentially an exploration of power relations (Rogers, 2004).

Chouliraki and Fairclough (1999) believe that there is a connection between certain discourses and social positions, rendering the ideological effects of discourse as created and arranged in the process of articulation. In his work *Language and Power*, Fairclough (1989) clarified and highlighted the relationship between language use and unequal power relations. His approach is particularly appropriate in this kind of research because it puts a special emphasis on commonsense assumptions that are implicitly contained in conventions of human interaction, without actors' awareness of them. Such assumptions are usually tinted by ideology and shaped through power relations. It is key to note that such assumptions, referred to as ideologies by him and other authors (Wodak, 2001; van Dijk, 2012), are possible to identify through the analysis of language used by actors in certain situations. Fairclough points out that we live in a linguistic era and that we are encountering a so-called linguistic turn in social sciences by the very fact that reality is now seen as constructed rather than given, which implies that research is focused on unveiling the process of construction, or rather deconstruction, instead of unveiling reality and social laws. 'Everyone who is interested in studying the modern society, and especially those who study power relations, cannot afford to ignore language (Fairclough, 1989: 3). It constitutes social identities, social relations, and knowledge and belief systems, meaning that every text constitutes three aspects of society and culture (Titscher *et al*, 2012).

Authors who have a postmodern orientation claim that language is not a 'deeply structured linguistic code', nor a 'transparent medium of conveying ideas' (Hemphill, 2000: 22). 'Linguistic meaning is constructed through an endless game of signifiers, in the context of diversity and power relations (Hemphill, 2000, p. 22). Language is not an independent phenomenon, which is a principle of modernist Enlightenment. Postmodernists see language not only as the means of expression, but also as a structure that defines limits of communication and shapes the speaking subject (Poster, 1989, in Hemphill, 2000). In other words, no reading can be innocent and neutral (Miyoshi, 1991: 42, in Hemphill, 2002).

The meaning of ideology in critical discourse analysis

The previous paragraph mentioned that the point of critical discourse analysis is to uncover ideologies, incorporated into language and concurrently into social practice, that reproduce power relations. In the analyses of theoretical assumptions underlying research, ideology is often taken to mean false knowledge that mystifies truth and creates and maintains power relations. Van Dijk alerts us to the existence of numerous definitions of ideology and notes that the above interpretation is related to Marxism, i.e. the view that ideologies are forms of 'false consciousness', or popular but misleading beliefs planted by ruling classes in order to justify status quo and conceal true socioeconomic conditions of workers. He points out that the negative concept of ideology, i.e. the system of ideas that

serves the dominant group, has until recently been widely received in social sciences, and used as a counterpoint to truth and scientific knowledge. Even authors like Fairclough and Wodak speak of ideology in the extremely negative sense, and emphasis that it always seeks to perpetuate unequal social relations (in Đerasimović, 2012).

After Foucault's discussion of the relationship between power and knowledge, and the indication of the role that social sciences play in creating discourses that produce power relations, it is obvious that equating ideology with false knowledge is neither adequate nor sustainable. The goal of education for liberation is to identify false beliefs and recognition of true knowledge. Foucault's research and deconstruction of social practices (such as psychiatry) shows that we cannot be insensitive and neglecting of the contextualised nature of knowledge and its role in reproducing power relations.

There are also 'looser' definitions of ideology that go a step beyond the idea of false knowledge. Van Dijk, for example, suggests a very broad definition of ideology: 'fundamental beliefs of a group and its members' (2013, p. 7), and offers examples of ideologies including communist, feminist, etc. He further states that ideology does not always have to be negative or dominant. The very term 'belief' implies irrational conformity with ideas that form the ideology. However, Foucault (1980) higlights the problematic nature of the concept of ideology, pointing out that it is usually a belief that is in antagonistic to truth: "The notion of ideology appears to me to be difficult to make use of, for three reasons. The first is that, like it or not, it always stands in virtual opposition to something else which is supposed to count as truth. Now I believe that the problem does not consist in drawing the line between that in a discourse which falls under the category of scientificity or truth, and that which comes under some other category, but in seeing historically how effects of truth are produced within discourses which in themselves are neither true nor false. The second drawback is that the concept of ideology refers, I think necessarily, to something of the order of a subject. Thirdly, ideology stands in a secondary position relative to something which functions as its infrastructure, as its material, economic determinant, etc. For these three reasons, I think that this is a notion that cannot be used without circumspection." (p. 118)

Comprehensive explanation of critical discourse analysis within the scope of one short article is by necessity doomed to fail since it is alsmot impossible to capture and clarify multiple, almost inexhaustible possibilities to apply this methodology in the field of adult education. We trust that an illustration of the analysis will offer to a reader better insight and more claraity about CDA, Possibly, we hope that the research example will be an argument for the belief that CDA can and should disrupt power relations by mapping the dominnat ideologies and hidden purposes of the mainstream concepts in andragogy. We have chosen to examine lifelong learning as a very fashionable discourse that took over the (non-existing) throne of adult education.

Discourses of lifelong learning or lifelong learning as discourse

Slowly, but steadily, the idea of lifelong learning has been accepted across the entire European space. Five-year review of the European Employment Strategy (EES), published in 2002, made this particularly clear: "And new common paradigms such as lifelong learning and quality at work were recognised as policy priorities, with convergence in these areas starting to take place [...] The EES also fostered political agreement on new common paradigms, such as lifelong learning and quality in work. The need for lifelong learning, and the complementarity between education and training systems has become generally accepted and Member States are all in the process of re-designing their education and training policies in a more integrated way" (Commission of European Communities, 2002, pp. 2, 9).

Political and economic changes have led to the acceptance of the idea of lifelong learning – it appears that the EU has embraced this idea, "The EU therefore embraced the idea of lifelong learning, systematically translating it into documents, communications and programmes. However, it narrowed its scope from a broad conception of education (lifelong and lifewide) to a narrower, more instrumental version." (Mohorčič Špolar and Holford, 2014, p. 46), however there is still advocacy within some EU bodies and with some authors for a 'triad conceptualisation' of lifelong learning – in terms of personal development, political development, and professional training.

"In this neo-liberal form, lifelong learning has become an explicit agenda for the EU and a crucial key in its economic development" (Mohorčič Špolar and Holford, 2014, p. 46), completely replacing 'lifelong education'. The latter has never, in truth, been as fully propagated in the EU as it was internationally, appearing only intermittently in certain documents, and with certain authors and approaches. Even though it is based on a humanist, radical, and critical ideology with implied agenda towards social transformation and emancipation, it has been easily replaced by lifelong learning, based on an individualist, neoliberal philosophy, with a technocratic-managerial ethos and the social adaptation agenda.

Field (2000) notes that it is no wonder that the expert community has approached lifelong learning with skepticism – on one hand, it appeared as a gallant prince who saved Cinderella of adult education from the lifelong languishing on the margins of educational policy, but on the other hand it endangered the existing adult education structures – as much as due to its orientation towards economic and professional issues as due to its fragmented and dispersed view of learning. Besides, it has undermined the idea of the need for a specialised adult education profession, as well as the very concept of andragogy (Field, 2000, p. 14).

Central to the effects of discourses of lifelong learning has been de-diferentiation, or breaking-down, blurring, and increasing permeability of traditional boundaries and norms. Whilst demarcations and their normative prescription have always been subject to challenge, the extent and nature of the challenge to the differentiation [...] leads many to argue that not only but all the structuring metaphors of boundedness have become themselves questionable. Within adult education assumptions about what constitutes the field, its values and purposes, have all been questioned and bounding metaphor of field has itself become problematic. [...] Where education binds, learning fragments. Adult education is then increasingly displaced by lifelong learning as the locus of study, practice, and policy. (Edwards, 2007, p. 70).

Gustavsson notes that the concept of lifelong learning is being used as a vision, its context emptied (Gustavsson, 2005, p. 92), and adds that the European understanding of lifelong learning is really recurrent education in disguise. Boshier carries on in similar vein, adding that lifelong education, in the sense in which it is used in 1972 Faure Report is an entirely different creature to the one parading through corporate boardrooms dressed up as lifelong learning (Boshier, 1998, p. 4). Various criticisms point to some of its other aspects – learning and teaching "are fashioned as disembodied and disembedded techniques to be articulated across subject domains and institutional contexts in the mobilising of learning as a lifelong activity" (Edwards, 2007, p. 80), somehow decontextualised and universally applicable. In this way educational processes, interactions, programmes, and methods also become devoid of meaning. And all this at the exact time when other social sciences are becoming increasingly appreciative of the subjective, of contextualisation, and interaction. The concept of lifelong learning has been imposed as a 'recipe', but it has neglected another aspect of the current European reality: high risk dynamics on structural, organisational, and individual levels brought about by the contemporary learning society (Hake, 2013, p. 40). Finally, one can apply the criterion used by Aspin and Chapman, who, paraphrasing Wittgenstein, state that we need not seek out true meanings and precise definitions, but simply look at how these concepts are used in ogranisational discourses, and look at the purpose for which they are used (2012, p. 10).

These numerous criticisms still did little to prevent the victorious advance of 'lifelong learning' through the European political, economic, and social spheres, despite the fact that this concept failed to display much constancy, consistency, or the expected results.

Up until 2006, 'lifelong learning' was understood as 'adult learning'. Since then, EU documents have started creating certain distinctions, whereby 'adult learning' became but a part, however important (a 'key component'), of lifelong learning (Holford *et al*, 2014, p. 268). The way it has been defined, as well as the way it has been treated in the European Commission policy, has varied since, and Jarvis believes that the Commission has in this period maintained three dis-

tinct areas of lifelong learning – education and training, higher education, and adult education – publishing separate strategic documents within each of these (Jarvis, 2014, p. 53).

Of course, one cannot help but notice, that even disregarding the temporal distance, adult education has been found teetering. Whilst it remained enmeshed with the concept of lifelong learning, carried on by the successful career of the latter which became a term and a concept *très à la mode* (Düchs, 2013, p. 13), the 'adult' part tended to go missing with the focus shifting towards children and youth, and lifelong learning became valid only as a framework, a concept within which adult education was yet to fight for its identity (and its share of the budget). When adults eventually got their 'right of vote' in this concept, and were recognised as an important category (now with the appropriate budgetary support), the pendulum swung the other way and they ended up being reduced to 'work force', 'employees', 'employable', 'human resources' – and other objects of professional training, all for the purpose of economic development. Holford and Milana also point out this duality – as much as adult education became important and significant through the rise of the ideas of lifelong learning and the learning society, they had "often obscured the specific – some would argue unique – features of adult education. (Holford and Milana, 2014, p. 4).

Once settled in European public policy, lifelong learning has been popping up as a convenient, elastic, flexible, malleable, 'plastic', 'chameleon-like' term employed for various needs and purposes – a 'slippery term' (Johnston, 2000), an 'elastic concept tailorable to any needs' (Dehmel, 2006, p. 49), or, according to Gilroy, a 'language game in search of its rules' (Gilroy, 2012). As much as this 'pluriformity' (Bagnall, in Centeno, 2011: 133) has acted in its advantage, it nevertheless prevented further proliferation, operationalisation, and 'budgeting'. One could say that the 'plasticity' of this concept that has had 'a long past but a brief history' has proven to be so effective due to several factors, such as "a policy with a small degree of political operationalisation, that simultaneous discursively combines different political orientations... (Centeno, 2011, p. 145). This worldwide discourse adoption enables the application of lifelong learning policy to a wide spectrum of unexpected initiatives, whilst in continues to maintain the same travel documents in spite of the significant, and obvious, discrepancy between political discussions and policy formation (Centeno, 2011).

Abandoning adult education as a concrete, defined practice in favour of lifelong learning as a philosophy, an approach, or a conceptual framework, had its costs and they became obvious in later developmental stages. They particularly became discernible when, despite general popularity of lifelong learning, adult education became unrecognisably diluted in the fluid conceptualisation of lifelong learning, thus returning to the sad beginnings of elementary claims to identity and need for existence. Concurrently, the argumentation supporting such claims has become reduced to a beginners level in andragogy, unfortunately

evident in numerous EU publications and websites. In contrast, Jarvis believes that the Commission has been treating lifelong learning in its programme documents as (institutional) education the entire time, and that this was precisely the reason why in some European circles the term ALE (adult learning and education) has never been accepted, because 'learning' has been taken to mean 'education' in these interpretations, hence rounding the circle, as education always incorporates learning (Jarvis, 2014, p. 55).

