



Rethinking Adult Education for Development
Premislek o izobraževanju odraslih in razvoju

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Accompanying Letter

Dear colleague,

Within the research programme of the Educational Research Institute at the University of Ljubljana we deal, among other things concerning education, also with questions of reconception of adult education and with theoretical questions of adult education (andragogy). Although proceeding from our situation the world's dimension of the theme must be taken into account, the dimension which is connected with the assertion of the principle of permanence of education and with the vision of "learning society".

We see number of reasons for our engagement in this type of research, one of the most important being perhaps the fact that the last few decades have been marked by a rapid development of adult education worldwide, a process in which it has been confronted with the traditional concepts and models. As it has developed in different directions, a variety of attitudes, concepts and even terms defining adult education both as a whole and its constitutional parts and areas have emerged.

For this reason we have decided to make a request on the most distinguished professionals engaged in adult education worldwide to briefly outline their views and understanding of some questions concerning adult education. Thus we have designed a short questionnaire, which we hope you would care to answer as you have been included, due to the outstanding place you hold in adult education, into our representative sample.

The answers we hope to receive will enable us to make comparisons in which you may also be interested. We intend to publish them in a study under the title "Outstanding Professionals on Adult Education" so as to make them known to a wide circle of professionals and students, in this country and, hopefully, internationally as well. The information gathered in such a way cannot possibly be collected by any other method, not even through slow and meticulous study of written sources.

We hope will find our purpose worthwhile and will be willing to spend some of your valuable time and energy on answering our questions. We would greatly appreciate your cooperation as it is of great importance for the success of our research.

With best wishes,

Zoran Jelenc
Head of adult educational research
Educational Research Institute of
University of Ljubljana

Questionnaire

Outstanding Professionals on Adult Education

1. HOW DO YOU UNDERSTAND ADULT EDUCATION TODAY?

What do you understand under the term adult education? Which areas does it comprise? Does adult education exist as a uniform system?

2. WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ADULT EDUCATION ("ANDRAGOGICS" AND EDUCATION OF CHILDREN/ YOUTH (PEDAGOGICS)?

Is it possible to speak about a special philosophy and theory of adult education as compared to the philosophy and theory of education for children and youth? If yes, what factors constitute the basis for the autonomy of adult education and its theory (andragogics)? Are the two interlinked and complementary in your country? Are they rivals which diverge?

3. HAVE THE PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICE OF CONTEMPORARY ADULT EDUCATION CHANGED SO SIGNIFICANTLY THAT ITS BASIC CONCEPTS NEED REDEFINING?

If yes, what are the reasons that call for this? What are the basic and propulsive elements of the new concept to emerge? How do you see the role of adult school and out-of-school education or formal and non-formal education within the new concept of adult education?

4. WHAT PLACE DOES ADULT EDUCATION HAVE OR SHOULD HAVE IN THE SOCIETY?

In your country? On the global scale?

5. TO WHAT EXTENT IS ADULT EDUCATION A MATTER OF AN INDIVIDUAL'S PERSONAL INTEREST? TO WHAT EXTENT IS IT A RESPONSIBILITY OF ENTERPRISES AND ORGANIZATIONS, COMMUNITIES OR THE STATE?

What is your personal view? What is – if formulated – the official (education) policy of your country?

6. WHICH IDEA OR GOAL DO YOU FIND MOST WORTHWHILE PURSUING IN ADULT EDUCATION?

What have you done professionally to realize this idea?

We are aware that the questions we have asked are very broad and of a general nature. What we are interested in is your personal attitude towards them. Please state it briefly and concisely; the answers should be contained on two to four typed pages. You can use English, French, Russian, German, Spanish or your mother tongue if this should be easier.

We are asking you for the following personal data (only to verify if our data is correct and for identification):

1. Name: _____
2. Institution where you are working: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____
3. Position at work: _____
4. Profession: _____
The field of your study: _____
The present work area: _____
Date: _____ Signature: _____

The research group:

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1.

A. Adult education is an important worldwide movement that is gaining increasing momentum as the pace of change accelerates and human beings become more aware of their own need to keep abreast with change throughout their life. Adult education is an intentional effort made which engages an adult in a learning process which results in any change ranging from personal awareness or perception to professional skill, attitude or value.

