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PREPARATION OF BECOMING TEACHERS OF AGRICULTURE FOR FILLING THE PART OF AN ADULT EDUCATOR

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Key words: adult education, andragogy, adult educator, teacher training, vocational trainer.

CONCLUSIONS

- All becoming teachers would need knowledge on adult education in order to better understand his own lifelong learning.
- If adult education were integrated into university education of BSc or MSc level, extension courses for practicing teachers would not lose their importance, but on the contrary, those would be arranged at an upper level.
- Adult education should be changed to competence based education, as the competent andragogical knowledge can hide the possibility of some extra profit.
- Teachers and trainers in vocational education, who are engineers and economists etc. at the same time, would mean potentially the best qualified adult educators, whose teaching competences should only be completed with andragogical competences. They are appropriate and can be let in on the task, but they are not used up.

ABSTRACT

In the age of Lifelong and Life wide Learning adult education has been appreciated in vocational education. Educating adults needs special knowledge and competences, which most teachers acting in adult education, do not possess. Do extension courses solve the problem of preparation of practicing teachers for filling the part of an adult educator? *Final aim* of the research is to develop and test an adequate and effective curriculum for andragogy in teacher training. Theoretical and historical analysis, analysis of EU documents, investigation via questionnaires and group interviews were carried out at the Institute of Human Sciences, Languages and Teacher Training among students about their needs and evaluation regarding pedagogy of adult

education, who chose adult education as an optional subject in teacher training and in a control group. *According to the findings* there is an urgent demand among becoming teachers for being prepared for filling the part of an adult educator. That preparation should be built up on the pedagogical basis of teacher training.

INTRODUCTION: EVENTS PRECEDING AND LEADING TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Since 2000 a lot of documents of the European Union have emerged in the context of Lifelong and Life wide Learning, which have been forcing vocational training schools, teachers, trainers and teacher training to act in a new way (see e.g. Europass and the European Qualifi-

cation Framework). Increasing chances for European mobility and unemployment of teachers and trainers (sometimes also among carrier starters) make younger and older adults work out safe survival strategies in a creative way. Some of them make corrections in their carrier or turn towards new roles of teachers and trainers e.g. in connection with e-learning. In Hungary a law of adult education (Nr. 101) has been accepted in 2001, which prescribes pedagogical or andragogical qualification for leading persons responsible for educational program of institutions of adult education. A new academic specialization (Andragogy) was established and accredited by the Hungarian Accreditation Committee. All these changes appreciated adult education especially in vocational education. These new challenges led to draw up the following research questions:

1. Does the pedagogical knowledge need to be completed by some andragogical knowledge?
2. Do extension courses solve the problem of preparation of practicing teachers and vocational trainers for filling the part of an adult educator?
3. To what extent can the up-to-date theories and methods of adult education come across in the Hungarian practise?
4. Can a curriculum of an andragogical subject be elaborated, which would be effectual for becoming teachers and trainers?
5. What kinds of opinions is formed by the becoming teachers and trainers on content and importance of knowledge and competences in adult education?

MATERIAL AND METHODS

In order to answer the research questions the following documents of EU and Hungary have been analysed theoretically and historically:

- Memorandum on lifelong learning (2000).
- Education and training 2010 work programme (2002).
- Council of the ministers of education of states: measurable objectives (2003).
- National conference on realisation of the work programme Education and training 2010 (2004).
- Interim report on Education and training 2010 (2004).
- Interim report on the Hungarian Ministry of Education to Council and Committee on realisation of the work programme Education and Training in Hungary (2005).
- Declaration of Copenhagen (2002).
- Declaration of Maastricht (2004).
- European Qualification Framework (2005-2006).

