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ADULT DIDACTICS – COMPONENT OF ANDRAGOGY: PECULIARITIES AND BASIC CATEGORIES

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At the stage of rapid development of science and market of educational services for adults, a relatively new direction in education was formed - andragogy (pedagogy of adults).

In the present time, andragogy occupies a place in the structure of education sciences as an independent category, possessing at the same time its own scientific apparatus, research methods, scientific approaches and principles. In this article, an attempt was made to substantiate the definition of basic concepts and categories of adult teaching: subject, tasks, functions. Special attention is paid to the principles of adult learning: priority of independent education, reliance on personal experience, individualization of learning, contextuality of learning, reliance on individual needs, considering them as motives and sources of designing the outcomes of education.

At the same time, adult learning is considered within the framework of the following characteristics: andragogic self-reflexivity, decentralization of andragogic approach, deconstruction/reconstruction of andragogic theory, contextualization of adult learning and education.

Keywords: *andragogy, teaching of adults, self-training, learning and education of adults.*

DIDACTICA ADULȚILOR – COMPONENTĂ A ANDRAGOGIEI: PARTICULARITĂȚI ȘI CATEGORIILE DE BAZĂ

În stadiul de dezvoltare rapidă a științei și a pieței serviciilor educaționale pentru adulți, s-a format o direcție relativ nouă în educație - andragogia (pedagogia adulților).

În prezent, andragogia ocupă un loc în structura științelor educației ca categorie independentă, având în același timp propriul aparat științific, metode de cercetare, abordări științifice și principii. Acest articol încearcă să fundamenteze și să definească conceptele și categoriile de bază ale didacticii adulților: subiect, sarcini, funcții. O atenție deosebită este acordată principiilor învățării adulților: prioritate a învățării independente, încredere pe experiența personală, individualizarea învățării, contextul învățării, dependența de nevoile individuale, considerându-le motive și surse pentru proiectarea rezultatelor învățării.

În acest moment, învățarea adulților este considerată în cadrul următoarelor caracteristici: autoreflexivitate andragogică, decentralizarea demersului andragogic de construcție/ reconstrucție a teoriei andragogice, contextualizarea învățării și educației adulților.

Cuvinte-cheie: *andragogie, didactics of adults, autoformare, învățarea și educația adulților.*

Introduction

The term ,,didactics” (from the Greek *didacticos* – the one who teaches and *didasko* – the one who studies) is a general scientific term for pedagogy in general, and for andragogy in particular. This term is also used to designate and characterize the general theory of learning/the theoretical foundations of learning. In this context, ,,adult didactics” includes the theoretical foundations of adult learning.

The transfer of theoretical provisions of general didactics to adult didactics is legitimate, but also specific due to the pedagogical, psychological and didactic peculiarities of adult education. The need to single out ,,didactics of adults” within the framework of andragogy is due to the need to develop the theoretical foundations of adult education and distinguish between the theory and practice of adult education; it is adult didactics that includes the substantiation of principles, content, strategies and methods of teaching, learning outcomes, identifying the peculiarities and possibilities of adult learning, identifying means and psychological and pedagogical conditions of learning.

At this stage in the development of andragogy, the emphasis is made on promoting a competent approach, motivating adults to learn, interactive learning and self-learning.

Self-learning/self-education we attribute to one of the priority aspects of adult learning. At the same time, the subject of adult didactics is not only the process of their learning, but also the holistic process of intellectual influence on an adult, on the development of his/her mental abilities. In this regard, we consider adult didactics both as a conditionally independent category and as an integrated category of andragogy, which forms the basis of adult learning and education.

Basic Concepts and Categories of Adult Didactics

The majority of experts dealing with the problem of adult education claims that the scientific-categorial apparatus of adult didactics, as well as of andragogy in general, does not have a clear theoretical basis. Moreover, many of them do not distinguish adult didactics as a separate component of andragogy.

In our opinion, the subject of *andragogy* is the theory and process of *adult learning and education*, and the subject of adult didactics is the theory and process of adult learning, the second one being a part of the first.

This approach allows us to consider the problems of adult education in unity with the problems of education, but if necessary, they can be considered as a priority, in this case it concerns learning.

Thus, andragogy is part of the structure of education sciences which has as its object of study the specifics of adult learning and education, explained and interpreted through a specific methodology, ordered and regulated by a specific normativity, and the adult didactics is a component part of the structure of andragogy.

The specified definitions do not ensure the full understanding of the essence of andragogy as a science. To understand the language of science, it is necessary to know its categories. The category (from the Greek: *kategoria* – message, property) is a scientific notion, which reflects the most of properties, attributes and relationships of a phenomenon of reality.