B. Adult education is comprised of the flexible and dynamic interaction of the elements of a multidimensional social system including but not limited to: 1) Subject matter – content/ program; 2) Personnel – planners/teachers/learners; 3) Geographical – international/national/regional/state/local; 4) Organizational – societal/institutional/individual; 5) Methodological – format/small and large group techniques/ /devices/media; 6) Contextual – Work/education/personal/professional/family/purpose/expectations/setting/motivations; and 7) Building Blocks – Beliefs and notions about adults, perceptions on qualities of effective teachers, phases and sequences of the learning process, teaching tips and learning techniques, implementing the prepared plan.

C. Adult education as a multidimensional social system is uniform only in its diversity, but not sameness.

2.

It is a changing relationship. During the first quarter of this century, the techniques used in the education of children and youth were looked to for clues as to the most appropriate techniques which needed to be used to conduct adult education. Then in 1926, Edward C. Lindeman published *The Meaning of Adult Education*, which started adult educators to thinking that adults should be taught differently than children, and that is still a very influential book. By 1950, Malcolm S. Knowles identified and articulated thirteen practical principles of adult teaching which, by the mid-1970's, grew from his own experimentation as well as Lindeman's and others' influence, into a popularization of andragogy/self-directed learning in the USA. Accompanying this movement has been the invention of new and uniquely adult learning techniques which take advantage of adults' experience as resources for their own and others' learning. These new techniques have also sparked the interest of children/youth educators into experimenting with using and adapting these techni-

ques to improve their teaching, as well as helping to improve the learning of the children and youth with whom they work.

A. Yes, in my opinion there is. However, adult educators in our country are divided on this issue.

B. The wide range of definitions of adulthood currently include: Chronological age – culturally determined variously by a particular group, nation, region or society; Role Responsibilities – such adult roles as spouse, parent, worker, wage earner, professional or other; Psychological Maturity – such as sustained attention on a given topic as well as autonomy in thought, spirit and action; Exemplary Models – of a personal integrity standard considered important by a culture or nation; A Complete Human Being – criteria as determined by some of the religions of the world; and A Process of Striving Toward Growth and Fulfillment – not a condition.

Some, if not all of these attempts at differentiating adults from children would stand up under scrutiny. Thus, even if it is assumed that the ability to learn is internal to each person, what is sought to be accomplished in adult education – as some means for helping the above take place – constitutes some basis for the autonomy of adult education and its theory (andragogics) because it is different from what is presently sought in the education of youth and children. Furthermore, adult education represents a universal need, not just a way to remove some deficiency. It is designed to meet the needs of all adult citizens, not just the illiterate or unfortunate, nor is it sort of a philanthropic benefit to be given to the underprivileged. It does not mean merely extending more of the same existing patterns of education to an older group that the privileged already enjoy, but it does mean designing some new patterns of learning experiences uniquely suited to meet the needs of this older group. The character of the ideas are consequently not quantitative and static, but rather qualitatively new, innovative and carries new dimensions in learning. Adult education insists on its being a right, a normal expectancy, not a charity thought of in naively instrumental terms of giving neglected learners something which other people have acquired in the normal course of experience. Adult education proposes to do something for and with adults which can not or has not to date been achieved by conventional education. It emphasizes acquired knowledge rather than the learning process, life coping skills instead of disciplinary content, learner-centered knowledge rather than socially- or institutionally-centered knowledge, learner relevant goals instead of abstract goals, and curriculum flexibility in response to changing environmental conditions rather than curriculum rigidity.

C. If they are linked, it is accidental rather than intentional.

D. The rivalry and divergence comes mostly at the points of: Some saying that adults learn no differently, and hence need to be taught no differently than children and youth; and, others who are unaware that they give only lip service to the idea that

adults do learn differently than children and youth, but teach them the same because they don't have the slightest notion of how to do it.

3.

It has been the continues changing, beginning about two decades ago. The major keystone has been focused on a shift from emphasis on teaching adults toward an emphasis on helping adults learn—from teaching to learning.

