

## LEARNING AMONG ADULTS

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### Abstract

Nowadays everyone is convinced of the importance of lifelong learning. For a vast majority of the population is not enough just to have a good education. Further education is necessary in order to prepare adults for changes in the context of work and lifestyle. Given the continuous shortening of knowledge life, as well as and the actual social and economic problems, knowledge that are gained in school are not enough for a lifetime. In this context, recognition of andragogical principles takes a special importance. In this article there is a summarized theory on adult learning, including the individuals' needs of continuous education, the six theses of andragogist model by Knowles (1975, 1984a, 1984b, 1989), establishing of learning phases for adult learners, differences between children and adult learning, as well as some features of adult education. The authors, comes to the conclusion that although adult learning differs from children, the fear that adult learning may not be productive has not base. The key to achieve the adult learner is the information possessed by the respective lecturers on some basic principles of adult education, which are based on adult motivation for learning, curriculum planning and organization of learning for adults.

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**Keywords:** Adult education, adult motivation, methods for adult learners, curricular programming for adult learners.

## **Introduction**

### **The need for continued learning**

Globalization of the economy and market internationalization, industry innovation have transformed Information and Communication Technology and has made information and an important condition and necessary to be competitive in the vision of this new market. Also, this important element of being "involved" has created a sense of anxiety and uncertainty to achieve the perception of opportunities, as well as the "duties" of the new set forward to learning as much about this technology that is moving with great speed. As a result of changes in the world of professions and fleeting technological development, vocational education is increasingly, but less determines subsequent field work. According to several studies show that nearly half of the employees exercise other profession besides their education (BBWFT 1997).

In Albania, as in Europe and in the Balkan region, this situation in the labor market has dictated the need for the continuation of a number of studies, always growing student aged adults. Although there are no accurate data on the number of adult students (students over the age of 25 years), starting from the records of the 2007-2008 academic year until 2013-2014, appears to be an increase of about 31% of adult students who have begun to pursue higher education (part-time). According to Papa (2013) who conducted a study on adult education, in a sample of 400 students taken from ten public universities throughout Albania, who attended part-time education in the academic year 2011-2012, showed that age the students were respectively: 24 years 6%, 73% 25-39 years, and 50-59 years 3.8%. As noted, the highest percentage of adult students represent (about 76.8%) which means that mainly auditors of part-time system are dominated by adult students. In the framework of obligations for EU membership, Albania among other states, will adjust its educational policies with those of the EU. To achieve balance between work forces more qualified and less skilled, European Commission has set the objective of continuing involvement in the education of 15% of adults 25-64 years of age, until 2020 European Commission, (2011). To realize this objective MAS (Ministry of Education and Sport) has established policies to support adults who decide to engage in various education programs by adding quotes students in Bachelor programs (BA level), as well as Master programs (Scientific and Profesional) and up to Doctoral Schools .

Employees of each profile must be trained further. But many adults are faced with a sense of powerlessness when faced with the necessity of acceptance of new knowledge within the workshops and further training through professional literature or specific courses. Often adults are not very optimistic about their progress in learning. According to Schröder-NAEF

(1997), some of the reasons that motivate a further education related to their desires and needs such as;

- The desire to know better themselves, for further development , to overcome the crisis or new situations ( for example, psychological and pedagogical courses)
- The desire to improve interpersonal relationships , couple relationships , family relationships , between friends and companions , personal skills as a parent to successfully pass the stages of growing children (infancy , childhood , adolescence, school problems , communication issues, etc);
- The desire to know better coordination between forces and social phenomena, for commitment as conscientious citizen in politics , providing the best preconditions to perform important tasks in society;
- The need for planning leisure, to find a biased load balance professional or family, to further develop his interests, to further develop the talents trends , to meet personal curiosity, even up to the end of lifetime.

In a study conducted in Albania by researcher Papa (2013, p. 107-8) main motives that governing the adults to be back in the auditorium, are : " employment " 39.3 % , " personal development " 34 % , " career development" 7.8 % , " the demand of the time " and 5.3 % " social reasons " 5.3 % . In terms of secondary motives according to a descending order are : " further development of knowledge " 21.3 % , " the motivation to find work " 10.3 % , " to feel better in society " 9.8 % , and " to enhance the economic income " with 6.8 % . Other motives are " for more security in the future " , " to recognize new society " , " the profession " , " find another job " , " this branch is my passion " and " to make better work . " While , in terms of motivation to learn , this factor significantly predicted by factors of age , current employment , and enhance students perceptions of learning environments. Besides those mentioned above, we learn not only due to external imperatives, but for the sake of fulfilling the other requirements and professional qualifications that we create for better employment opportunities and improve the quality of our life. In these conditions, adult education acquires a new dimension.