Investigations via questionnaires and group interviews were carried out at the Institute of Human Sciences, Languages and Teacher Training among students as follows: A few years ago the author initiated to establish a new optional university subject, named 'Pedagogy of adult education' for becoming teachers of agriculture and vocational trainers studying at the Institute of Teacher Training (at present it belongs to the Institute of Human Sciences, Languages and Teacher Training) of Szent István University. She had a free hand in planning the curriculum of the subject for 15 lessons (1 lesson/week). The subject can be chosen after finishing basic courses in pedagogy. The responsible educator, who developed the curriculum of the subject for becoming teachers, has many-year experience in adult education and in research of adult education. Students of 3 different semesters were asked about their needs and evaluation regarding pedagogy of adult education, who chose

the subject optionally in teacher training and in a control group. A sample of 31 students having participated in the course (all of them were full time students in teacher training) and a control group of 149 students (consisting of 57 full time students in teacher training and 92 corresponding students in education of vocational trainers) were measured with 3 different kinds of questionnaires and group interviews were organised at the end of courses on adult education. During the interviews experiences on the course and on lessons, the students visited at adult education institutions as homework during the course, were discussed. *Theoretical framework* of methodology of the research and also of planning and implementing the courses was a new epistemology namely *constructivism*. It comes from California (from *Ernst von Glasersfeld*) and from Germany (among others from *Horst Siebert*, *Xaver Fiederle*), and it goes back to the psychologist *Piaget* (4). Instead of detailing that theory, this paper wants to introduce only some of its consequences on education, which can be applied also in teaching adults. The reason for that is that there is nothing more practical than a good theory, because a good theory can help to understand and to innovate practice. One of the „hot topics” of constructivism which are relevant to teaching is that one’s brain does not mirror the reality as it really exists, but the brain builds up (or in an other word constructs) its own reality or ideas about the world, teaching and everything. That process is based on life experience. The primary criteria for constructing those ideas are not the objectivity or truth of an idea, but its *viability*, namely its fitting into the person’s previous ideas (constructs), into the story of his/her life. The aim of teaching adults in a constructivistic way is *to widen the repertory of possibilities*

in thinking and acting. Instructional interaction among adults is usually not possible, unless they need it. The so called „outside-control attitude” is more widespread among elderly people in Hungary than in western countries (6). For young people with „inside control attitude” learning is not determined by teaching, but rather by cognitional structures of the learner’s mind (2). These structures are in connection with biographical experiences and preconceptions (prejudices). Each individual is an operationally closed system, so we do not know exactly what others really think of teaching adults. *Niklas Luhmann* calls it „the normality of misunderstanding” (2). In spite of this people need communication for their survival, and they can make intersubjective agreements - though sometimes those are just supposedly intersubjective agreements. The present conference makes it also possible for participants to compare and modify their constructs on human resource management. Informing or communicating on teaching adults means: offering the opportunity for the participants to make connections (that is compatibility) between different constructs on teaching, that is offering the opportunity for them to build more structured, more complex and better informed „mind maps” than they had before the course. Teaching and learning on adult education were realised in sharing previous knowledge and experience. Leader of the course (or the adult educator in adult education) is one among others (though he/she is an expert) who can present well-informed constructs to the others. Participants were stimulated to find connections (or contradictions) among their previous knowledge and the new contents of the course. Investigation of subjective views fits well into the goals of constructivistic education and

constructivistic research. Each participating student was asked to fill in a questionnaire, where he/she had to answer 19 intensity questions by choosing from '1'-'5' (Chooseable scores were 5: very much, 4: much, 3: middling, 2: a bit, 1: not at all). Some of the questions were:

- Have you added much to your knowledge?
 - Can you apply what you have learnt here?
 - Did you like the behaviour of educator?
 - Did you like it here?
- (See the Findings).

Results of researches on the content of profession of pedagogue and teacher training were taken into consideration as well (see Zrinsky).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Some findings of analysis of EU documents

Measurable future objectives of the European Union (among others increasing the number of participants in adult education) reinforces the importance of adult education, which needs increasing number of competent adult educators especially in vocational training in the con-