The fact that LLL is a discourse is demonstrable in a fact that it very specifically defines roles and functions imposed by the discourse creators. An individual has been made to assume all of the responsibility – one is responsible not only for their own education, competencies, and employability, but also for their own social inclusion, civic engagement, and cultural openness. Through 'aggressive logic' (Barros, 2012, p. 127), one has also been placed under the imperative of learning throughout their life, updating their skills and knowledge, and achieving progress. Some assistance in this process is perhaps possible only through advice and guidance, and the formal recognition of what has been learned in non-formal and informal contexts. Since lifelong learning is a normative term (Field and Leicester, 2000, p. xvii), there is more to it than just a practical-utilitarian imperative of continuous learning, i.e. gaining skills; there is also a moral obligation to continue learning throughout one's life (Lawson, 2007, p. 109). As citizens, we are bound to this by duty, obligation, and right. Thus an individual becomes a permanent learning subject (Hake, 2006, p. 32).

Lifelong learning is supposed to ensure adaptability through flexible combination of working hours and change of employment, and companies have a task of providing good examples of corporate responsibility for this package of lifelong learning, labour organisation, equal opportunity, social inclusion, and sustainable development (European Parliament, 2000).

In the communication *Working Together for Growth and Jobs. A new start for the Lisbon Strategy,* Barroso says that the emphasis on lifelong learning and knowledge in economic life also reflects an understanding that higher level of education and skill means an important contribution to the social cohesion (Commission of the European Communities, 2005: 26).

Cort notes that the analyses of EU policy seen as discourse demonstrate a tendency within a part of the academic community to uncritically reproduce critical discourse analysis in which neoliberalism is an all-explaining factor (Cort, 2014, p. 132).

Milana points out that EU and UNESCO made a significant contribution in raising adult education to the level of explicit subject of global policy, but also accentuates that these organisations have a limited and simplified understanding of the meaning of globalisation processes (Milana, 2012, p. 796), illustrating this in the following way: "UNESCO discourse calls for a new task for nation-states: to 'forge alliances', within and outside territorial borders, if the "cumula-

tive effects of multiple disadvantages" (UNESCO, 2009, p. 8) are to be overcome, and thus the human right to access adult education is to be fulfilled. [...] The EU's discourse calls on Member States to make more effective use of available resources to promote regional economic growth" (Milana, 2012, pp. 792–793). Both UNESCO and EU accept political discourse as truth, leading to two types of consequences:

- The question of responsibility – who holds the responsibility towards citizens? Responsibility is today shifted from the traditional state, i.e. government responsibility towards its citizens, to state responsibility towards international agencies: governments face decreasing levels of internal and increasing levels of external obligations – towards standards and benchmarks set by international agencies, justifying this as a way of increasing socio-economic development on the national, regional, and global plane;
- The question of morality – what is right, what is wrong, and whose rights and obligations remain unacknowledged? The matters of right and wrong are now determined by who is responsible for social justice and inclusion. Both UNESCO and EU have positive social effects as their aims, with UNESCO assigning rights to the individual and holding the government responsible for their realisation, whilst EU holds the individual themselves responsible for social inclusion. Such divison of rights, responsibilities, and obligations has longterm effects on education policy as well (Milana, 2012, p. 794).

The biggest criticism aimed at the EU when it comes to the change of adult education paradigm points to an uncritical acceptance of 'lifelong learning' and definitive forsaking of 'lifelong education'. This movement from education to learning is really based on discourses reflected in these concepts and ideologies that use them (Milana, 2012a). In addition to the above criticisms, there is also a kind of neglect of the potential offered by modern developments. Nowadays the understanding of schooling and educational institutions has changed; there are new, more flexible approaches to formal education, enabling lifelong education to be understood in the broadest possible sense, as a lifelong continuum that is all-encompassing, including most diverse sites and forms of learning. Such tendency has found a clear expression in, for example, learning cities and learning regions, learning festivals, and similar initiatives that express these new practices. Lifelong education is much more realistic today than it used to be, and it has nevertheless been almost entirely discarded. According to Barros, lifelong learning is an 'intentional and continuous erosion' of the Union's past political and social goals (2012, p.131). Boshier says that if 'lifelong education was an instrument of democracy, lifelong learning is almost entirely preoccupied with the cash register' (1998, p. 5), and according to Lima and Guimaraes, it might subordinate adult learning

and education to 'pedagogism with economic and managerial roots' (Lima and Guimaraes, 2011, p. 9) and represents an instrumentalisation of adult education with respect to economic and social reality. In short, this paradigm change is a defeat to the European Union and desertion of its most important and most authentic goals, reflected in an ironic commentary sometimes heard in circles of European policy critics – that this is not about *lifelong learning*, but *lifelong earning*. But if this was true, there probably would not be a problem; there is a question of whether this earning is truly possible, for whom, how, and under what conditions, and whether it is pursued at the cost of individual and social goals, as well as the question of who bears the responsibility in this process. Reducing this problem to a choice: professional education and employment v individual development and social inclusion, is not only incorrect and far from normal reasoning, but it is also deeply damaging to all aspects of European economic, social, and educational policy. Field still estimates that there will be a change in terminology due to the massive changes in the global environment since the time this concept was coined (Field, 2000). Perhaps this concept's journey, described by Mohorčič Špolar and Holford as one 'from margins to mainstream' (Mohorčič Špolar and Holford, 2014), will take a different course, conditioned by dynamic changes. Edwards leaves the possibility of moving 'from adult education to lifelong learning and back again' (Edwards, 2007: 70).

Replacing 'adult education' with 'lifelong learning' is in a way a victory of political over academic discourse, which opens up the question of participation of scientific research in the new global architecture of this field.

Adult education was developed from the place of strong social, economic, and political needs, and, as Walker's analysis points out, its foundations are in fighting for democracy and social justice, with significantly pronounced aspects of togetherness and community approach. Humanism, progressivism, and radicalism have all been traditionally related to adult education, whilst lifelong learning has in contrast been philosophically founded in liberal individualism. When, for example, OECD speaks of learning, it clearly speaks of it as a matter of individual responsibility – learning is an individual process, unlike education, and it does not include the infrastructure, or those who assist learning, which makes it cheaper (Walker, 2009). A tension between education as a privilege or as an obligation paid for by an individual (or by someone else on their behalf), which is usually very lengthy, and education as a process that is carried on never-mind-where-or-how (supported by the idea of recognition of prior learning, where it is only the 'exit' not outcome, i.e. the result, that counts), which usually assumes a level of individual responsibility (or the benevolence of a system that would enable or facilitate this process), is at the root of, as well as the reason for this conceptual change. The adult education movement that was supposed to contribute to a civilisational and humanistic enlargement of the idea of education, not only in terms of age, but also in terms of causes, goals, forms, sites,

approaches, and methods, has been 'discharged' in favour of lifelong learning that has begun to disavow the idea of education as civilisational achievement, and instead of 'crowning' adult education in philosophical terms, it replaced it in praxical terms, and reduced it to an individual psychological process and responsibility.

Lifelong learning, that, applied to individuals, bestows a dimension of development and emancipation, when applied on a social level bestows on the same individual pressure, responsibility (moral, social, and financial), ideological and economic dictates and conformism without the possibility of rebellion. In this way the individual is isolated, the force of social solidarity is broken, and resistance is diminished. Duke makes a very explicit claim that UNESCO introduced the ALE combination (adult learning and education), because the initial enthusiasm about this individual approach and humanistic focus on individual-learner (pronounced through 'adult learning' and 'lifelong learning') was replaced with an insight that this approach really relinquishes the state of responsibility, cancels all discussion about policy formation, resource allocation, and individual and group right to education, as well as depoliticises the entire area by eliminating aspects of justice, (in)equality, and democracy (Duke, 1999, p. 7). It is perhaps precisely here where one should look for the causes of the contemporary trend of rejecting the phrase and the concept of 'adult education', whose analysis necessarily invites not only scientific and research factors, but primarily factors of economy and education policy.

The concept of lifelong learning is destructive to both the academic discipline and to the field professionalisation, and its critical, transformational potential is noted to be unnecessary. It has broken the academic and professional compactness of the field of adult education (built laboriously and with a lot of effort) and opened up a space for various brokering practices, that turned out to be lucrative in national and global relations.

Conculding notes

As is has been shown in the previous chapter, the goal of critical discourse analysis is to reveal the relations of domination and control and find their host in certain institutions and social structures (Wodak, 2001). Dominant structures, according to Wodak, serve to stabilise and naturalise conventions, so that the effects of power become natural and transform into a given, which implies an assumption of the repressive quality of power. This is despite the danger, following Baudrillard's (1987) critique of Foucault, of power becoming so abstract that it cannot be located within a single institution.

CDA can demonstrate how policy texts work for certain ideologies, which was illustrated through the critical analysis of lifelong learning. Its critical ap-

proach is disclosed by the clear revelation the discursive construction of power relations, thus, its social engagement is quintessential. By that mean, it creates a possibility for the broader use of research results in policy creation, helping overcome improvised, arbitrarily actions based on the power-driven and not democratic-led decisions.

Our main focus was to present the CDA as a politically engaged research paradigm and to analyse how we can apply it on texts of educational policy, especially in adult education and lifelong learning, in order to identify implicit understandings and the inclusion/exclusion of voices, showing thus its social and economic aspects. The overview was not meant to be exhaustive, and due to its breadth cannot engage in deep analysis; rather, it offers a broad view of the terrain of uses of social construction to enable considerations which may then be investigated in more detailed ways in future analysis of educational policy on national and global level. As Edwards and Nicoll pointed out "Rhetorical analysis helps to point to the politics of discourse that is at play in policy-making processes. This is a politics – often dismissed as spin-doctoring – with which we need to engage if our own attempts to develop lifelong learning are to be persuasive" (2010, p. 103).

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INNOVATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR VULNERABLE POPULATION AND COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTRES IN INDIA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Abstract

Starting from the conceptual frame and activities comprised by Vistaar — Extension in Higher Education of University of Delhi as the local point for conducting various lifelong learning activities pertaining to education, skill enhancement and employability among the most vulnerable sections of the society, in this paper, activities of the Community Learning centres of Thailand, Bangladesh, Japan and those established in India within the Vistaar are presented and compared through a series of "mini" case studies. Target groups, to whom the opportunities for lifelong learning and other activities aiming at improving the quality of life are dominantly designated, are members of vulnerable population. In the paper the life condition and possibilities for its improvement which can be offered by education to members of the transgender community are especially analysed.

Key words: Extension in the higher education system; Vistaar; community learning centres; vulnerable communities; transgender community

The Extension/Dimension in the Higher Education system was introduced during the implementation of National Adult Education programme in India. Its objective was to extend knowledge and other institutional resources to the community and to gain insights from a contact between knowledge resources and socio cultural realities with a view to reflecting the same in the curriculum and co-curriculum in higher education.

The University-System extends knowledge and students resources in the Extension – Dimension through the various initiatives from the Departments

of Adult, Continuing Education & Department of Social-work, National Service Scheme and National Cadet Cadre.

The opportunity to introduce the Extension-Dimension in Universities was taken when the National-Adult Education Programme was introduced in 1978. The National Adult Education programme was followed by the Area Development Approach (1989–92) and the Total Literacy Campaign (1992–1997) of the National Literacy Mission, Adult Education, Continuing Education, Population Education, Counseling & Guidance and Community Education.

The subsequent plans of the UGC IX, X and XI provided freedom to the universities to review their plan of Action to the Extension dimension specific to their own university's need (X Plan guidelines).

The University Grants Commission decided to discontinue grants and further issuing its Guidelines since XII plan as it was practiced from 1997 to 2011. In view of the UGC communication, the University of Delhi decided to introduce its own plan of Action namely Vistaar– a Lifelong Learning Initiative which was inaugurated in an International Workshop on 21–22nd Oct. 2013 in Professional Development in Lifelong Learning & Extension, Vice-Chancellor, University of Delhi.