### **Andragogia**

For the first time, *Andragogia* term as the science of adult learning, was used by Knowles. (1980). Adult education is defined as the science and art that helps adults in their learning. It is based on a set of assumptions about how adults can learn, given their psychological features appropriate to

their age (Knowles, 1980, p.43). Andragogical model is based on six assumptions:

- **Concepts of own adult learners.** Research on adult learning have discovered that these kind of students should feel comfortable in the learning environment in order to self-directed and take responsibility for learning .
- **Experience of adult learners.** Adults possess many experiences, which can be used in auditoriums. Lecturers should build their learning process based on the reflections, which take into account the experience and knowledge to give adults the opportunity to use them. Thus, adult learners will assess knowledge or habits that own and through learning activities will create a new meaning for the information.
- **Readiness of adult student for learning.** The adult is willing to learn if and to feel pleasure . This can be used by coaches or instructors choosing teaching methods to make concrete and intentions regarding the future needs of their adult learners.
- **Adults orientation towards learning.** Because adults are oriented towards learning process vital issues , lecturers can use examples from real life or experience of their work to achieve effective learning . Structured learning allows students to use their experiences as input and helps them to acquire new competence faster and therefore be more successful in life.
- **Motivation of adult student for learning.** The uniqueness of adult learners is intrinsic motivation although and why external motivators are present. Increase joy during learning , self-respect and improved quality of life , are strong reason to motivate adults toward learning . It necessary that these reasons to taken into consideration in the selection of teaching methods . Activities that develop the elements of self-respect or sense of accomplishment of a task, make the adult learner to be motivated for a long time.
- An adult should know why he learn. Pedagogical model suggests that students must submit reasons why he should learn something, because it makes learning easier . At the adults, it is even more important. The adult must be aware why should learn something new and what wil benefit from this immediately or in the future ( Forrest III & Peterson , 2006; Knowles , 1975 , 1984 , 1984b , 1989).

### **The main stages of the learning among adult:**

If we analyze all forms of learning, will find that every once distinguished at least seven different factors or elements that are valid not

only for itself learning stages, but also and for the overall educational performance.

1 . **Submission of purpose** : What will learn, where they will be oriented ? At first the question arises , will face uncertainty in the problem.

2 . **Choosing the path of learning** : How to find the answer and to approach the problem ? Decide which procedure and which way of learning , which aids are most suitable for the achievement of knowledge and answering the questions ?

3 . **Preparation and planning** : In which exterior conditions and interior can reach the goal of learning ?

4 . **Accepting new material , providing information , acceptance of new readiness** : It may be oral or written , active or passive , with the observation , by example , byresearch , alone or in a group .

5 . **Processing** : New contents must be critically controlled, compared, then compared with information or with previous observations and to avoid confusion of the moment . And gain new insights.

6. **Memorization** : regulation, establishing comparisons and evaluation .

7. **Product Creation** : Exercise, use, transmission especially towards learning material such as lectures, reports, course assignments, essays, etc. ( Schröder - NAEF , 2008, p 25 ) .

### **Differences between students and adult**

Based on the views of researchers Edneres, (1997) and Döring (1995), between young student learning and adults identify these differences:

- The possibility of linguistic expression, wealth of vocabulary and general knowledge stay at a higher level to adult learners than children;
- Adults learn processed material as well as the children;
- During the repetition of the exercises, equally benefit both adults and children;
- Reducing learning skills found only in the sphere of learning by heart;
- Another difficulty for adults presents match with unfamiliar situations in which they must enter new unrelated information to which it is impossible to apply previous experience;
- Among adults often lack modern teaching techniques, but they can win with adequate training or exercises;
- In preparation tasks in a given time, adults are disadvantaged in relation to children because they are faster, but this is compensated by adults with accuracy in work. The process of learning of adults

learning relies on logical and not mechanical, logical scheme using maps or symbols. In moments when time pressure is uneven, adults give better results;

- In the process of learning adults are self directed, while children need direction;
- Adults often take responsibility reflecting critically;
- Motivation at children is mainly externally, while in adults the motivation is internal rather than external (Edneres, 1997; Döring, 1995).

By analyzing all these differences, we understand that it is wrong to think that children learn better than adults, but certainly in ways of learning has differences. Adults are more interesting for teachers because they ask more questions, seeking answers to personal experience, previous experience in connecting individual facts (Döring, 1995). The ability that have adults who knowingly, to combine their experience with new knowledge, expressed positively in training courses or providing adult pretty good results. As adults and children have different styles of learning, but for adults it is very important to recognize personal style and to use it so independently (Döring,1995).