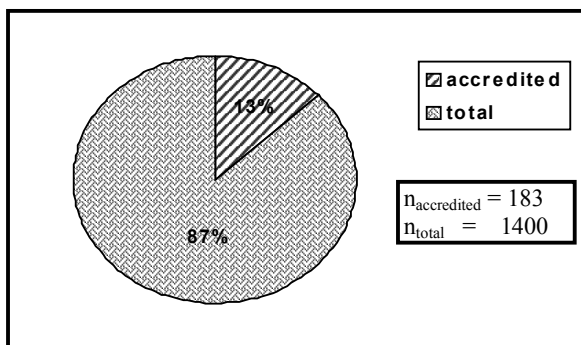
text of lifelong learning. Fulfilling that objective needs education and training of adult educators of high quality, who possess special competences. The roles of the pedagogue and adult educator have to be clearly distinguished, and the latter must not mean only the imparters of knowledge. Learning by doing must be an important and real objective of adult education. Only those working acts will create economic values, which involve learning as well at the same time. Increasing European mobility needs the consideration of principles of quality, transparency and knowledge of prior experiential learning.

From findings of analysis of official Hungarian documents of adult education

Hungarian statistical data of institutions of adult education (www.om.hu) show, that a quite large percentage (13%) of total number of vocational training schools has already made accredited itself as institutions of adult education as well (Figure 1). That number can make us optimistic, but it urges solving of the problem of educating and training adult educators.

Figure 1

Percentage of accredited vocational training schools related to total number of vocational schools in Hungary



Some results of investigations with questionnaires and group interviews

Results presented in Figures 2-6. conform the necessity of integration of adult education into the curriculum of training of teachers in agriculture and of vocational trainers. After the course feedbacks from 31 anonymous students have been analysed on the basis of an-

swers of 19 intensity and 3 essay questions. Average of the given scores was 4.32, scatter was 0.41. Most of the students proposed to increase the number of lessons or/and the importance of the subject. During the group interviews, the students reported that andragogy and andrology are often mixed up in the common knowledge.

Figure 2

Experiences in adult education before optional choosing the subject „Pedagogy of adult education”

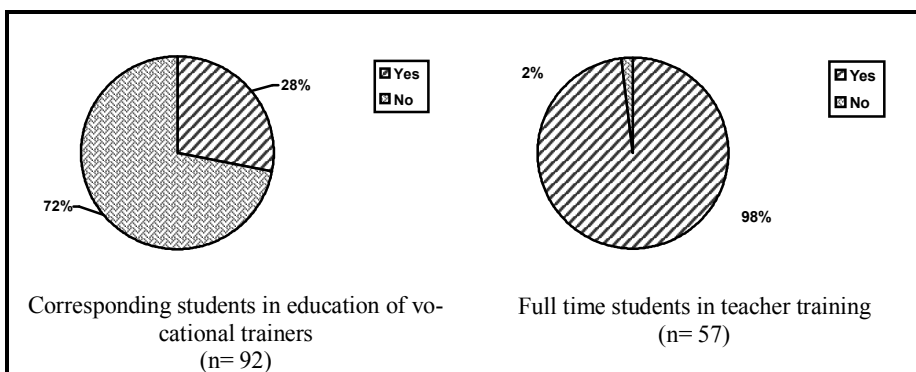


Figure 3

Would you say Yes, if you were asked to fill the part of an adult educator after getting your degree?

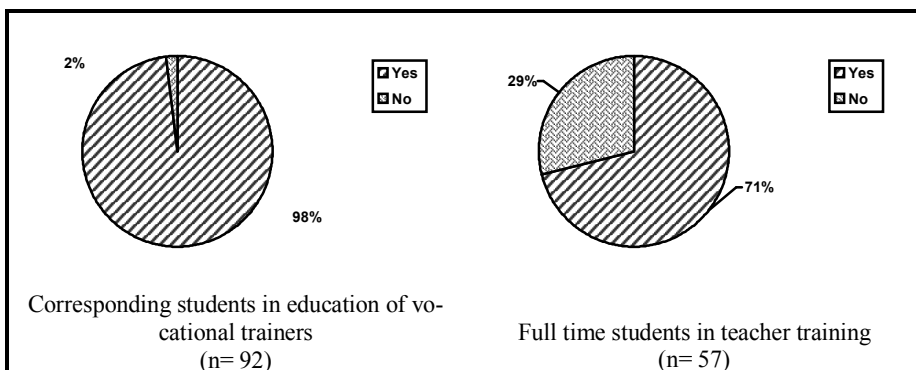


Figure 4

Should knowledge on adult education be the part of pedagogical knowledge?

