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EXPERIENTIAL TEACHERS' TRAINING IN GREECE: FOR A QUALITATIVE UPGRADE OF ADULT EDUCATION

The main objectives of this paper are to show i) the value of life-long learning, ii) the direct connection of knowledge, action and research and iii) the continuing reflection, that will lead to the self-development of the teachers. In order to achieve this, the model of adult education that based in experiential learning and show the direct connection of the desirable educational process with the continuing training of the teachers is presented. Finally, proposals are formulated and the need of continuing training is stressed, as well as ways of achieving this by each teacher, either if she is already in-service or is going to enter the profession, so that education could finally acquire a content of general culture.

Key words: *life-long learning, self-development, adult education*

Introduction

The contemporary school, as a primary system of a continuously developing financial and social reality, takes on the role of the dynamic molding of the new generation, which is the society of the active participated citizens of tomorrow. For this reason we have to re-estimate its role and possibilities, its operation and aims, in the view of new designations and determinations.

The first step of this difficult work is the investigation of the relation of the two communities from which the school consists of, the community of the students and the community of the educators. The historical study of this relationship brings to notice that the precedence had once the one community and then the other. From the ancient years till Rousseau (18th century), the frightening, the threat and the punishment were thought as a successful way of learning in order to achieve the abrupt maturity of children. Rousseau, for the first time, put the respect of the nature and personality of the children themselves as a matter of great importance, denying that the children should be faced as “miniatures” of the elders. In contemporary era, one more factor

was thought of very important in the procedure of learning; the factor “environment” with all the aspects that it might have, historical, social, political, financial, and cultural. Many times, though, it was faced with dogmatism as an implantation of prepared mentalities and systems in the field of education, creating predisposed carriers of the each time financial, social and political pursuits, so circumventing - in this way - the personality and the free development of the children as of the educators.

The current situation

In modern times, within the experience of the past and the anxiety about the future, the asking matter is to re-determine the relationship of the two communities as a relationship of completing each other binary unity, which will respect the each time circumstances. This relationship will be able, though, to control those circumstances and maybe change them, in order to succeed the common benefit and the best circumstances of life of all. When the new generation is not faced as an “empty vase” which has to be filled in with knowledge, then it learns to face its fate and not to accept it in a passive way. In the world of information, of computer-surfing, of multi-civilization and of world-wide historical changes, in which we live in, the previous demand is more imperative than ever.

And that's exactly the point in which the question is raised whether the educators have the possibility to satisfy those contemporary needs, whether they can contribute to the developing of a type of school, which will not be marginal and cut off, but it will stand up for the new challenges, taking over the role of the breeding, of the catalyst, and not of the passive receiver. The suspense of the consciousness of this responsibility often provokes owe to the educators, since they recognize themselves the chasm between their scientific establishing and their insufficiency, concerning the instructive methodology and the psycho-pedagogical approach. They often try to overcome this chasm by resorting to personal experiments or personal education. They feel anxious in front of cases of problematical behaviour and they ignore how to handle them. Many times they lose their self-confidence, they feel disappointed and even worse, they lose their self-control or the mood for systematical and effective teaching.

The state from its side ought to be succoring, offering generously its actual support and assistance to the educators through well-organised nets of seminars, which will not have the character of spasmodic and isolated

solutions; on the contrary, they will have the character of well-meditated and permanent answers in the temporary erudite reality, which the school of today experiences.

Design of the content of the re-education

The continuous improvement of the quality of the provided education can be succeeded only through the continuous re-education of the educators. This re-education will examine thoroughly all the aspects, in which impotencies come up, naming that it will connect the theory and the action. In that way, it will contribute to the versatility of the educators, supporting not only their personal but also their professional progress. So, for the establishing and the correct intend of the seminaries, those following themes must be seriously taken over (Tzavara & Vergidis, 2005, p. 256):

- What educators can learn and in what way
- What must they necessarily learn
- What kind of knowledge and adroitness must they be taught during the schedules of education
- What kind of knowledge and adroitness are they to pass on to the pupils
- In what way a schedule of education could be planned, developed and practiced, in order to be thought successful
- How can we define the successfulness of the schedules of re-education

We will state next the features of the model of learning through experience and its effectiveness to the professional progress of the educators.