- *Development* – the process of qualitative and quantitative changes in an organism, psyche, emotional, intellectual, spiritual sphere, determined by the influence of external factors (nature, society, education, joint activity), internal factors (physiological premises, personality's activism carried out in an activity) and unconditional factors (objective and subjective influence of the environment).
- *Training* – the process of a human personality's becoming as a result of the objective influence of heredity, environment, education and own activism (self-education).
- *Socialization* – the process of integrating an individual into a society; the assimilation by a person (human) of values, needs, orientations, behavior patterns, characteristics of society, community, a concrete social group through the reproduction of relationships and social experience.
- *Education:*

- the totality of training/development influences of all social institutions, which ensure the transmission of social-valoric experience, moral values and non-values from one generation to another;
- the process teleologically oriented on personality's training under the conditions of a specially organized education system that ensures interaction between the educator and the learner;
- the educational activity organized for the purpose of training specific qualities, attitudes, behaviors of a human;
- the psychosocial activity based on valorization of internal psychological requirements, depending on external social requirements [5, p. 18].

- *Learning:*

- As a system – the unity of study programs and education standards, the network of educational institutions and managerial structures.
- As a process – training/development of competencs, learning experiences and practical activity within formal and non-formal education.
- As a result – the achieved level of competences and learning experiences.

- *Instruction* – the organized process of teaching-learning-evaluation as a unitary construct.
- *Educational process* – the interaction specially organized and carried out over time between the educator and the learner within an educational system and oriented towards achieving predetermined objectives.
- *Learning process* – represents the main subsystem of educational system specialized in the designing and realization of efficient and coherent general pedagogical objectives that can be operationalized at the level of didactic/educational activities [5, p. 27].

These are the basic categories of general pedagogy that are also characteristic for andragogy. Andragogy also includes another system of categories: methodology, technology, didactic strategies, content, curriculum, methods, procedures, etc. The foundation of epistemological status of andragogy and, in particular, adult didactics cannot be complete without a conceptual approach to the influence of postmodernity on this science. The analysis of development trends of andragogy from the perspective of post-modernity attests to various discussions regarding the identification of postmodernity's essence with reference to the education sciences and especially with reference to andragogy:

- the andragogic launch of curriculum as a fundamental category of adult education;
- the functioning and interconnection of several learning and adult education paradigms;
- the technologization of process of adult learning and education;
- the paradigmatic, psychocultural and sociocultural approach to adult learning and education.

The perspectives of postmodernity, in S. Cristea's view, relate to the following:

a) *rationality*, which ensures the conceptual and methodological stability of adult learning and education as an expression of the epistemic maturity of the discourse specific to andragogy;

b) *multiplicity*, which allows the further, intensive and extensive development of andragogy, corresponding to the social and professional expansions of the study object specific to andragogy - the learning and education of adults.

Postmodernity represents a simultaneous process of diversification and unification of social and, especially, educational values. This process involves promoting the values of education centered on the learner, opportunities and participation in community and professional life, establishing democracy, freedom in communication and the creative process. Postmodernity implies a flexible model, focused on interconnections between the psychological, social and professional dimensions of adult education. Therefore, postmodern andragogy engages a new epistemological perspective with the following characteristics:

1) *Pedagogical Self-Reflexivity*

It envisages the renovation of every part of adult learning and education from the perspective of necessary interaction between the scientific approach and the practical/methodological approach. It implies the self-improvement of theoretical discourse, the consolidation of scientific status, including through the rigorous re-examination and pragmatic valorization of the rationality of andragogy.

2) *Decentralization of Andragogic Approach*

It considers the trainer's exit from traditional clichés of adult learning and education. It involves the identification of interculturality resources - existing in an open andragogic and social context - and their promotion at the level of adult education system and process.

3) *Deconstruction/Reconstruction of Andragogic Theory*

It aims at the retroactive approach of classical andragogic foundations in order to deeply analyze the education and training of adults in an axiomatic and historical sense, in the perspective of new interpretations, valorizations, theses, antitheses and syntheses. Updating some fundamental pedagogical approaches by revising them from a postmodern perspective. In this sense, authors like J. Dewey, L.S. Vygotsky and R.W. Tyler can be reconsidered as representatives who founded the curriculum paradigm as an expression of postmodern pedagogy, including that of adult learning and education - andragogy.

4) *Non-Universalization of Andragogic Praxeology*

It aims to contest any type of authoritarian didactics, dictated by society or promoted by the trainer, through the realization of a democratic, open education oriented towards creativity and the realization of learner's needs.