Conceptual Framework of Vistaar

Vistaar — Extension in Higher Education a lifelong learning initiative is the local point for conducting various Lifelong Learning activities pertaining to education, skill enhancement and employability among the most vulnerable sections of the society. The most vulnerable sections that are selected in the first phase are women below poverty line, transgender population, minority population, elderly population, injecting drug users, ex workers & the youth. It is envisaged that the college students, research scholars and teachers from the various faculties and the Department are involved in Vistaar initiate.

The students, research scholars and the teachers along with the professionals, experts and the representatives of the voluntary organizations are working in the selected communities of Delhi.

Sharing Comparative Success Stories under CLC

In Asia, the experiences of Thailand and Bangladesh pertaining to Community Learning Centres (CLC) are most significant. On the pattern of Dakar Framework of Action 2015, Thailand children were facilitated free and compulsory education and 50 percent reduction in adult illiteracy. Thai population witnessed lifelong learning through several learning centres such as public libraries,

museums, public parks, Sciences & Technology parks and national parks (chantavanich 2006) Community Learning Centres were initiated in Thailand to provide non-formal and informal learning initiative to the marginalized population.

It became, a local focal point for providing non-formal and informal learning to Thai population. The office of Non-formal and informal education play vital role' 'for conducting educational activities for various out of school youth, the labour force, differently abled, prison inmates, slum dwellers, Thai Muslims, hill tribal, the elderly and the local population. Several continuing Education programmes are initiated for the population in those areas.

Continuing Education in CLC

Vocational Training Programmes

Learning on improving competences, language issues especially in refugee camps, building self-esteem and continuing education for mainstrearning are covered under continuing Education in Thailand.

Education for Vocational Skills

It covers knowledge and understanding regarding occupations with work and management skills as well as applications of technology in careers. It also covers group-learning, learning to remains happy life inside the communities.

Continuing Education for Life skills building

Life skills covered problem solving, decision-making, planning & management, search & utilization of knowledge. The programme emphasized personal ethics and morals that are consistent with the local society and culture of Thai people.

Social and Community Development Programmes

Its objective was to create learning society that is strongly empowered through self– sufficient economic theory. The short term courses are designed to respond to learning needs.

Effective Delivery Mechanism for Lifelong Learning activities covering the following:

- People's participation, it is highly effective to the sustainability of Community Learning Centres.
- Learning needs of various target groups.

- The learning needs of the local people and learning pace of learners are considered while planning and implementing for the various target population.
- Financial Arrangement and Management.
- The financial resources tare arranged through the government allocation. There is a need to develop public-private partnership in terms of financial allocations and management.
- Participation and involvement of the local leaders.
- The local Community Leaders are involved in planning, implementation and management of the community learning Centres in Thailand.
- Developing and procuring learning materials. Thai Community Learning Centres initiated developing and producing learning materials suited to the local needs.

Networking and Partnership

The centres are linked with the local government department, business houses and the voluntary organizations for their continuing education.

Recognition of knowledge and experience of local people

Recently, UNESCO organized International Conference in Collaboration with the Government of India in July, 2013 on recognition, validation and certification of prior learning. Community Learning Centres in Thailand initiated taking advantages of knowledge and experiences of local people.

Community Learning Centres created atmosphere of a learning society leading to access of lifelong learning. It is learnt that in non-formal education, a facilitator takes care of 260 learners that are divided into five categories namely 60 learners for basic non– formal education, 20 learners for vocational training, and, 60 for life skills programmes, 60 for social development programmes and 100 for self-sufficient economy programmes and 200 learners for informal education. More effort are needed to subsidies fees, computers and facilities or mobilizing local resources and funding for undertaking lifelong learning activities in the communities.

The Bangladesh Experience of Gano Kendra

The concept of lifelong learning is embedded in the development process of civilization. The cradle to grave concept of lifelong learning is widely accepted and promoted in many countries including Bangladesh. The concept and forms

of learning and education become wider though the basic spirit of the needs of the Community.

A key element that was learnt and that is common across the regions is that more the community plays proactive roles in planning and managing educational activities, the more the educational interventions meet the learning needs of the people and the initiatives becomes sustainable.

Organizing community Learning Centres (CLC) as centres for lifelong learning is such an approach which evolved in the Asia Pacific Region with the active participation of the communities in the countries of the region with the support from governmental and non-governmental organizations and technical support of UNESCO Bangkok office.

The vast majority of poor, vulnerable people and differently abled have lack of information and resources of public services and the facilities. The coverage and system of literacy and post literacy programs in the country is also inadequate to provide support to Bangladeshi people with limited reading skills to continuing education. One of devise was to retain the literacy of the neo-literate, particularly the adolescent and the youth, who do not intend to enter into formal system of education, in organizing multipurpose community learning centres at the doorsteps of the neo-literate poor population.

Association Mission in Bangladesh is analyzed Gano Kendra (people centered approach) of Dhaka as a model at the community level offering opportunities for continuous upgrading of knowledge and lifelong learning.

Gano Kendra model of CLC as a people's forum

Gano Kendra people's Centre creates facilities for lifelong learning and community development. It provided institutional support for the people in the community towards improvement of quality of life, social empowerment and economic self-reliance, Dhaka Ashiana Mission.

Literacy and post literacy programmes covered illiterates and neo-literates in 1992 by Dhaka Ashaiana Mission in Bangladesh. The idea is to provide multipurpose community Learning Centres at the doorsteps of the neo-literate poor population.

Gano Kendra is considered to provide the following in Bangladesh:

- A meeting point for the community particularly for disadvantaged people.
- A community organization to cater to diverse learning needs of the community.
- A platform for community interaction and participation in social, economic and cultural activities for sustainable development.

Gano Kendra Functions

- Educational activities.
- Information networking
- Social empowerment
- Economic development
- Community Learning Centres – as centres of lifelong learning supported by UNESCO.

The Initiatives

- All citizens have constitutional basic rights.
- All governmental and non-governmental organisations involved in education, health, agricultural and livelihood services particularly among the poor communities.
- Vast majority women/disabled are not aware about their rights.

The educational programmes incorporated the following activities:

- Literacy programmes for the adults.
- Life skills education.
- Non-formal education for out of school children.
- Development of local materials based on local needs.

Linkages of Gano:

- Linkages with Bangladesh open university to facilitate secondary distance education.
- Networking of all Gano Kendra for the exchange of learning materials and training.
- Facilitation of vocational skill training for income generation through partnership.
- Networking with primary schools for increased enrolment reduced dropout and quality education.

Services under Community Resource Centres (CRC) of Gano Kendra:

Community Resource Centre in Bangladesh under Gano Kendra offers a number of services contributing to lifelong learning and community development. It offers specific services such as:

- Information services through news bulletins, wall magazines.
- Services for market linkages providing information about product and prices.
- Information communication services such as phone, computer, compose printing.
- Recreation activities like amazing sports, film shows competitions.
- Documentation of learning and exchange of experiences.
- Discussion sessions on local issues.
- Organizing action groups to prevent social voices.
- Facilitating social harmony and peace.
- Promotion of indigenous knowledge and local wisdom.
- Supply of books and manuals for income generating activities.
- Skill and enterprise development training.

The local community contributes lands, manual labour, money, material to establish a Gano Kendra/People's center. The members save money in Banks in the name of Gano Kendra. The well of people (Philanthropists) and the representatives of the local government provide funds to undertake activities.

The study of Dhaka Association Mission Gano Kendra (2009) shows that starting with 20 Gano Kendra in 1992, as on 2009, there are 753 Gano Kendra in 87 unions of 5 districts, nearly 50 have been phased in self-sufficiency centres and 262 Gano Kendra are in process of institutionalization.

The analytical study of 2006 shows that Gano Kendra could demonstrate visible effect on literacy, competency of adults, life skills building including accountancy and calculation skills. The ultimate contribution of Gano Kendra is strengthening of the access of the poor people, financial and social assets as well as economic and social services.

The Sixth International Conference of Adult Education (CONFINTEA) VI of Belem 2009 call for action identified a number of action areas of harnessing the power and potential of adult learning and education for a visible future. In the Belem declaration this is a specific recommendation to create multipurpose community learning centres and spaces to improve access and participation in the full range of adult learning and education programmes.

As a follow up to CONFINTEA VI, the Japanese Institute of Education and Research organized a seminar in February 2010 to facilitate the exchange of experience of Japanese Community Learning Centre (Kominkam) and promoting the concept of CLC globally Bangladesh's experience of Gano Kendra and its consequential positive impact encouraged Pakistan to initiate DAMP to go for replication of the model of Pakistan beginning with the Baralcahu Union Council as its pilot project area. DAMP has established one CLC based Vocational Centre and three Early Childhood Care and Education centres in Shahdra Khurd, a village located in Bara Kahu.

Japanese Community Learning Centre: KOMINKAN

The Ministry of Education Japan established Kominkan based on the concepts of mutual teaching and learning and support for voluntary learning by local residents. It was started in 1940's and was quite unique in the world with special focus on the following.

Kominkan became an established part of a broader system of Japan

The National Government of Japan established an official certification system for social education expert that was closely connected with the work duties of Kominkan.

Kominkan activities included raising the position of rural women, enhancing daily life by improving standards of health and hygiene and increasing income through practical learning dames. The functions of Kominkan at that time were very broad and closely connected to quality of life of the residents.

Kaminkan network and function

The majority of Kominkan offer such things as space for classrooms and meeting spaces, reading rooms, kitchens, traditional Japanese rooms with tea, day care facilities, audio-visual rooms and sports facilities. The Kominkan pursue their activities alongside schools and other social education facilities such as libraries and museums, social education organizations, non-profit organizations and non-governmental organizations.

The function of Kominkan in a changing society

Japan is confronting with many social issues including the aging society, information technology and environmental concerns. In order to address social issues within each community, Kamini work with related institutions and organizations to seek solutions.

Supporting school based education

The national government uses school buildings as bases for activities and implementing a national programme to promote after school classes for child Kamini staff, families and community volunteers.

Bases for disaster preparedness education

Japan faces many natural disaster & such as earthquakes, floods and eruptions of volcanoes, Many Kominkan designed disaster shelters in the event of natural disaster.

Kominkan-system initiated in Japan in order to maintain national standards acted as social education movement. Kominkan education system in Japan and social education coordinators acted in coordination with the local bodies.

One of the special characteristics of social education in Japan in that the Government, including the Kominkan, and local residents, co-operate to incorporate the people's voices into the activities. The local government themselves manages Kominkan, and this kind of direct made them sustainable.

Community adult education in Africa

South African community adult education had its roots in literacy and numeracy. The shift that apartheid to the current democratic order in 1994 has seen spaces opening up for citizens. Many adult learning practitioners and those involved in community development in the country believe that adult learning should play a role in assisting communities. The various strategies involving community adult learning by civil society education activities include in the main working of social justice and transformation there by paying particular attention to the challenging conditions that marginalized communities faced in the present South African context.

University of Delhi model

The University of Delhi started Vistaar Extension in lifelong learning under XII Plan. Vistaar started operating through Community learning centres by involving students, teachers and professionals among most vulnerable population. The vulnerable sections covered under Vistaar are the elderly person, transgender, sex workers, minority and the unorganized migrant workers. Community leaning centres as it is envisaged, will provide continuing education, information, and skill enhancement leading to employment opportunities. The students of the colleges will get opportunities for field-work, internship and development of social skills which will help them in their career.

CLC: Some Issues

Community learning centre under Vistaar belongs to the community people and is operated by them for the benefit of the target population. The students, research scholars and the teachers including professionals are involved in providing learning opportunities for community development and people's quality of life improvement.

It has started collecting, generating and disseminating information an, networking, among government, voluntary organizations and the educational institutions including colleges and the universities.

Community learning centres are managing and conducting lifelong learning activities. All learning in the community is community based with harmonious integration between the way of life, working and learning that will lead to lifelong learning.

The target groups of community learning centres under Vistaar are the senior citizens, adult vulnerable population, minority population and the unorganized sector population. Thus, the community learning centre under Vistaar is the focal point for conducting various lifelong learning activities for the community members. It also provides vocational and occupational guidance including continuing education and skill enhancement. It helps in promoting learning interests for all target population under Vistaar. Thus community learning centres adopted by the University of Delhi under Vistaar reviewed various models available in Asia and in other continents. The focused activities are as follows:

- Literacy, non-formal education and continuing education promotion programme.
- Awareness on social, educational and vocational opportunities, health and human rights issues. It will also cover information on the various Government programmes.
- Education for vocational skills, programme to improve employability and self– employment skills.
- Education for life skills and interpersonal communication skills.
- Lifelong learning opportunities.
- Networking, partnership and convergence with the various programmes.
- The need assessment phase is already over and it has started community learning centres under Vistaar.

