

Professor Peter Jarvis, PhD

Our dear Professor Peter Jarvis devoted his life to his students, to teaching, sharing his experiences and thoughts with the world of adult educators and other humanistic scientists who were interested in his field of research. He remained dedicated to his cause until his last breath.

His theory stems from practice, which is in total opposition to our school of thought. He had disputes of this sort on numerous occasions with our legendary Professor Savićević. On one of those occasions, I was present and Professor Savićević told me that I had to convince Professor Jarvis that practice derived from theory was a better approach. Of course, I couldn't and didn't want to do that, firstly because I was far too young (still a student) and secondly, because I wasn't entirely convinced that this really was the best approach. As both of them had achieved tremendous success and contributed enormously to our science worldwide, probably the combination of the two was the right answer.

I had the privilege of meeting Professor Jarvis in 1996 and interpreting for him during the four-day Congress which was held at our Faculty after many years of sanctions and a lack of international exchange. However, together with another legend, Professor Pöggeler, he was brave and humane enough to come to Serbia during unfortunate times and support our developments in andragogy and adult education. He was so thankful for the interpretation, especially because it was coming from a student of andragogy. He was so kind that he had been sending me thanks and greetings when meeting our Faculty professors over the years. I was so happy, proud and honored!

In 2009, after 13 years, I received another privilege. I was to interview Professor Jarvis for the Science Magazine "Andragogical Studies". It was my first interview ever and the last one so far. I was so nervous and stressed as if I had been taking exams. One of the reasons for that is that if you wanted to talk with Prof. Peter Jarvis you couldn't just ask him simple questions, but philosophical ones. Our professors helped me formulate them, but still it was a huge challenge for me. Anyway, it turned out that there was no need for stress at all. As always, he was so pleasant, supportive and talkative. We were sitting in his hotel room as he wanted to be in quiet surroundings. I can still hear his voice and British

accent when I read his interview. In this interview, he shared some of the most important issues for us andragogues.

For example, when I asked him about the difference between adult education and lifelong learning, he said that we couldn't talk about that in general, because understanding such concepts largely depended on the country and the system where the education was taking place. In his own words: "One thing is certain nowadays – the recipient i.e. learner is the one who makes demands in the market and the education provider is a supplier of learning materials and learning opportunities."

For him, the biggest achievement in the 20th century for adult education proven by researches was that adults can learn! But it was intended for work. There was no need to discuss whether we should understand adult education as a science or practice. One discipline is the perception of the perspective which is taken upon from the field of practice. In that sense, entire education is a field of practice, not science *per se*. "We have to recognize that all grand theories are dead in some way." In his opinion, to claim that there existed a single theory of adult education was quite problematic. He thought that we as educators didn't convince the world of the importance of adult learning. Global capitalism did that, because it set demands. "These demands are for knowledge – we are knowledgeable workers." But nobody expected that learning would be a demand for the third age, as it became later. Now, there is a demand for more researches to be able to understand the knowledge, applications of the content we are exposed to, like the media and the web. There are numerous opportunities to learn now. Therefore, even though the workplace was a primary cause for growth of lifelong learning and the practice of adult education, it was certainly not the only cause.

When I asked him what he considered the biggest obstacle in the further development of adult education in the world, his answer was simple and direct – money. "Money and motivation (two Ms) are crucial factors in adult education, but at the same time they are major obstacles. Clearly, motivation can exist in many countries around the world where money doesn't."

Logically, I proceeded with the question: "If we talk about the world as a learning society, is knowledge the factor of cohesion or distancing the societies?" He said that we actually didn't have a knowledge society at all. "We have a society that places emphasis on certain forms of knowledge and that becomes a core to knowledge society." For him, knowledge did produce distance between societies, again because of money. Countries which can afford expensive education and research provided scholarships and attracted people from poor countries. When these people received their scientific education, they were not intending to return to their countries, because they were drawn to the improved standard

of living. "So, the rich countries benefit more and more from researchers and the poor countries are left without them." That is how knowledge becomes a divisive mechanism.

And is there a connection between education and social changes? The interrelation of education and social changes exists because of the connection of work and education. "The change comes from people who are prepared to work hard and prepared to keep on working against the odds. Knowledge and education have become an important factor in it."

He believed that the 21st century would bring about learning 'to love the planet', because the humanistic nature of education and learning was not as dead as it was in 20th century. The awareness that "the whole person that learns and the fact that we continue to learn and use our knowledge, not just for capital production, but for the good of the whole world and for the good of people" would put the whole person back to a learning theory.

In the end, I asked him if there was a relation between lifelong learning and happiness. He said that there was a relation between lifelong learning and happiness, but a complex one, since learning was intrinsic to people who made meaning and found some forms of contentment because of it. "But, learning itself has no intrinsic value. Learning is more about human being's benefit as a result of learning. There is a sense in which for the whole of my life I am learning to be me. So, the key is to be concerned for the learner and the process of learning so that we keep on becoming and growing as human people – the process of becoming. Therefore, we keep becoming who we are!"

After these thoughts there isn't much more I could add. If I had the chance, I would only say to dear Professor Jarvis: "Thank you for being you!"

Jelena Jakovljević