### **Some features of adult education:**

There are three elements that have a direct importance in the process of teaching and learning to adult learners:

### **Motivation to learn**

Most notably, the adult learner motivation is internal. Researcher Wlodkowski (2008) identified four elements of learning that are culturally associated with :

- a) the creation of inclusion,
- b) development of positive attitudes,
- c) increase understanding and
- d) increasing the competence.

Putting inclusion in classrooms, with adult learners helps them to feel respected and connected with each other , making them conscious for contribution that they bring to their environment. Developing of positive attitudes is associated with desire and need for adult learners to choose relevant topics related to the life situations . They are keen to learn the knowledge that apply to specific contexts . Development of attitudes is also associated with certain values, such as the fact that people should be treated as equals. For adults, learning is challenge and requires commitment from them to increase understanding through experience . Different social environments help them to use the knowledge of which already are back in

new values for them ( Bruhville, 1989) . In these conditions the adult not only add their powers , but as they grow more, so many adult learners, assess learning.

### **Programming of Curriculum**

Beisgen and Kraitman (2003, p 98) have compiled a list of principles on which it should be based makers of adult curricula so that their learning to be successful. They are:

- Provide the right environment
- Opportunity to create
- Encourage ideas
- Provide challenges
- Helping that an adult do not be afraid to fail
- Provide time and resources
- Development of expertise
- Provide positive feedback, constructive
- Encouraging the spirit of learning through experimentation
- Opportunities for group interaction
- Positive Climate
- Appreciation for achievements
- Opportunities for brainstorming
- Assisting to develop patterns of thinking and creating new ideas
- Stimulation of all senses
- Providing the opportunity to display creative work for adults.

### **Learning Organization**

Dunst and Trivette (2009), in their meta-analysis on the methods of adult learning have discovered that some practices are significantly associated with the outcomes of these students.

1. Preliminary presentation of the topic to be taught through quiz, exercises to create a friendly environment and self-instruction;
2. Role plays and simulations;
3. Tasks that require solving everyday problems or practical knowledge
4. Planning activities (student engagement in determining the next steps), providing opinions and group reflection.

Considering what have submitted Dunst and Trivette (2009), teachers of adult learners should use variations in teaching to avoid fatigue. The best way to accomplish this is to include them in concrete activities where the problem methods that will develop their logic (Rogers, 2005). Certainly teaching adult learners should be planned to be developed in a suitable environment, free of conflicts of all kinds (Bruhville, 1989). Taking into account the preference of adults for self-directed learning (Rogers, 2002,

2003), teaching should be arranged in its manner so that the adult himself take responsibility and control for the learning process. In terms of valuation, it have meaning to perform for a specific job realized by an adult. Similarly, in the study of Papa (2013) show that adult students affected in their learning and learning environments, their level of education, perceived appropriateness of curricula which are for more important predictor of factor confidence.

How is perceived by people the word *teaching* ? Most of them connect school learning environments, teaching a course or group, but the meaning of the word is, however, much broader: Learning when supervise any work , draw conclusions, gain practical experience, think, read professional literature, pose questions, uncertainties define, analyze and solve problems, seek answers, process materials, when in truth educational programs of radio and television make comparisons, follow courses, discuss various issues, check and verify the condition of personal knowledge, establish liaison things, provide information or advice regarding the current knowledge or skills, exercise or use theoretical knowledge while working. If you look closely all the situation in which we learn, will understand that learning is an integral part of life and that man learns throughout life.

## **Conclusion**

Today more than ever, is the real expression : " Man is getting old by learning " . This trend dictated by conditions of internationalization of market, entry of Information and Communication Technology, globalization in general and common policies of the EU countries. For these reasons for any adult, is important to check his attitude to the learning and to reach a positive rating. Regardless of whether that we follow courses, seminars, or training programs whole, whether it is set target completion of studies or obtain a diploma, we think in today's time, learning gives life meaning. In addition, through life-long learning we enrich our spiritual side. Only the brain that learns remains capable of delivering results, while he is not involved in learning activities, he loses his abilities and sleepy. As numerous studies show that brain ability largely depends on the possibility to exercise it. Through continuous training maintain the ability to learn until third age, and with this, and the ability to overcome the problems of daily life .The fear in learning abilities of adults, compared with children is unfounded. Really all depends on what we with own ability would learn later. Recognition of personal learning styles helps us to facilitate the learning process. During this process, help provide rational methods of learning and independent teaching, scientific programming curricula that are based on the experience of adults and aimed at further improving of their competencies, and the use of strategies in accordance with adulthood, to achieve the intended objectives.



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