5) *Permanent Andragogic Openness Depending on Context*

It considers the re(organization) of an adult learning and education system open to non-formal education/training institutions, to any social institution (economic, sportive, cultural, religious, artistic, etc. [1, p. 120].

Functions of Adult Didactics

The functions of adult didactics consist, firstly, in the study of theoretical problems, analysis and generalization of accumulated experience, secondly, in the introduction of theoretical developments in the content, organizational forms, means and methods of adult education, thirdly, in predicting the directions of development of adult learning theory and practice, fourthly, in personal competences and behaviors.

Principles of Adult Learning and Education

The fundamental principles that should guide the organization of adult education are developed by scientists and refined by practitioners. This concerns the preliminary requirements for the organization and conduct of the cognitive process, the use of modern trends in the learning process - humanistic, democratic, personality-oriented, etc.

It is necessary to distinguish between general didactic principles applied in all forms of education, regardless of the contingent's age characteristics, and didactic principles of adult education. The latters act in close relationship with general didactic principles based on consciousness and activity, visibility, systematicity and consistency, firmness, scientific character, accessibility, connection between theory and practice.

S. I. Zmeev relates to the andragogical principles of teaching the following [7, p. 92-93]:

- *priority of self-learning* as the main type of educational work for adults. This implies that not only the development of educational material should be independent, but also the organization, planning and implementation of the educational and cognitive process;

- *principle of joint activity* of the learner with the andragogue and other learners in planning, implementing and evaluating the learning process. This does not contradict the previous principle, since it is impossible to provide fully effective training without the participation of a teacher-andragogue or ignoring the experience of learners;

- *principle of relying on learner's experience.* According to this principle, the life (everyday, social, professional) experience of an adult is used as one of the sources of learning both for himself/herself and his/her fellow learners. The possibility of a new comprehension of the trained competences is assumed;

- *Individualization of Learning.* In accordance with this principle, each learner, together with the andragogue, and in some cases with other participants in the educational process, creates an individual training program focused on specific educational needs, experience, level of training, psychophysiological and cognitive characteristics. It is supposed to organize the training in the most comfortable conditions, style, tempo, etc. All this taken together initially aimes at achieving a certain level of training for all learners;

- *principle of learning contextuality,* on the one hand, pursues the goals, specific, vital for the learner, focused on the fulfillment of social roles or personal development, and on the other hand, it is built taking into account the professional, social, everyday activities of an adult personality and its spatial, temporal, professional, household factors (conditions). No matter how significant learning is for an adult, it is an additional, auxiliary activity;

- *principle of actualization of learning outcomes* involves the immediate application of the acquired knowledge and skills by learners in practice. This means the maximum practical orientation of learning;

- *principle of learning eclecticity* gives the learner a certain freedom in choosing the goals, content, forms, methods, sources, means, terms, time, place of learning. At the same time, an adult takes responsibility for learning outcomes, which positively affects the effectiveness of learning;

- *principle of developing educational needs* focuses on the fact that, firstly, the assessment of learning outcomes is carried out by identifying the real degree of mastering the educational material and determining those concepts, without mastering which it is impossible to achieve the set learning goal, and secondly, that the learning process and the formation of new educational needs of learners are specified after the achievement of the previous learning goal.

The principles of learning predetermine not only the effectiveness of a particular educational process, but also the educational perspective for the adult learner participating in it. They allow you to avoid negative moments and failures in the learning process, which in the future can provoke a refusal from learning.

Many adult learning experts demonstrate a slightly different approach when defining the andragogical principles. Thus, B. Sansier [*Apud* 6, 3, 4], formulating the principles of adult education, only partially develops and corrects the didactic principles of pedagogy:

- *main responsibility for learning lies with learner himself/herself* as a voluntary subject of education, which leads to a redistribution of roles, responsibilities and views of adults and educators. A voluntary learner has a certain amount of knowledge and experience. For more successful performance of the established functions and especially when changing the nature of work, there may appear a need for new knowledge and competences;

- *personal or professional needs stimulate specialist's desire to learn.* The learner's baggage contains previously acquired knowledge, experience and understanding of what competences he/she has and what he/she lacks, and the andragogue should be ready to help form the latter competences. Therefore, a more active role of adults requires them to participate in the processes of planning the nature and methodology of lifelong learning;

- *it is necessary to apply various forms of lifelong learning.* The most common forms of formal education are used more often (in the classroom, as well as participation in professional conferences and symposiums). Along with this, informal activities are useful - reading professional literature, consultations, speaking at staff meetings;

- *changing conditions under which continuation of adult learning is supposed to require development and approval of new forms of recognition and encouragement.* The reward for an ordinary student is a diploma and the opportunity to get a job. As for the forms of encouragement for adult learners, they include the acquisition of new knowledge and competences that contribute to improving the quality of work, promotion, salary increase, getting a more prestigious job and personal growth;

- *it is important for teachers to maintain flexibility, ability to respond to emerging needs and problems within framework of andragogy.* It is important to take into account the fact that in the context of lifelong professional learning, the problems of an active, creative approach and quality learning are often raised.