Experiential learning and its contribution to the professional development of the educators

According to Alan Rogers, an intellectual of the adult's learning, when the adults are being taught, they progress, they carry a whole of experience and values, they participate to the schedules having given intentions and expectations and they already have shaped ways of learning (Rogers, 1999). As it is known, the main purpose of the models of training and re-education is the change of attitudes and beliefs of the educators, concerning their teaching methods. However, this procedure of change – specifically this kind of procedure of change – is accompanied by a sort of undesirable feelings, such

as anxiety, stress, even immobilization (Goddard & Leask, 1992 in Tzavara & Vergidis, 2005, p. 256). In order to achieve this change, the ones who give re-education ought to have seriously in mind this factor and give systematic support to the educators, according to the scientific principles of Adults Education.

In proportion to their focusing, there are common points between the schedules of education and the professional development of the educators, but also differences relating to the aim, the intentions, the methods, the substance, the structure and the organisation. Especially useful for the education of the educators are the approaches that have developed about the adult's training, usually known as "theory of self-raising", which has been founded by M. Anderson, E. Linderman and mainly by M. Knowles. This theory shows the completely different way that adults learn and act comparatively to the children. This theory also relies on the active participation of the educators to the educational scrutiny in order to find a personal self-definition. According to that meaning the educator acts more as a coordinator of actions and as useful resource and less as an instructor or as a transporter of knowledge (Rogers, 1999).

Experiential learning was the main issue between the adult's trainers of the latest years. It relies on the active participation of the learners, because it depends upon their decision to learn by action, to have vivid experiences, the great importance of them as constituent elements of the learning process is a point of converge between all the intellectuals (Kokkos, 1999). However, learning by experience has also been named as a way of common sense for adults to learn, because the adults construct a point of view about the reality according to their personal conscience of experience (Mezirow, 1981). How difficult or easy learning can be, could be determined only by the cultural environment in which a person lives and grows, because the meaning that one gives to their activities assigns the grade of familiarization that they have with them, and that consequently assigns how difficult or easy learning can be (Rogers, 1999).

The experience, however, in order to guide to the production of new knowledge, is essential to be connected with critical consideration. That's why many intellectuals discuss about the "circle of learning", a theoretical model, introduced especially by Kolb (1984). The "circle of learning" is an endlessly up meandering coil, in which anything that we live or comprehend guides to a new mental perspicacity. This mental perspicacity leads to a new experience and so on (Kokkos, 1999).

If we desire, however, to comprehend entirely the “circle” we should, in Roger’s opinion, proceed to three annexes – modifications: the first modification concerns the need for searching new piece of knowledge and new experiences through the critical approach of the new experience. This criticism relies on the already made experience in our conscience, personal or not. The second modification concerns the important way of thinking by abstracts, which can be testified under new circumstances (active experimentation). The third modification includes the need of making decisions. This need comes in sight not only when one is ready for action, but also at other points of the “circle”, such as before the designation of the experiences which are being used for critical meditation, or before using the abstract’s as a step before the active experimentation. Obviously Roger’s suggestions enrich the model of the “circle of learning” not only with evidence of theoretical scrutiny, but also with evidence of action. So this model leads to a specially attractive, thorough and effective “vivid learning in classroom”.