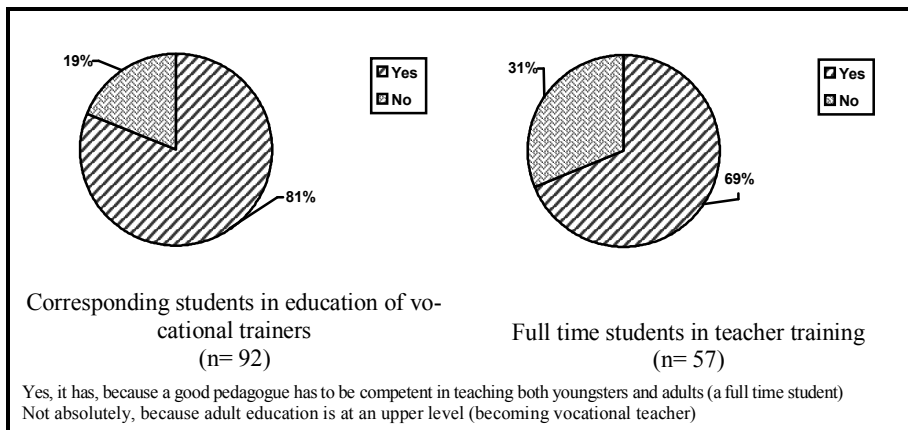


Figure 5

Would you like to study on adult education integrated into your studies?

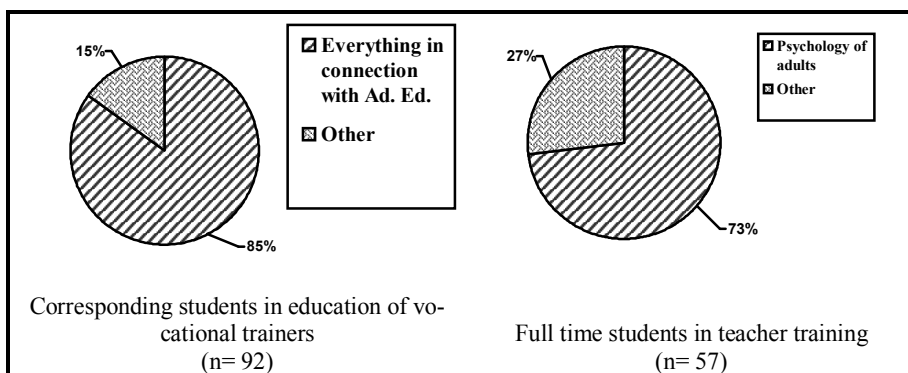
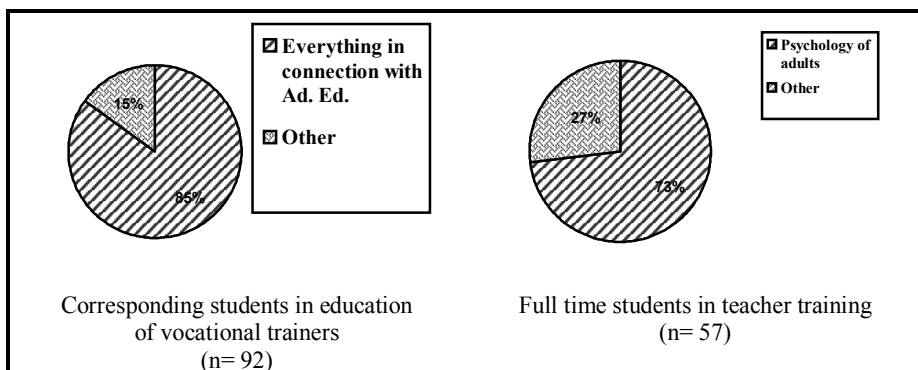


Figure 6

What would you like to study in the frame of the subject „Pedagogy of adult education“?



The main points of Didactics of adult education could be:

- Characteristics of adults.
- Characteristics of adult learning and motivations of adults.
- Learning characteristics in different target groups.

- Preparation for self-directed learning (e-learning).
- Reflective learning.
- Roles and competences of adult educators.
- Special methods in adult education.

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