Suggested approach to mainstream the community in education system

In the midst of our many achievements in education sector, there lies a severe flaw in our approach to deal with the issue of inequality and inclusive edu-

cation for the community. There is no contrary belief that addressing stigma and discrimination at early stage has been a huge problem in bringing transgender children to school and retaining them to the higher level.

The transgender community experts also argue that there is an urgent need for addressing the community concerns in education sector in a holistic way- that implies giving attention to the four core issue of: Access, Equity, Enabling Environment, and Employment.

The policy and programmatic framework on education has to ensure that all the important aspects as highlighted above are addressed to improve access and infuse equality in our education sector (primary, secondary and higher level). The framework should address the aforesaid four core areas in education sector to ensure that a holistic approach is being adopted in addressing the gaps. The framework will revolve around four pillars which are dwelled upon as:

Other Suggestive measures

Equal access to educational opportunities at all level without stigma & discrimination

The mainstream society does not understand the culture, gender, and sexuality of transgender community and their social deprivation and harassment have never received attention by policy makers. The better understanding of the socio-cultural and human rights aspects of discrimination against the transgender and Hijra community would help in attitudinal shift towards the community. The mainstreaming efforts would require a review and reform of structural con-

straints, legal procedures and policies that impede access to mainstream education. Affirmative actions are needed to reduce stigma and discrimination associated with the community and to improve the access to educational opportunities at all level. Schools and colleges need to play a supportive role in such instances, stepping in to ensure that education and/or vocational training is made available to these individuals.

The following actions may help in improving the access

Free and compulsory education up to the age of 14 is the responsibility of the State. The fulfillment of this obligation is critical for the improvements in the educational conditions of transgender community. The proper instructions should be issued to states and district level to include the transgender community under Economically Weaker Section (EWS) category to provide them necessary benefits as per the Right to Education Act.

Sensitization towards Transgender/Hijra should be included in student counseling at schools. The community feels that it is an essential to create an opportunity for students to interact with trained counsellors as they experience gender dilemmas.

A chapter on TG/Hijra can be included in the adolescent education curriculum in school to sensitize the larger society on Transgender. This can be an effective step to address stigma/discrimination at school level.

State and Central Education Board (ICS/CBSE) and the University Grants Commission (UGC), National Council for Vocational Training (NCVT) and other relevant authorities should be encouraged to evolve a system to sensitize their schools/universities/educational institutions with respect to the need of the community and mainstream them into the system.

Review the existing schemes and educational program to assess their suitability to the transgender and Hijra community.

Develop advocacy, social mobilization and communication strategies at various level (society, transgender community, governments) to address the structural barriers to improve utilization of existing educational schemes/courses and create an enabling environment for inclusive education for the community.

Development of community friendly customized pedagogy for skill based learning

India is facing acute shortage of skilled manpower in different sectors. There is a need to provide vocational education and training to the community within the mainstream education system. At the secondary and higher secondary levels, vocational training should be provided to the community for additional skills

which can prepare them for jobs. The tailor made skill based programme need to be developed at this level. The strategic convergence with Jan Shikshan Sansthan, National Skill Development Agency (NSDA) and lifelong learning program of universities and colleges will help in mainstreaming the efforts.

Financial incentives for higher education/professional education

Government should provide fee-waiver, fee-reimbursements, scholarships, free textbooks, free hostel accommodation and other facilities at subsidized rates for students belonging to the marginalized group in order to make higher education and professional education accessible by the community. Special coaching should be provided to the candidates for competitive examinations and National Eligibility Test (NET) examination.

Establishment of anti-discrimination cell

All the educational institutions/universities should establish an anti-discrimination cell to monitor any form of discrimination against the transgender community. On the line of strict anti-ragging cell, there should be zero tolerance towards any incidence of the discrimination or complain.

Create an enabling environment

It is increasingly recognized by experts and other key stakeholders that transgender need a facilitating environment to continue their education and live a decent life. There is need to work closely with community and different school based committees like; school management committee, village management committee – as provided recommended under RTE Act. There has to be proper sensitization and capacity building about the issues and needs of the transgender community. The involvement of gurus and other opinion leaders from the transgender community will help in building the confidence and create a supportive environment. An advocacy strategy has to be worked out at each level to influence the stakeholders.

Research

There is need for a focused institutionalized mechanism of research and academic activities to generate more data/information to identify and understand the problems related to various aspects of their life and help frame policies through research and academic program that would bring an effective and long-term change in their lives.

Convergence with existing schemes on education

The, strategic networking and building partnership with the wide range of stakeholders should be established for leverage of resources, cross fertilization of ideas.

Improving employment opportunities for transgender community

- Article 14 of the Constitution of India guarantees equal rights and opportunities to men and women in political, economic and social spheres.
- Article 16 Equality of opportunity in matters of public employment
- Article 42 directs the State to make provision for ensuring just and humane conditions for work.

Problem Analysis and Gaps

The vulnerable communities are highly deprived of several rights including their right of participating in economic activities including employment. Lack of educational opportunities and social exclusion further limits their employment and livelihood opportunities. There are several factors responsible for their economic deprivation which have been analysed as below.

Exclusion from family and society: Hijras/Transgender are excluded from their families and do not get any support related to livelihood. There are no employment opportunities for even qualified and skilled transgender person. Lack of livelihood options is a key reason for a significant proportion of transgender people to choose or continue to be in sex work – with its associated HIV and health-related risks. The discussion with the community members and experts revealed that if employment opportunities are provided, the community would take any alternative livelihood option or job.

Stigma and discrimination at work place: Transgender persons face high level of stigma and discrimination at work place forcing them to leave the work in short period of time. They are abused verbally, physically, and sexually at workplaces for which they never received any justice. Denied in the job market, transgender forced to take optimal or low paying work or go for begging, sex work and badhai as their livelihood. Even in these occupations, they are exploited by clients, beaten up but hardly report any incidence to police because of fear of further harassments by the police.

High level of economic deprivation: Lack of education and social support force transgender to survive in difficult economic conditions. There is no eco-

nomic security for the community in case of some crisis or medical emergency, especially with poor transgender persons or old age transgender. Many transgender do not have enough savings to go for treatment for serious illness and some other complicated illnesses, saving schemes or health insurance schemes can be of great help.

***Lack of documentary proof*:** Majority of the transgender persons do not have any legal document like Election Photo Identity Card (EPIC), Aadhaar Card, and PAN Card. The low level of educational status, mobility from one place to other, apathy of officials and complex procedure are some of the factors which demotivate transgender to obtain these documents. The lack of basic documents further hinder their access to other social protection and livelihood promotion schemes like pension, micro credit, bank loan, etc.

Lack of vocational skill: As traditional occupations of transgender are becoming difficult particularly in urban areas, most transgender expresses their desire to be involved in any occupation. However low level of education skill and absence of vocational skills push them to low paying jobs or unemployment Studies reveal that inequality in access to and quality of education among social groups leads to inequality in wages and employment (Heckman et al. 200). Besides labour market outcomes, lower status group like transgender also deprive of non-market benefits and the stand to lose these benefits. Overall, the low level of skill and educational access would hinder full and effective utilization of resources and eventually lead to slower economic growth.

Suggested approach for enhancing employment

The economic empowerment of transgender community is located in a complex set of identities, community norms, culture and lack of policy support. In this context, the empowerment process has to be broad and should cover the following aspects

- Awareness generation
- Skill and Capacity Building
- Employment and entrepreneurship

The suggested strategy would cover the following:

Create opportunities for information and counselling

There is a need to create a knowledge base within the community and organisation working for transgenders on the issues related to economic empowerment. Special awareness drive in the form of camps/melas, communication cam-

paign should be initiated to enhance the awareness on economic opportunities, various government schemes for employment and livelihood. This should ensure participation from all relevant departments of the state and central government and NGOs/CBOs and networks of transgender etc. The melas/camps can work as single desk to help the community on getting basic documents like Election Card, Bank account, Aadhaar, etc. Special counselling on career guidance, self-employment, financial schemes of banks/loans etc. can be provided.

Establish a Helpline for Career Guidance and Online Placement Support

A telephonic helpline can be set up to provide the information regarding opportunities related employment, jobs, existing schemes of the government, financial schemes of banks. The helpline can also work as crisis management centre to record the company of any harassment at work place and report it to the concerned agencies for necessary actions.

A dedicated online placement portal can maintain the online data of skilled manpower from transgender community with detailed profile of a person. This can be accessed by the employers, corporates, and placement agencies for suitable placement.

Capacity building support on entrepreneurship development

A comprehensive model of market led approach for economic empowerment of transgender person need to be developed. This would require a strategic shift from income generation activities to enterprise development by the community. In order to the address the combined need of skill and market access, a comprehensive program for building the entrepreneurship skill is required. The program will include the knowledge, confidence and skills for entrepreneurship development (curriculum of for start-up) and functional education and literacy consisting of simple math, language and life skills. The program will also include specialised nature of income generation and microfinance activities, market understanding, market linkages, retails and business development strategy.

The training will also cover life skills including soft skills like spoken English, communications, client management, dispute resolution, workplace etiquette and leadership skills.

Enhanced credit and other support to economic activities

Bank credit/subsidized loan/micro credit should be provided for creating and sustaining self-employment initiatives which may include small and micro scale enterprises and small businesses, retail trade, professionals and self-employed occupations.

The agencies like National Scheduled Castes Financial & Development Corporation, National Backward Classes Financial & Development Corporation should be approached to provide the economic support to transgender community, their networks, community based organizations (CBOs) to support the initiatives related to micro enterprises, cooperatives etc.

Vocational skill building

As highlighted above, the lack of skills and limited training opportunities for skill building prevent transgender from improving their capacity to sustain their livelihoods and enter into strategic employment opportunities in new market conditions. To address concern, a two pronged strategy can be worked out: design the customized vocational training program for the community as per their needs and interest and effective linkages with vocational training centers run by private and government agencies.

Create a supportive environment

The transgender need a facilitating environment to explore the alternative employment opportunities. Efforts should be made to sensitize all concerned stakeholders like government officials in relevant departments, banks, private employers, corporate, community leaders like Gurus etc.

The transgender community has unique culture of dance, folk songs and arts etc. It gives great strength and a sense of identity to the community. These expressions of culture and arts are inseparable parts of the community and should be integrated with livelihood activities to ensure a greater community involvement. The efforts with adequate fund support should be made to link it to employment opportunities.

Networking and linkages

The strategic networking and building partnership with the various departments, industries/corporate, placement agencies etc. should be established for integration, leverage of resources and sharing knowledge etc. Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MSJE) can facilitate this networking by forming a special working group for enhancing the employment opportunities for the transgender. The necessary instructions may be issued to all concerned to make special provision in the existing schemes for the community.

The MSJE can facilitate to make educational skills and training opportunities available for the transgender community so that they are able to find stable, sustained and meaningful employment, or set up their own enterprises. The following are some agencies which can contacted: National Institute for Open Schooling (NIOS), National Skills Development Agency (NSDA), National

Council for Vocational Training (NCVT), State Council for Vocational Training (SCVT), The Ministry of Labor and Employment, Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Ministry of Rural Development and Ministry of Urban Development, along with 14 other ministries, have come up with various schemes on skill development.

The Modular Employable Skills (MES) and Skills Development Initiative Scheme (SDIS) adopted by the Directorate General of Employment and Training (DGET), Ministry of Labor and Employment, Government of India, provides a new strategic framework for skill development for early school leavers and existing workers, especially in the un-organized sector.

Self-employment and Wage employment (Ministry of Rural Development) schemes like Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) for self-employment programme for rural areas, can have special provisions for the community with some physical and financial targets earmarked for beneficiaries belonging to the transgender communities specially living below the poverty line.

Swarnajayanti Shahari Rozgar Yojana (SSRY), Urban Self-Employment Programme and Urban Wage Employment Programme (Ministry of Urban Development) should be made accessible to the transgender community.

Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY) aims at providing additional wage employment in V rural areas, can have some special provision for beneficiaries from transgender community.

Clarification of concepts

- Vulnerability in this context can be defined as the diminished capacity of an individual or group to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from the impact of a natural or man-made hazard.
- Terminology Guidelines/UNAIDS (October 2011, page 27) define stigma as dynamic process of devaluation that significantly discredits an individual in the eyes of others. Within particular cultures or settings, certain attributes are seized upon and defined by others as discreditable or unworthy. When stigma is acted upon, the result is discrimination that may take the form of actions or omissions
- The Constitution (Eighty-sixth Amendment) Act, 2002 inserted Article 21-A in the Constitution of India to provide free and compulsory education of all children in the age group of six to fourteen years as a Fundamental Right in such a manner as the State may, bylaw, determine. http://india.gov.in/ sites/up1oadjiles/npi/ffles/coi_prtjull.pdf
- Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are infections that are spread primarily through person-to-person sexual contact. There are more than 30 different sexually transmissible bacteria, viruses and parasites http://www.who.int/topics/sexually_transmitted_infections/en/

- Terminology guidelines, UNAIDS (October 2011, page 27): Discrimination refers to any form of arbitrary distinction, exclusion, or restriction affecting a person, usually but not only by virtue of an inherent personal characteristic or perceived belonging to a particular group
- Mostly Hijra live and work under a guru who is a senior hijra, called 'mother' of a group of hijra. The hijra who are under this guru are called diela that mean 'child'. Guru and diela relationship always go through some disciplines and rules in their community.
- Accessibility indicate that the educational system is non-discriminatory and accessible to all, and that positive steps are taken to include the transgender persons.
- Equity looks into the dimensions of disadvantage, social exclusion, gender disparity, and special needs for marginalized section like transgender persons and other neglected groups. It focuses on gaps in enrolment, infrastructural provisioning, management, and governance issues social groups (teachers, students), training, motivation and so on.
- Enabling Environment refers to supportive environment that harmonize policies with laws, reduce harassment, violence, stigma, remove structural barriers to the use of services.
- The RTE Act makes it mandatory for all schools, except minority unaided (religious and linguistic minorities included), to reserve 25 per cent of seats for children from the disadvantaged sections/EWS category (http:// mhupagovJn/W_new/EWS_OFFICE_MEMORUNDUM_14_11...2012.pdf
- NCVT is the vocational training schemes of Directorate General of Employment & Training (DGET), Ministry of Labour & Employment, and Government of India. The scheme aims at creating opportunities for central government recognized certificate courses, (http://dget.gov.in)
- Jan Shikshan Sansthans (JSSs) are established to provide vocational training to non-literate, neo-literate, as well as school drop outs by identifying skills as would have a market in the region of their establishment.

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INNER QUALITY OF THE TEACHING – LEARNING PROCESS – A LEARNERS' PERSPECTIVE ON THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WIDER BENEFITS OF LIBERAL ADULT EDUCATION

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Abstract

The large scale research conducted within the project "Benefits of Lifelong Learning" – BELL (www.bell-project.eu) in 10 European countries (data from 8646 questionnaires and 82 interviews) aimed to highlight the wider benefits of liberal adult education. The BeLL study follows the 'wider benefits approach', investigating the contribution of non-formal learning to wider individual and societal goals.

The article highlights the steps done in early stage of a qualitative analysis of the answers to an open question: data from Romania, England and Germany describe the role of teachers and their activities for the learning of adults, as reported by the learners. The first

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100 answers were codded, to set up common items to be followed, to make sure there is a comparable way of coding the answers. Possible interpretation of preliminary results is also included, covering this way, as demo, steps to be followed in the qualitative analysis, in an international research.

Key words: learning benefits, liberal adult education, teachers' role, teacher as person, qualitative research.

The role of liberal adult education for personal development

Adult learning is understood by the European Commission (2013) as a "vital component of EU education policies, as it is essential to competitiveness and employability, social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development across Europe". In the same context adult learning is divided into (1) vocationally oriented "formal, non-formal and informal learning for improving basic skills, obtaining new qualifications, up-skilling or re-skilling for employment" and (2) non-vocational learning. Non-vocational learning is defined by the Council of European Union (2011) as "participating in social, cultural, artistic and societal learning for personal development and fulfillment." This kind of adult learning provision is usually labeled as 'liberal' or 'general' adult education. Usually these courses are non-accredited and not considered to be directly or explicitly developing labor market skills and employability. Common to these adult education activities is voluntary attendance in the participants' own spare time, based on their own personal interests. In such non-formal learning processes the learners may be more oriented to themselves, to their learning experiences and learning interests.

The benefits of participation in lifelong learning, as they have been researched so far, have focused mainly on the societal and economic impact, on vocational aspects and work related skills (see Schuller et all 2004, Desjardins 2008). They have highlighted how individuals, groups, organisations and society benefit from formal education. Less attention has been given to the benefits of learning in non-formal and informal learning settings, where the learning is directed by and oriented to the interests, aims and needs of the learners (see Manninen 2010; Kil, Motschilning &Thöne-Geyer 2013). Thus there is also little known about the way the teachers are seen by the learners in these contexts. The BeLL study tries to fill this gap, exploring such aspects, within 'liberal adult education'.

The BeLL – Project: concept and methodology

"The Benefits of Lifelong Learning" project (BeLL), ran between November 2011 – January 2014, funded by the European Commission as a part of the EU funding stream "Studies and Comparative Research (KA 1)"), is based on the 'wider benefits' approach to lifelong learning and focuses primarily on social

and personal benefits of learning such as well-being, self-efficacy, health, social cohesion etc. rather than on economic or vocational benefits (Desjardins 2008; OECD 2007; Feinstein, Budge, Vorhaus, & Duckworth 2008; Motschilnig 2012). In other words, the focus of BeLL is on what could be called non-economic benefits and a return on learning in terms of social and/or personal benefits (Schuller, Bynner, Green, Blackwell, Hammond, Preston & Gough 2004). Even so, all the benefits listed so far in the research literature were included in the BeLL research. The results show therefore that even there are attended courses in liberal adult education, economic benefits can be identified as well, in terms of competences, and of work related benefits. The BeLL research project analyzes the wider benefits of liberal adult education in adults' lives from an individual perspective, and across 10 European countries. It is the first pan-European study of the wider benefits of liberal adult education.

Being for the first time researching in this way, the BeLL study is an explorative research (Nargundkar 2003, Mertens 2007). As Nargundkar (2003) observes, the explorative research might not be as rigorous as the conclusive research, but contributes to a better understanding of the situation. The contribution of the BeLL study is not only to the understanding of the wider benefits adults perceived while participating in liberal adult education, but to giving an insight on how such benefits differ in various countries, according with the cultural contexts, and the development of adult education.

To produce a deeper understanding, usually a mixed methods study is used (Teddlie, Tashakkori 2009). BeLL is a mixed methods study, using both qualitative and quantitative data from a questionnaire (n = 8.646, structured questions on a Likert scale and three open questions) and qualitative theme interviews (n = 82). In addition, the sample of adults being investigated (1000 subjects per country) is not a representative one. The representatively would have been difficult to reach, as for some European partner countries there is no accurate data about the structure and profile of adults participating into (non-formal) adult education. Thus, the criteria of including the adult learners in the sample were: adult learners who have participated in adult liberal education within a 12 months period.

In this article there are presented the preliminary steps in analyzing the answers to an open question, to offer the insight on the research process in an international perspective.

The qualitative data have been analyzed using an abductive procedure of content analysis. That means categories are built up in a continuous developing process from both deductive (related to theory and theoretical constructs) and inductive (related to the empirical material) perspectives (Haig 2005; Reichertz 2003). First, reflections and decisions have been taken in the preliminary phase on the data layout, pre-coding, preliminary jottings, and on what gets coded (Saldana, 2013, p.15–20).

Being about a large set of data, we have followed the rules for data analysis of D. Silverman (2011, p.58), with respect with the data we are going to present in this article, as illustration of the preliminary steps in analyzing the answers

to the open questions. So, following rules like: "Go down to analysis as early as possible and avoid "busy" work"; "Try out different theoretical approaches; see what works for your data"; "Avoid too early hypotheses and seek to see where your analysis is leading, in order to establish an hypothesis"; "Initially focus on a small part of your data and analyze it intensively; there will be time later to test out your findings on your data set as a whole" etc., we have first check out the categories that might be derived from analyzing the first 100 answers from three countries, trying to ensure the comparability of meanings across countries. These preliminary data are illustrated in the following.

The value of teachers in liberal adult education

For approximately the last ten years, researchers have been 'rediscovering' teachers as important factors for the learning of adults (Egetenmeyer & Nuissl 2010; Nuissl 2010; Sava & Lupou 2009, Sava 2014). Content analysis (Sava 2014:147–156) of the main European policy documents in adult education highlighted this paradigmatic shift: between the end of the '90s and about 2005 the teacher seemed to have disappeared from analyses of the concept of self-directed lifelong learning. Then, from the Communication from the Commission on Adult Learning in 2006, the importance of the role of teachers for the learning of adults was recognized, demanding special efforts for teacher professionalization.

The role of teachers is seen nowadays mainly in the support of the learning of adults, with teachers as facilitators, counselors and mediators. These roles place less stress on subject knowledge and more on the teacher's capability to transform knowledge in the learning process. The 'how' of teaching is emphasized over the 'what'. This means the competences of teachers today are seen in a more complex way: "... the professional development of people working in education and training is one of the vital measures to improve quality of learning at all levels. ... the emphasis is not only on providing instruction, but also on focusing on the broader concept of learning, which involves paying attention to the well-being, motivation, and transformation of the individual" (Research voor Beleid 2010). In the transnational Delphi study run within the QF2Teach project for identifying the future competency profile of adult educators (www.qf2teach.eu) it is concluded that "Teachers and learning facilitators who help individuals acquire new competencies play a key role in making lifelong learning a reality. Their professional skills and qualifications may thus be considered to be of vital importance for the quality of learning that is taking place" (Bernhardsson & Lattke 2011).

Within the overall investigation of wider benefits deriving from liberal adult education, one additional aim of the BeLL study was to elucidate how certain course related aspects like the teacher, the methods, the group etc. contribute to the development of wider benefits of adult learning from the learners' perspective, and particularly, with reference to this paper, how the teacher is perceived by the learners.

In this article, we will highlight how learners participating in liberal adult education describe the importance of their teachers in their learning processes when reflecting on the development of their wider benefits after participation. Only from these preliminary data differences amongst countries can be already observed.

The teachers according to BeLL findings

Earlier studies (i.e. Hammond 2005; Desjardins 2003; 2008) have indicated that the relationship between learning processes and wider benefits is a complex one. In order to analyse these relationships, a set of structured and open questions was included in the survey questionnaire. The respondents were asked (question 2.4) to rate how important different elements in the learning situation have been for their learning and for the development of benefits. They were introduced to a list of potential elements (teacher, teaching methods, group activities etc.) and asked to assess how important they considered these elements for determining/influencing the learning benefits pointed in the previous questions:

> "2.4 Now think back to your learning experiences during the past 12 months. Please estimate how important the following elements of learning situation were for the outcomes you listed above. Use a scale from (1) to (5), where (1) is not at all important and (5) very important."

The basic frequencies (see figure 1 below) show that the respondents experience the fact that they were able to learn new things and be exposed to the contents of the course as the most important elements. Almost as important were ranked the "teachers as a person" and the "teaching methods". Further, a third teacher related element, individual support and guidance, was considered as an important one.