A. Two major publications in the early 1970's and their convergence made the impact which is still being felt: Allen Tough's *The Adults' Learning Projects* and Malcolm S. Knowles' *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: Andragogy vs. Pedagogy*. Tough's emphasized adults spend much more time learning than we had thought; sixty-eight percent of adults' learning is self-planned; ninety-eight percent is not for credit. There are identifiable steps adults go through when learning without a teacher. Knowles emphasized: an articulation of contrasting the art and science of helping adults learn (andragogy) and the art and science of teaching children (pedagogy); major assumptions about adult learners, with the most important one being that as human beings mature their self-concept has the increasing capacity, desire, willingness, ability and motivation to be self-directing; to capitalize on that emerging self-direction means, and results in, maximizing the learning. Thus, teachers need be present and available to undergird, foster and help learners learn. Learning is always in the learner's control. Consequently, no one can teach anyone anything.

B. When people, (teachers and learners) began to become aware of the fact that in education it is the learner that acquires and internalizes the material and not that it is just "material which is covered", than learning had to be considered as a process for engaging the whole adult human being in a learning experience and not just as a truckload of information to be dumped which turned adults off by making them feel they were being treated as children or just things.

C. The role of both needs to be congruent with all the meaning of how adults learn, no matter the setting, even including the fact that we live in a world where there are givens (or laws, rules, restrictions) of one kind or another. Let it not be said by word or deed: This is the way adults learn, but we cannot practice that here. Put adult education principles (andragogics) into practice wherever adult education is being conducted or forget it entirely.

4.

Adult education is and should be employed to accomplish something (growth, learning, development, goals) which can be reached in no other way. Its primary aim is to be goal striving for adult learning. Let the society benefit because adults have learned something of importance and value.

A. If we in the USA ever mustered the will to eliminate illiteracy in our country, adult education could well be used as the means to get this implemented. But it is difficult for a nation whose adult education movement grew up as individual episodic responses to learning needs which presented themselves in various ways, to shift into viewing adult education as a systematic instrument of social policy to be used by the government for the development of the nation.

B. Adult education could and should be used to help people all over the world to solve many of their problems. It is not being as beneficial presently because too many in national and leadership positions do not understand andragogics--treating adults as the adults they really are,, with all the accompanying richness of meaning. Thus, by treating adults as less than they are, many problems go unsolved, poverty is perpetuated, learning is trivialized, disrespect is laid upon people. Use andragogics in teaching (or helping maturing human beings learn), and one sees the blossoming forth of many possibilities in human beings.

5.

A. To a large extent adult education is dependent on this, but this interest must be nurtured and not just left to its own accidental devices.

B. Increasingly adult education is being viewed as a cooperative venture with all parties investing, cooperating and benefiting. With a shrinking workforce as well as one less competent in the basic employability skills needed for the nineties, it will take every sector of society and the individual to accomplish this formidable task. Andragogics must be used fully to reach the goal.

C. Commitment to pedagogics as the theory for teaching everybody--treat adults as children and thus keep them dependent. This is hardly a conscious position, but it is present because most people in charge either are not connected with education or they do not understand the learning process for adults (andragogics). Most of them were raised educationally on pedagogics and thus that's the way they think--and naturally would think that way unless someone catches a vision and provides for their reorientation to andragogics.

6.

Developing within maturing human beings the capacity, desire motivation, and competence for carrying on their own self-directed, contractual, lifelong learning, to help them accomplish their life goals and professional goals.

A.

- Teach and practice andragogics in all my courses at the University of Missouri;
- Foundations of Adult Education;
- Foundations of Adult Basic Education;

- Improvement of Instruction in Adult Education;
- Leadership in Adult Education;
- Learning How to Learn: Adult Style;
- Staff development in Adult Education;
- Problems in Adult Education;
- Using Learning Contracts;
- Internship in Adult Education;
- Help my 100 active Masters' Degree students and my 30 active Doctoral students practice self-directed learning (andragogics) in their degree program.
- Teach courses in andragogics at:
 - Kansas State University;
 - Federal University at Belem, Para, Brazil;
- Research and publish articles in Adult Learning (Andragogics),
- Writing a book on andragogics;
- Conduct adult basic education workshop for certification in Missouri, USA;
- Work with State Department of Education on new adult basic education certification standards.
- Work with professors of adult education to improve the theory and practice of adult education.
- Present papers and workshop on andragogics at professional development conference in adult education.