Such questions are legitimate, no matter what form of education is discussed.

These principles of adult education not only do not contradict general pedagogical ones, but also constitute (or should constitute) a single whole within the framework of general pedagogy.

Teleological Approach to Adult Learning and Education

The objectives of learning predetermine the choice of content, methods, organizational forms and means of learning.

If in the higher education system the goals and outcomes of learning are, first of all, the formation of a qualified specialist, then the outcome of learning in the adult education system is more often focused on rethinking the already established system of competences and experience, etc. It is important to understand that there is a change or reorientation of semantic, operational attitudes, and this affects the motivational sphere.

At this stage, the general trend in education of adults is to transfer them to the regime of permanent self-education and awareness of the constant need for it. The main result is the development of critical, creative thinking, integrated with the human sensory sphere. To achieve this result, it is necessary to present it as competence units. When designing a learning strategy together with an adult, one should adhere to a hierarchy of competences: by time (perspective, midterm and immediate) and by priority (in relation to the general course program, key competences – specific competences – units of competences). After that, you can choose didactic means to achieve them.

Competences are ranked according to the competences of training courses, separate topics. They must be realistic and specific enough to be able to assess then the degree to which they have been achieved and the adequacy of results. Realism allows to avoid overestimating or underestimating the “threshold”, since both of them reduce the motivation and effectiveness of learning. And concretization aims at achieving a rather defined, planned outcome.

A clear planning of learning competences allows to show a perspective to learners: what awaits them during the learning period, what can be used by them in their work to achieve professionalism, mastery and further career and professional promotion.

For the effectiveness of learning, it is very important for adults to realize the final outcome. The joint formulation of outcomes is one of the ways for learners to take responsibility for their achievement. This is an indicator of cognitive activity awareness, stimulating motivation. A diagnostically given outcome is one of the prerequisites for creating motivation to start learning.

It is especially important for adults to have a clear idea of the final outcome and the possibilities of its practical use.

The clarity of formulating outcomes is especially important in self-education. This allows the educa-

tor and the adult to rationally organize the learning process, choose the appropriate methods, select the most appropriate means, and maintain a high motivational level of learning.

To implement the above-mentioned requirements, the so-called *taxonomy of goals/competences* (hierarchical sequence) with diagnosable learning outcomes is used for the formation of learning outcomes. The hierarchical sequence of goals/competences implies their formulation in the form of an increment of knowledge and competences in diagnosable results, observable signs and actions, which can be given an objective quantitative and qualitative assessment.

There are several approaches/taxonomies for classifying objectives/competences (*see [2]*). It is very important to take into account the degree of adult's participation in the organization of educational activities, including the determination of learning outcomes. The highest level is typical for adults, whose learning goal goes far beyond the specific course and is designed for a lifetime. At the same time, not everyone is immediately ready to learn, actively participating in the organization of educational activities. Even those adults who independently organized their professional activities are not always ready for self-management in educational activities (especially if they have lost such experience over time). It is generally accepted that the main way to develop the independence of learners is the organization of their active independent work. However, if we want it to become truly complete, an adult needs to gain experience in performing such actions as the following: analysis, planning, regulation, evaluation of activities. Meanwhile, the acquisition of such experience directly depends on the interaction of an adult with a teacher, on the harmonic correspondence and correlation of their roles (Table 1).

Table 1. Relationship Between Characteristics of Learners, Teacher and Learning Methods [6].

Type of Learner	Type of Teacher	Learning Methods
Dependent	Teacher/Mentor	Informational lecture, instruction. Exercises, etc.
Interested	Inspiring, guiding, motivating	Inspirational lectures, discussions, etc.
Included	Facilitator, assistant	Discussions, workshops, group projects
Self-managed	Consultant, adviser	Individual work, work of self-managed study groups at the final stages of education

The tasks of andragogue are to track the development of learners and involve them in more effective forms of the cognitive process, based on their maximum activity.

Conclusion

The foundation of basic categories of adult didactics as a component of andragogy develops the theoretical and methodological framework for learning and formal and non-formal education of adults. At the same time, it opens up new research perspectives on the andragogic issue: adults' needs for knowledge, self-understanding, previous experiences of the adult, willingness to learn, orientation towards learning and motivation to learn.

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