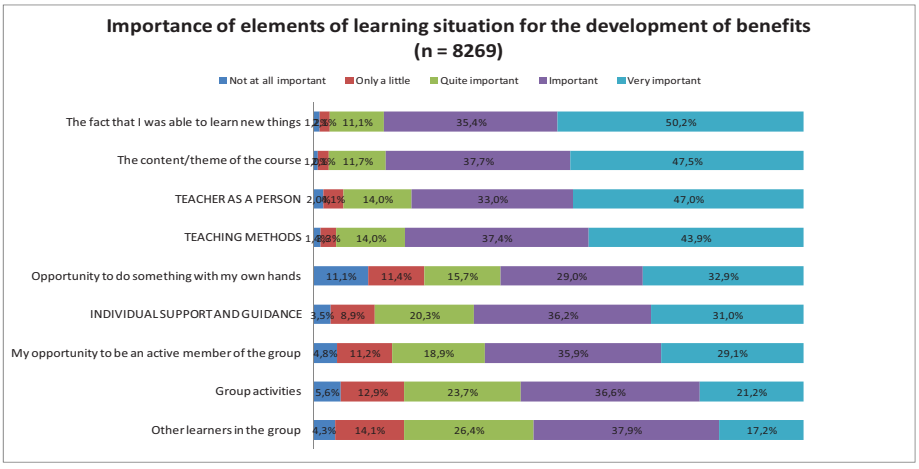

Figure 1: Importance of elements of learning situation in the view of the learners

The respondents were also asked to explain their rating in an open question (question 2.5: "If possible, please give one or two examples which illustrate, why and how these elements were important for the outcomes you listed above"). The categories used to analyze the answers to 2.5 complemented the elements listed in question 2.4.

These two questions aimed to stimulate the learners thinking about not only the benefits of their learning experience, but also about the factors contributing to the development of these benefits, factors related to the didactical setting of the classes attended. The analysis of the answers to open question 2.5 revealed a detailed insight into different aspects participants associated with the factors stimulating their learning experience. These aspects are analyzed further in this article, showing how the teacher as a person, and as a professional, is perceived by the learner, and what elements of her personality and professional behavior were highlighted by the learners as influencing the development of benefits.

Data analysis

The results presented in this paper are based on the qualitative analysis of learners' open answers to question 2.5. The teacher related elements in the answers were analysed while categorizing them in an inductive way. The qualitative analysis is based on the first 100 answers to the open question in the three countries Germany, England and Romania.

We will use examples picked up from responses to the open question 2.5, in order to gain an impression of learners' views of teachers' contributions to their learning. In this inductive approach we use the three teacher-related categories found in the overall analysis of the BeLL project: a) the teacher as a person, b) the teachers' expertise in the subject, and c) the teaching methods applied by the teachers.

In the following analysis we present some of the answers in illustration of the findings by categorizing the open answers. It is an exploration of possible values of teaching, providing hints for teacher professional development as well as for further research on pedagogical topics. Since there are the results from three different European countries (Romania, Germany and England) included in this analysis, our results suggest also an initial explorative direction for possible hypotheses of different awareness of teachers in varied cultural and learning contexts.

a) The teacher as a person

'The teacher as a person' is, in adult education as well as in all other sectors of education, an important factor involving, potentially, her authenticity, her person, her attitude, her opinions, her behavior, her gender and age, her personal experiences, her wit and humor. The following categories to describe the teacher as a person have been inductively pulled from the data we gathered and at the same time related to theoretically grounded terms (Hayes 2006).

Enthusiastic: The teacher values what he teaches and displays the value for his subject with appropriate degrees of emotion (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg 2010:40). This kind of emotional expression which is related to the teaching subject is deeply estimated by learners. "*It was vital to have an enthusiastic and committed teacher* (England/ENG). *"The teacher or the trainer is the one who gives a special charm to the course he can make a mundane subject attractive, by his enthusiasm and passion for the subject"* (RO). It seems that the teacher is 'breathing life' into the subject when showing enthusiasm and passion for it. These two elements can play a significant role in the success of a course: "*...he can make a mundane subject attractive, by his enthusiasm and passion for the subject.*"

Empathetic: The teacher is sensitive and aware of how a student feels while learning and being in the learning environment (see Rogers 1969). "M*y tutor is supportive of my need to be an individual within the group*" (ENG). The teacher mentioned above seems to be sensitively aware of the learners need to be seen as a unique person among the other learners. "*The empathetic teacher, the empathy from the group... "* (RO) are elements enumerated by the Romanian learners too, without being further developed. In the answers from Germany these two threats were not identified.

Friendly: the teacher behaves in an open and approachable way. *"It's important that the teacher is friendly, because then I can better learn and understand"* (GER). *"I also like certain teachers as people, they have a more relaxed and friendly attitude"* (RO). A teacher who is approachable is seen as one of the main conditions for learning.

b) The teachers expertise in relation to the content

The teachers' expertise refers first to the preparation of the lessons and second to the subject matter-knowledge the teacher has. Third it refers to the teacher's ability to take into account the learners' preconditions ('getting to know the learners') and to adapt to their existing level of knowledge and experience of the topic.

Well-prepared: The teacher provides material and makes notes for the course: *"I very much admire both the teachers I had. They were both very well prepared, the history teacher had extensive notes and background information and gave pointers as to how we could follow up a topic. The art teacher provided materials as well as ideas"* (ENG). "*The person who teaches is very important, that he is prepared and attractive, because he keeps my interest alive, and then we remember a large quantity of information without effort"* (RO); *"I appreciated the well-prepared teachers because they knew how to attract participants to the materials studied, to make you feel that time is flying and to want to participate in new group activities in break time or after the course*". (RO)

Participants value teachers' efforts in preparing a course. These efforts become directly visible in the learning material they provide and the notes they've made beforehand.

Knowledgeable: the teacher knows his subject well. He is an expert in it and conveys his subject-matter knowledge to the participants (see Hattie 2012:25). The analysis of the data shows that participants connect their progress in learning directly to the subject-matter knowledge of the teacher. "*The teacher was very knowledgeable and therefore I could ask questions if I didn't understand something*" (ENG). A Romanian statement values the competence of the teacher in mastering the content: *"For example, in the workshop about Learning Techniques, it was very important that the person who held the workshop had a lot of knowledge in this area. He put us in hypothetical situations so we could then analyse what happened – training us in the task and putting our minds to work, so we could "feel" what efficient or inefficient work feels like, so we could better understand it afterwards."*(RO)

Furthermore, participants seek the subject-matter knowledge of a teacher in particular when they (the learners) find themselves in new or difficult situation, dealing with change: "*People give you a lot of hints how to raise your children, but often antiquated, for example to let your children cry, when they can't fall asleep. Here you can get exchange with the group and at least you get a competent advice respectively estimation from the teacher. This reinforced my decisions.*" (GER). This statement may suggest that the teacher's special subject-matter knowledge is seen as 'the last resort' by someone searching for a solution to a difficult situation. At the same time, she does not trust in everyday knowledge provided by her normal surrounding but is looking for more qualified, or authoritative, knowledge to solve – in this case – the sleeping problems of her child.

Adapts instructions to the learners' experience and skills: The fact that the teacher provides achievable learning tasks and assignments is seen as supporting learning: "*being able to learn new skills at my own pace and getting skills"; "the teacher recognizes the different learning styles of the students in the class and can adapt and modify teaching methods to the best outcome*" (ENG); "*Courses based on experiential pedagogy attracted me more than those based on content, which I can study on my own*" (RO). This emphasis on using everyday examples relates to the idea that adult learners in particular need to link what they are learning to their existing knowledge and experience (see, for example Knowles, Holton & Swanson 2012).

c) Teaching methods

Teaching methods concerns teachers' abilities to use different teaching methods: his/her didactical competencies. Even participants mentioned the characteristics of various teaching methods, they were talking about the way the

teacher was mastering the didactic setting and the methodological tools at his/her disposal. Treats like "variety", "interactive", "organization and clarity", "stimulating learning environment", "feedback", "individual support and guidance" have been derived, illustrated and analysed in the same way, but of the length of this article, not presented into detail.

As it can be seen from the different examples provided, the participants have not only named different factors influencing their learning benefits, but they have also explained how these factors worked and why they were important. Teachers can help to construct a kind of individual curriculum, can be helpers in building self-esteem, self-awareness and self-reflection, and can help to evaluate learning progresses and outcomes and to validate the learning results. Such statements can help us understand what is important for many adult learners, what it helps learners gain the learning benefits they desire, and provides useful feedback and illustration for teachers in structuring the learning environment, in self-evaluation of his professional behavior, and in designing the didactical settings.

Conclusions and Perspectives for Comparison

This explorative analysis indicates that adult learners see the role of the teacher as of significant importance in their learning, from personal qualities, such as patience, knowledge and organizational ability, to teaching approaches such as providing formative feedback or using a variety of teaching methods, against the background of profound knowledge in the subject.

The examples provided while illustrating each category hint at differences in the understanding of a category across certain cultural contexts. This can be exemplified at the category of "Teacher as a person". The role of the teacher seems to be valued differently in the different countries, and signaling the importance of societal positioning and individual experiences of adult learning, as well as the "power" relations in the didactic settings. This too has to be verified in further empirical studies.[1]

The stress which was put on the teacher in the Romanian open answers was notable. This can be illustrated in two examples:

1 In the BeLL project the survey data (n = 8646) was used to analyze group differences statistically in more detail (see Manninen & al. 2014). There were statistically significant differences between countries, but also between age, gender, educational level, type of course on how important the teachers' role was for the development of benefits. For example women value more teacher related elements. There is a linear relation between teacher elements and age group, younger participants paying more attention on teacher and teaching than older adults – except for oldest age group, where again the importance of teacher is recognized more. There is also a linear and clear relationship based on educational level: the lower the educational level, the higher all elements are valued in the learning situation. It seems that lower educated need more support from teachers.

> *"The teacher as a person is very important, because he holds in his hands the reins of the entire learning process. ... I have respect for the teachers I had, the high quality teachers. They kept my memory active and I was able to evaluate myself."* (RO)

Here the power of the teacher in organizing the teaching-learning process is pointed out, including how this organisational ability affects individual participation.

> *"For example the teacher is a very important factor, maybe even the most important, because according to his performance, the course will seem interesting or not, you will be actively involved or bored. Also the opportunity to be an active member is very important because it allows you to enter into the study space, not just to be a passive observer"* (RO).

Here the teacher is important also in motivating an interest in a particular subject.

In comparison here are examples of qualifying the teachers in the two other countries, Germany and England. In Germany responses were quite often:

> "The teacher organized the course in a very interesting way. Thus, it is fun to participate in the course and it makes you looking forward to the next lesson". "The teacher is sympathetic and does a good job. She responded well to every single participant". "Good teacher, whom I respected, opens me for learning." "The teacher is very sympathetic and well qualified. Thus, she gives me special knowledge for my practice". "The teacher knows how to teach and thus reached the participants."

These statements reflect the role of the teacher in the first place as an expert of special 'subject' knowledge but also as an expert in didactical issues. However, it is not only the teacher as an expert that seems to be important for the development of the benefits. It is also the teacher's person which matters to the learners. A teacher who is perceived as a 'sympathetic' and trustworthy person seems to be a key element for the whole learning process. A teacher can open a person for a learning process but he can also have an opposite effect as the following statement shows: "A teacher can be boring and also the learning methods he/she provides. In such situations learners become demotivated" (GER).

In England, participants overall placed less stress on the knowledge or subject expertise of the teachers and more on the qualities of the teacher, and pedagogic skill, that allowed the teacher to create a conducive environment in which the adult learner can learn, can 'use' the programmes for their own specific purposes. Participants commented on the importance of the teacher being motivating, inspiring, supportive, organised, prepared and using lots of examples: "It was vital to have an enthusiastic and committed teacher," "I think that what is important for me is to develop my skills and knowledge in areas that are of particular interest, with an inspiring teacher,". Very few participants responded that a teacher should be knowledgeable about their subject. It is, of course, possible

that the participants were taking it for granted that a teacher has subject expertise, and were simply focussing on the qualities and skills that they had experienced as more variable (i.e. some teachers are more supportive than others, some more inspiring that others).

Of course these are only explorative messages and examples, but they lead to hypothesises for a future comparative analysis. There are several *possible explanations* (an insofar hypothesises) for such country differences: for the teachers in England and Germany it might be more common to act in a non-directive way, in Romania the frontal interaction is more common, therefore the learners are more surprised and impressed by a more open way of teaching, using a variety of methods. Another possible explanation can be: in Romania there may be greater distances between many adults and educational offers and so learners attend classes less than in the other countries (which are supported by all available statistics on participation rate of adults to continuing education). People, not having such a lot of experience of adult learning (in addition, the respondents in Ro were quite young), are looking very intensively at that what the teacher is doing, and so teachers simply 'matter' more to them, as people and as professionals. In Romania very often the mentioned benefit is related to the teacher in a more intensive way. By difference, it may be that the English respondents felt more of a personal responsibility to drive or shape their learning to fit their particular goals, and so the teacher's role is to be prepared for, enthusiastic about and open to this engagement.