Criticism about the up to date existing training

The last years, the re-education of the educators remains unaltered. According to the mentality of Greek people, knowledge should be gained easily and swiftly. The formalistic view dominates that prejudices the transfer of standardized knowledge. This happens, indeed, by the traditional teacher instructional way, without focusing to the substance, meaning to the spherical and critical approach of the objects and to the development of deftness, so that the educators under training can be discouraged. Educators believe that the re-education that is provided although seminaries by exterior institutions (Ministry of Education–Administration) is not what their needs require, because they become receivers of prepared piece of training and formulas, without having the possibility of taking over themselves the responsibility of their re-education. And this happens because the role of the educator always changes. Concretely, the new educational programmes “demand the use of new approaches, the multi-subject approach, the cooperational, the projects. These approaches recognize learners as the main subjects in the learning-procedure. Under those kinds of changes the traditional model of an educator who is the main versed and conversant has been subverted and its place has been taken by a type of educator who tries to make suitable circumstances – as a facilitator – in order to help learners to conquest new knowledge and skills” (Lanari, 2005, p. 197).

From all these can be, however, ascertained that the already taking place re-education doesn't equip the educators with the suitable equipments, so that they can effectively face problems coming up in a class daily: "In the school of today and about whatever concerning re-education and professional process, emphasis has been given to the academic – theoretical part of it, the methods of teaching and the conducts and less to the features of the personality of the educators and to the points of view that they have about themselves, their students and the procedure of teaching itself. However, the sufficient preparation, the scientific faultlessness of the educators and their efforts to cover their student's needs are not sufficient. And that happens because the educators must be prepared to come over many roles, in many of which they haven't got the suitable scientific knowledge such as encourager, counselor or family counselor of each student" (Mouladoudis, 2005, p. 340). So naturally the educators think that there is a distance between the knowledge they get at seminars and the demands in their professional practice. So the educators come round to master studies, hopefully to find answers to the facts they are being through.

Proposals for an effective contemporary training and re-education

For the re-education of the educators and in order to achieve the qualitative enrichment of the educator, the following are suggested:

- A sector of Teaching and Pedagogics should be founded in each University with duration of one year after graduation, not only for the theoretical but also for the technical sections. Those programmes will include projects of teaching, psycho-pedagogics and teaching itself in classrooms. The graduators will get a certificate in pedagogics, which will be essential for their appointment in public schools.
- There will be compulsory preliminary re-education for the ones who have graduated and are to be appointed in public schools. That means for the ones who have succeeded in the examinations of supreme council of selection of staff and are to be appointed in the next two years.
- The educators that don't practice their job should have a semester re-education of the peripheral re-education centres. The re-education shall be organized by the traditional way, naming face to face.

- For the educators that practise their job, the possibility should be given to attend programmes of distance re-education by telematics at the Centres of impelling re-education and under perfect organization, in order to cover the whole country. Each having re-education should have an each-hour indemnity.
- Self re-education: educators who serve at schools of long distance could attend special re-educational programmes, having the support of the school counselors and experts – re-educators.
- Outline and structure of the programs by collaboration and equal participation of educators and educated, having always in mind the taking-place situation and the vital needs of the educators (Vergidis, 1999).
- Consistent holding of the documents of the program, knowing that they are the “tip of the iceberg” (Courau, 2000, p. 96) and the beginning for each action, giving special meaning to everything has to do with significance and its publication (Vergidis & Karalis, 1999).
- The educators should be qualified not only with theoretical knowledge, but also, and mostly with the ability of a creative handle of the relations that are taking place in a group (Jarvis, 2003).
- Establishing of suitable trained educators, according to the principles of the way that adults learn and are getting trained (Kokkos, 2002).
- Emphasis to programs which have diminished attention, such as those which mark to the social and personal enraiment of the adult-educator (Vergidis, 1999).

Conclusions

The training of educators in Greece, despite any weaknesses and dysfunctions, is a field with dynamics and auspicious prospects. The vastness of knowledge, the different expressions of our culture that spring through the modern life conditions, become dogmatic any perceptions for personal conquest of perfection. This is more like a personal arrogance, and not a starting point and motivation of a fertile self-development. The position of a great importance, due to the vital significance for each phase of person's life - independently from the age - it is the guarantee of the conditions that encourage the human growth. Having already realised the precedence those who are involved in the educational process feel permanently the necessity of the training.

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