The German statements reflect that teachers is not a respected person purely on the basis of her position or formal qualification, but has to 'prove' his professionalism by his knowledge and a certain didactical design adequate for adult learning. This critical thinking demonstrates a learner's self-consciousness towards the teacher and the teaching methods and might be rooted also in a certain 'customer' self-image of German learners and adult learning organizations as 'service-provider'.

In further research work, oriented to a common European understanding of teaching and learning, these possibilities for possible differences in the ways that teachers and their roles are viewed by adult learners (and perhaps also in school and university) should be taken in account and analyzed more specifically. Concepts for a European space of teaching-learning in adult age should be based on this.

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BUILDING EDUCATIONAL SYNERGIES WITHIN SCHOOLS: A REVISED APPROACH TO LIFELONG LEARNING IN EUROPE

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Abstract

In this paper we argue the idea of schooling as a space for building educational synergies as part of the broader European lifelong learning agenda. We suggest that we should look first at the purpose of the learning processes we wish to establish within schools and then determine what partners to involve. The paper explores a small number of studies and relevant policy documents and literature and calls for a new agenda for schools that stretches beyond their regular role and promotes the idea of lifelong learning by providing the space for delivering adult learning initiatives. The paper concludes that flexibility and support are important elements to run learning partnerships within schools.

Key words: learning partnerships, schooling, European Union, lifelong learning, adult education

Setting the framework for educational synergies within schools

Education as a central structure and process involved in any kind of liberating dialogue has the potential to provide a means of both conceptualising the contemporary social and human condition and also of engaging in action in local (and sometimes perhaps in global) contexts. When education is attached to the process of schooling, it then refers to the education system (schools, colleges, training centres, universities) together with other educational forms and structures to be found as in-house education, training and professional development in business and public sector organisations. In schooling however, the locus of

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power is external to the student. It is the adult who defines and imposes and adults do not just freely define and impose what they believe to be best. Rather, it is those in power who define the policies. If however the locus of power and agency is with the individual (whether child or adult) then what is drawn out are the interests, potential and creativity of the individual as they reflect upon the world (Zarifis & Papadimitriou, 2016 forthcoming). The individual, by reflecting upon experience, is able to draw out possibilities for courses of action (pedagogical methodologies, curricula, learning activities, etc.). This reflection may be carried out in community with others in order to bring about an educative community or what we identify as 'learning collective' (see Zarifis & Gravani, 2014).

Given its historical associations with controlling, forming and fashioning the minds and behaviour of young people, schooling today emphasises an education that leads the individual to engage in a system's desired forms of action. It is a form of "domesticating" people (Schostak, 2008), making them fit in to the demands of the social group into which they are born and live. The contemporary socio-economic demand for educational reform in many European countries largely focuses on the transformation of the school system in terms of shaping the curricula based on a vested approach that prioritises learning outcomes – set upon a leveled framework of knowledge, skills and competences – as a vehicle for assuring quality and promoting critical thinking (Mayo, 2014). Not unjustifiably policy makers in Europe and elsewhere have recognised the need for reform that envelops education as a whole and considers schooling as only part of the education system (European Commission, 2000, 2001, 2003 & 2007; UNESCO, 2002; CASE, 2009; College of Europe, 2001; World Bank, 2003; OECD, 2009 & 2013). In a rather divisive manner however, in the policy language education and training became 'the vehicle' for social and economic growth and a way to strengthen employment and economic reform as well as social equity and cohesion, as part of a process that defines the new dominant culture: the 'knowledge based economy'. This is still a major theme in European policy making; a new approach to education, training for living and working in the knowledge society. This was largely supported by the use of an occasionally neoliberal (as economic led) language that is plainly notable in the European Commission's Memorandum on lifelong learning (see Zarifis & Gravani, 2014; Mayo, 2014; Gough, 2014).

This proposal has created a major challenge for all member states in respect to the kind of projects and existing provision that could offer promising ways forward and examples of good practice. Besides the ongoing policy debate on issues that relate to lifelong learning in the EU, the final key message of the Memorandum 'Bringing learning closer to home' (European Commission 2000: 18–20), further set as an objective the provision of lifelong learning opportunities as close to learners as possible, in their own communities. Within this framework the Commission proposed that it is of equal importance – since for most people, from childhood through to old age, learning happens locally – that urban areas

can weld multiple partnerships from a hub of diversity, using lifelong learning as the driver for local and regional regeneration. Within this context, the development of local learning centres and learning partnerships is specified as an important component of the new approach required in education and training. In this respect one of the targets of the the message is that schools and training centres, all linked to the Internet, should be developed into multi-purpose local learning centres accessible to all, using the most appropriate methods to address a wide range of target groups; learning partnerships should be established between schools, training centres, firms and research facilities for their mutual benefit. These learning centres and partnerships have to be accessible to all, using the most appropriate methods to address a wide range of target groups. Moreover, learning partnerships should be established between schools, training centres, firms and research facilities for their mutual benefit. The logic behind this new trend for reshaping established education structures such as schools may not immediately raise eyebrows as in many European countries schools have already established their own networks and partnerships with structures that provide different forms of education (e.g. training institutes, universities, adult education centres). This is not to say that re-imagining school is merely about networking with other educational structures. The agenda is very broad and the degree of commitment to it by all member states differs greatly considering both the socio-economic and cultural appreciation to existing education structures, schools in particular. It is in this context that in this chapter we argue for the need of a systematic and in-depth deliberation on collective planning of such partnerships. Planning that will exemplify as many aspects of shared social and learning needs as possible from different communities and social groups, in order to define the purpose of the learning partnerships we wish to establish within schools before we determine what partners to involve. The target here is to present some of the issues that need to be considered based on relevant studies and the experience from existing relevant initiatives around Europe, in order to create a framework of action towards transforming schools to learning spaces for all children, youth and adults of all ages.

Up to now, and in line with the concept of lifelong learning and the demands of the knowledge society as they are passed in several policy papers (see European Commission 2001 & 2003), there have been many initiatives on widening access to learning opportunities (NIACE 2003). These include initiatives on open learning environments, distance learning, flexible and open classrooms (see European Commission, 2013a & 2013b), as well as learning cities and regions (see OECD, 2001; UNESCO, 2013; Jordan et al. 2014).

Based on existing research in the area there are three major issues that prevail in terms of the initiatives on learning partnerships in Europe today (see Buiskool et al. 2005). The first issue is how we define mutually beneficial learning partnerships between education and training providers, youth clubs and associations, enterprises and R&D centres, which can be profitably developed at

local and regional levels. The second issue is how we identify incentives that will encourage local and regional initiatives – such as learning cities and regions – to co-operate and exchange good practice at multiple levels, including the transnational level. The third one is the degree of commitment of local and regional authorities to a fixed percentage of their income to lifelong learning. However, the question that comes up is how can a learning partnership be defined in practical terms and even more so, what can the added value and the actual impact of this definition be to the role of schools and schooling in Europe? In the following paragraphs we analyse some of the issues we consider most important for defining and developing learning partnerships within schools.

Building learning partnerships: a revised approach to schooling?

What it is important to understand at this point is that school and schooling relate to a socio-cultural experience that essentially defines our learning and educational choices as adults. One crucial issue we stumbled upon while writing this paper was why does school need to be seen from a different perspective? Even more so why this perspective should be founded on the idea of building or developing learning partnerships within schools that essentially frames our position on re-imagining schooling? A relevant quasi critical approach is presented by Instance (2003) who tries to find some balance between schooling and lifelong learning when he argues that substantial clarification is still needed of the role schools play in the larger lifelong learning strategy (ibid. p. 85). The approach of Instance however is a reflection on the OECD's *Centre for Educational Research and Innovation* (*CERI*) findings on the perceived impact of lifelong learning policies rather than a pragmatic hands-on approach to learning that engages people of all ages in a single space. This is rather evident in his – and others – appreciation of framing and assessing key competences for lifelong learning. If we approach the schooling/lifelong learning relationship(s) from this angle there are two important aims of partnership initiatives we can identify (see Buiskool et al. 2005):

1. initiatives that are related to the world of employment and economic activity;
2. initiatives that are of importance to furthering equal opportunities and social cohesion.

Our idea however is to push the envelope a bit further by suggesting that schooling/lifelong learning relationships must initially address the reasons for barriers to learning and suggest ways of overcoming these barriers at both individual and institutional levels. Before any learning partnership initiatives de-

velop we need to know the benefits of the service that will be provided and the beneficiaries, as well as how to make these initiatives attractive to different age groups and people with diverse backgrounds and work together towards an intercultural and intergenerational approach to learning. This is not an easy task. As Buiskool et al. (2005) observe an important condition is that education and training systems and stakeholders have to find a more effective and positive articulation with each other. Barriers to learning are not only found in the education and training system but also in other systems like organisations, labour and product markets, industrial relations, innovation policy, social structures, social security systems etc. Besides these organisational barriers for education providers and relevant stakeholders, there are individual and social reasons as to why people are demotivated to learn. One of the objectives therefore should be to examine the practices of learning partnerships in the context of widening access to learning opportunities.

In the relevant literature (see Himmelman, 1994; Buiskool et al. 2003; European Commission 2003b) learning partnerships are defined in various ways. They refer to those initiatives that help make education and training accessible to individuals and communities otherwise excluded by distance, transport, or cultural barriers. A learning partnership offers community access to facilities otherwise limited to the economically affluent private citizen, to enterprises, or to higher education. At best, they can offer access to information technology including personal computers with CD-ROMs, access to the Internet and broadcasting, software, print materials, and access to a learning adviser. They may offer, too, a context for learning at a distance. Essentially learning partnerships are an approach to community-based learning. Despite the diversity there are common elements that characterise learning partnerships at their best. Founded on a commitment to the social and economic development of the area they serve, and taking an active approach to the engagement of local residents, they may deliver learning that seeks out and responds to individual and community needs; is accessible and welcoming in both physical and psychological terms; stimulates and sustains the appetite for education; provides opportunities for progression; builds confidence, motivation and self-sufficiency; values the life experiences adults bring to their learning; and encourages learners' ownership of planning, management and evaluation of provision.

The term *learning partnerships* however is often used without explicit definition. In the relevant literature one can find similar concepts, such as learning communities, learning cities and learning regions (see Kilpatrick et al. 2003; Jordan, 2014; Mayo, 2014). Examples of learning partnerships on local, as well as regional, national or international level, partners typically include educational institutions (including schools), government bodies, industry partners, and community groups. This phenomenon is said to be a "collaborative environment" (see Himmelman, 1994; Zarifis, 2010). Based on the above a working definition of learning partnership for the purpose of this chapter may be the following:

A learning partnership is a space of collective intercultural and intergenerational action that addresses the learning needs of its locality through educational provision within schools. It uses the strengths of social and institutional relationships to bring about cultural shifts in perceptions of the value of learning. It explicitly uses learning as a way of promoting social cohesion, regeneration and economic development which involves all parts of the community. Recruiting new learners, making the learning processes match the needs of employment and employers, supporting the local policies that aim at participation, cohesion and active citizenship are examples of the benefits learning partnerships may offer.

The above definition holds that members of a learning partnership share a stake in a particular purpose, interest or geography, collaboration, partnership and learning, respecting diversity and enhanced potential and outcomes. Such outcomes range from economic development of the community (see Longworth, 2002; Jordan et al., 2014) to successful education for children and adults (see Taylor, 2002; NIACE, 2003; Zarifis, 2010). In the following paragraphs we are presenting the most important issues on building learning partnerships within schools focusing on accessibility, outreach, attractiveness, organisation, synergy, and provision based on studies that the report on the organizational profile and examine the performance of existing learning partnerships (Buiskool et al. 2005; NIACE, 2003 & 2006; European Commission, 2003b; Zarifis, 2010), with reference to some examples from a number of European countries.

Organizing, administering and managing learning partnerships within schools

The organisation of learning partnerships that either engage schools or operate within schools certainly goes beyond administration and management. Some studies (Buiskool et al. 2005; NIACE, 2003) observe that responsiveness to local community needs as well as outreach of target groups with no previous access or participation in education, clarity of objectives and methods, and evaluation of provision are among the key elements for organising a successful learning partnership. Matching objective with organisational structure is what determines success or failure of a learning partnership. This means that that educational objectives need to be developed taking into account the needs of the local people and that education providers need to work together within schools considering these needs. European experience shows a rich realm of possibilities. One important finding from research is recognition of the strong influence of relevant European projects. This influence is substantial particularly in terms of funding. Funded initiatives however seldom continue without having found a new external source of funding. Learning partnerships need to consider new and effective ways of turning projects into common and perhaps institutionalised prac-

tice. Projects must be turned into policies and into (semi) permanent structures. There are many examples of cases where the initiative evaporated, when after the project period, funding was no longer available. Perhaps funding is often ended too abruptly. Gradual changes of the funding regime from fully funded through co-funded to self-funded may be considered. Last but not least a final aspect is that of evaluation. By engaging with systematic self-evaluation, learning partnerships will be able to account for their actions and the impact they have. That way they will learn to improve their practices and at the same time develop the professionalism needed to be able to cope with autonomy and self-directedness (see Buiskool et al. 2005: 22). In addition to self evaluation, there must be a kind of external monitoring and control. The combination of internal and external evaluation will sustain the quality enhancement of partnerships concerned.

Embracing diversity among different actors

The involvement of more actors in partnerships may improve the chance of learning to take place, of learning to be effective and of learning to have an impact on people's lives and work. Cooperation between schools, municipal bodies, employers, etc. has proven in many cases to be successful in the sense that they brought people back to employment or to school with a perspective, sometimes even a guarantee of employment. The often mentioned reluctance or even fear of working together can be overcome in safe and small scale environments thus decreasing the initial fear and opening up new ways to access adult education. Not only do partners enhance the schooling part of it, but they enhance their own part in it as well. Bringing a school, a library or a community centre together may be proven beneficial to the school, but it also means that libraries get more visitors, people meet more often and make plans together, and that social cohesion is strengthened. Still it seems that a well established learning partnership does add to the quality, the support and the impact of the learning processes of all participants (children and adults). The interests represented in learning partnerships however are extremely diverse. What it is suggested in the literature is that learning partnerships in general fall into two main categories of partners; governance and resource partners (see Buiskool et al. 2005: 19). Governance partners are more orientated to a strategic level, like administrative, developmental, business and political institutions which have a strong influence on the conditions for local development and the role of learning institutes in this development. Resource partners can be considered as partners on operational level. These are different professional institutions like for example learning centres, community organisations, training providers, and business enterprises that operate in the area of adult education and guidance or in similar activities. The ideal situation is that both kinds of partners are taken up in a school based learning partnership, although this depends on the specific context of the partnership.

Partnerships need to open new ways for participants to enter or re-enter the formal educational system. The European experience shows that a degree of cooperation between schools, municipal bodies, employers, etc. has proven in many cases to be successful in the sense that they brought people back to employment or to school with a perspective, sometimes even a guarantee of employment.

Serving participants' needs

One aspect that schools may consider if they wish to open their premises to a learning partnership is that people differ in their needs in their styles and in their potential. In accordance with those characteristics a mix of learning opportunities might have to be offered. Because of this diversity it is advisable to perform a needs assessment to make clear what the priorities should be. This essentially refers to the process of diagnosing (through foci groups, questionnaires and/or personal interviews with learners) learning needs and prioritising those that will serve the relevance and the effectiveness of the educative activities. After defining the target groups and their needs, methods and activities can be developed. In order to reach any group at risk, a number of elements can be mentioned that would positively affect accessibility and continuation of participation (also see Buiskool et al. 2005: 171; Zarifis, 2010: 651). The first is using a pedagogical approach in which every day problems form the basis and the starting point for learning. Instant applicability of outcomes reinforces the learning process of adults. The learning activities need to be put in an informal learning environment. Many non-learners have bad memories of schools and the formal education system. Getting them in contact with other ways of learning may encourage them to continue learning. The second is that the educational activities need to provide some room to other aspects of learning than only cognitive; equally important may be biographical learning, reflection, emotional learning, and personalized learning. This can be established within secure and safe environments in which mistakes may be made, in which feedback is constructive and in which privacy is guaranteed. The third aspect relates to attendance. Lower barriers to come in and do a course may sustain participation. Flexible opening hours, absence of entry requirements, free courses, individual learning at flexible times, learning at their own level. This aspect also refers to the need for support by employers in terms of learning during working time or financing training as a vital condition for success in work oriented learning. The fourth and last aspect is of evaluation and monitoring of the progress and results of the learning centres. This is an important way to increase quality of educational provision within the partnership and to give input in formulating goals and mission of the centre in the future. One issue that is also very important is reaching groups at risk; semi– and unskilled people, unemployed people, socially disadvantaged people and immigrants. With respect to non-participants, we also have to include

younger people who dropped out of secondary school and not only adult learners. This is because experience from learning partnerships and initiatives (see NIACE, 2003 & 2006), shows that some of them try to reach the most successful learners only in order to show positive results to their funding parties (low drop-out rates; high attuned level by students etc.). The problem is that this may lead to the exclusion of those groups, which need most attention. Sometimes, the most vulnerable groups are excluded from the programmes, because they could not manage to attend the courses or training due to personal problems (childcare, family circumstances, financial problems etc.) or lack of motivation. This lowers the net-effectiveness of the outreach. The challenge is to activate the non-participants. For this purpose partnerships need a multidisciplinary approach.

Discussion: drafting a roadmap to building effective learning partnerships

Learning has extended its territory. It is no longer the monopoly of schools. It takes place in work environments, in library buildings, in community centres, in virtual settings, in multimedia environments and across organisations. Learning no longer is an incident in a working life or in one's personal life; it is increasingly becoming an integrated part in many people's lives. That is why in the physical sense of the concept school as we know it could never offer the support for all that could be included in the learning processes. A learning partnership is what is needed to support this integrated, permanent, and lifelong learning. That way only it will be possible to support people in the variety of learning situations they encounter during different phases of their lives, their career and their personal and collective development. According to Buiskool et al. (2005: 229–230) there are some issues to be considered as the involved stakeholders, teachers and students who participate in educational programmes organized within partnerships, suggest that the majority of programmes seem to focus on work and employment thus underemphasising the need of more informal and non-formal activities. Perhaps, it could be that this straightforward, goal-directed approach, knocks off some of those that would need to be involved most. It is also important to notice, that, despite this focus on the world of work, connections with employers are few. Maybe, an answer could be that for target group members the way from participating all the way to acquiring a sustainable job is too long to be covered by one learning partnership. Some partnerships could better focus on accessibility of learning and on reaching the target groups while others can be responsible for formal learning and/or job searching activities. Another aspect for consideration expressed by stakeholders is that partnerships tend to focus on densely populated areas (i.e. large cities), where problems are concentrated. Rural areas are less supported. On an individual or local level this may be appreciated as unfair and undesirable. It adds to inequality if people

in rural areas are confronted with a significantly lower accessibility of learning opportunities. That is why bringing learning closer to home has become an issue for creative thinking to those who wish to make learning environments also available in rural areas. Mobile arrangements, open and distant learning, travelling educators using existing facilities in rural areas such as school buildings, community centres etc., appear to be promising parts of the solution. Another issue concerns the way local, national and European funds are available to support adult lifelong learning. As we explained barriers were encountered regarding the nature of this funding on a project basis, where continuity and sense of direction are concerned. Changes in the composition of the EU with the extension of the number of members and changes of national governments tend to cause similar discontinuities. The nature of the centres and partnerships tends to change whenever a new source of money comes into play. This seems to be again an indication that the initiative is still too much in the hands of the authorities and not of the people themselves.

School needs to be approached as an organisational entity that initiates, develops and delivers training or educational services or activities to promote learning in the broadest sense of the word; learning from the people and for the people. European experience so far shows that schools can initiate or even be transformed to central actors for building learning partnerships for all (children and adults). European policies support these initiatives although they are not always clear of their scope that in the policy language are more inclined towards professional training and skills for the labour market. Our conception is that learning partnerships that operate locally within schools or engage schools could include anything ranging from initiatives focusing on academic performance, to work competence, personal development, group development, societal/civic participation, covering any area from technical to artistic, from culture to agriculture to economics; all in the scope of serving the needs of the local community. Educational provision within such learning partnerships may be of a non-formal or a formal nature, meaning that they may be a private initiative, or part of an organisational structure, or they may be established within an educational institute or structure. The development of such partnerships fits with the European Employment Strategy (EES) that supports the development of a territorial dimension of employment policies, encouraging local and regional authorities to develop strategies for employment in order to exploit fully the possibilities offered by job creation at the local level and to promote partnerships to this end with all the actors concerned, including the representatives of civil society. A weakness of the European Employment Strategy however is that in most countries the consultation procedures tend to be limited to national authorities with little involvement of local partners; likewise, although the involvement of local and regional authorities in the implementation of measures has generally increased, the situation varied considerably across countries. This partly reflects governance structures in EU Member States and, in particular, the extent to

which policy-making and implementation is decentralized. However, it is also attributable to the limited capacity of local authorities in many countries to play an active role in employment development. The issues we need to consider however at a pragmatic level relate more to the establishment of well functioning learning partnerships that engage schools and include the following:

1. **Inventories of potential partners:** A school that wants to be engaged in a potential learning partnership should first of all make an analysis of the activities, projects, contents or resources where collaboration with other parties can be useful. Furthermore, it should investigate what other kind of institutes are active in formal and non-formal education and lifelong learning in the local community. This overview is necessary to decide which collaboration partners are possible. This is a key issue in the initial phase for effective learning partnerships.
2. **Diversity of partners:** Cooperation between different actors on municipal, regional and national level is a key issue for effective learning partnerships. Depending on the kind of school (public, private, general, professional, etc.), one needs political support, cooperation with the public sector, trade unions, companies and unions of companies, employment agencies, sport agencies, primary schools, secondary schools and other educational organisers. Cooperation with similar schools in the region, country or abroad is also a very important way of working in a learning partnership.
3. **Involving business enterprises:** Developing learning partnerships with the business community is also important because it makes schools less dependent on government funding and improves links with the labour market. An important precondition is that the business community embraces a social agenda within its local area and an active involvement in lifelong learning issues. This involvement range from financial and other support to local learning centres and partnerships in order to encourage lifelong learning.
4. **Mutual understanding of shared and own goals:** The partners have to express their shared intentions by articulating a problem to solve, goals and objectives, intended outcomes, or mission. An effective, sustainable partnership makes documented progress toward fulfilling its goals. Different members of the partnerships may have complementary subordinate goals, but improved student learning is the essential measure of a good learning partnerships. Moreover, it is important that the school unit goals are also met within the partnership. Partners have to respect each other values, goals, and organisational cultures.
5. **Responsibility and leadership:** In a learning partnership there should be a distinctive role for all partners. This will emphasize the need for shared responsibility and equality. However, there is also a need to identify a

strong lead partner to coordinate and steer the partnership. Especially in the initial phase of the partnership, partners need guidance from a lead partner. This responsibility may change as the partnerships develops and evolves.

6. **Adequate resources:** Most of the learning partnerships are to a large extent dependent on initial funding. Effective partnerships are partnerships that are sustainable after the initial period of funding. The research shows that short-term funding is seldom sufficient to allow partnership relationships to become securely rooted, not only in the partnership itself but also in partnership organisations. Therefore successful partnerships are partnerships which have proved to be sustainable over a longer period of time.
7. **Monitoring and evaluation** is crucial to develop effective partnerships and should be an integral part of the partnership design. It can help detect adult learning needs and whether they are being met or not. Evaluation can also contribute rationalising limited resources and to a better coordination between different partners.

It is with all the above mentioned principles that this paper's core argument on revisiting the purpose of school as a space for initiating and developing learning partnerships for all, refers to schooling not as a process of shaping minds and behaviour according to the interests and beliefs of a particular group of people or an authority that represents the dominant culture, but as a space that re-defines learning in its broader terms based on its potential to challenge and suspend vested interests, and beliefs. In order to achieve this we need to (re)define the purpose of the learning processes we wish to establish within schools based on the learning needs of certain target groups and then determine what partners to involve. However we must not forget that the locus of power and agency must be with the individual.

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