

ADULT EDUCATION AS A CONTRIBUTORY FACTOR TO THE INTEGRATION INTO MODERN SOCIO-CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

The advent of the so-called “post-literacy” era imposes on an individual the need to master not only various verbal, but also visual, artistic and scientific languages that have been developed in modern culture, which requires an adult to constantly improve their general educational and cultural level and to constantly struggle against functional illiteracy. The authors believe that by engaging in continuous education and lifelong learning, individuals not only increase their adaptive capacities essential for integrating into a dynamically changing socio-professional environment but also satisfy their need for self-actualisation, fulfil their potential, thus also preserving their mental, cognitive and social resources.

Since self-actualisation explains a person’s effectiveness in all areas of life, determining its level can serve as the basis for designing the most appropriate educational programmes that would allow an individual to realise their potential and increase their adaptive capacity. The paper presents the results of a study of self-actualisation in adults who seek opportunities for self-development by enrolling in further education programmes and professional development courses. The study revealed that adults who seek opportunities for continuous education do so in the desire to enhance their hidden merits, to use, preserve and enrich their cognitive resources and, thereby self-actualize.

This raises the issue of tailoring further education programmes to specific self-actualisation needs of adult learners, developing new models of lifelong education that would foster the activation of adults’ cognitive capabilities, identifying potential resources and modelling modern educational environments that would cater for the operation of self-development mechanisms.

KEYWORDS

Self-Actualisation, Lifelong Learning, Further Education, Cognitive Resources

1. INTRODUCTION

Innovations have always been part of human life. The emergence of any innovation changes the ways we think and act and, as a consequence, the consciousness and self-determination of an individual and of large groups of people.

In this regard, education has a new mission: to promote the innovative model of development in a variety of industries and areas of activity. This will eventually determine the competitiveness of economic, social, cultural projects, and an individual’s adaptive capabilities.

The current global problem is the mismatch between a person’s ability to adapt to changes in the surrounding world and the pace of these changes. Formal basic education, obtained at the early stages of life, does not keep up with the changes and, fundamentally, cannot provide a person with the knowledge, skills and qualities required to fulfil social and professional roles throughout life. We chronically lag behind the changes, do not have time to comprehend them, to understand their essence, to find a rational way of action (Toffler, 1971.)

A system of continuous lifelong education, with adult education as its main part, can become an instrument for supporting these essential changes. Continuous education can also contribute to strengthening a person’s social connections that tend to weaken in later life stages, thus carrying out important social and psychological functions.

1.1 Context and Background: Adult Education in the Modern Reality

Adult education has been the arena for intensive scientific research and international cooperation since 2001 when the Lisbon Strategy defined education as an essential resource for development (European Commission, 2001). The benefits of adult education have been actively discussed by many researchers (Dench and Regan, 2000; Merriam and Kee, 2014).

The Russian educational system with its long history has entered the period of change unprepared for dealing with the new challenges. Nevertheless, over the past decades, a new sphere has established itself in the country - further adult non-professional education. The orientation towards the consumer, the flexibility in the new conditions of relative freedom, the application of not only pedagogical but also social and psychological technologies - all this has become a distinctive feature of Russian educational institutions that offer programmes for the adult population of the country.

This type of education is expected not only to give new knowledge but to preserve mental and social activity, which is an essential condition for achieving and developing success in a dynamically changing socio-professional environment. In the collective sense, they can be referred to as cognitive resources and an individual's potential (Nurgaleyeva, 2015).

Special expectations from adult education are associated with the penetration of information technologies into our daily life, which requires an adult to constantly improve their general educational and cultural level and to constantly struggle against functional illiteracy. The subject matter of adult education consists in a fundamentally new understanding of literacy or "post-literacy", which includes mastering not only various verbal but also visual, artistic and scientific languages that have been developed in modern culture and synthesized by various media.

The difference between adult and youth education is a higher motivation for learning in the former and, hence, the possibility of more effective learning. The learner plays a leading role in the education process, in the interaction with those who teach them, as well as in planning, implementing and evaluating programmes, syllabuses and teaching methods. Science needs to rethink the structural model of lifelong learning, giving a meaningful place to self-education (Litvinova, 2003).

The content of education is determined by the fact that it has two main consumers (stakeholders): organizations and individuals. The individuals' requirements influence the content of education in two ways: first, based on professional specifics, and secondly, on the basis of the qualities that a person needs to possess to effectively integrate into modern professional communities.

A special feature of adult education is the psychological characteristics of the adult learner, which include striving for self-realisation; the leading role in the learning process; life (everyday, social, professional) experience, which can be used as a source of learning; steady motivation. The learning process is also influenced by outdated ideas about the learning process, the formed structure of complexes, a certain deficit type of information processing (perception filters), mental manifestations, resistance mechanisms based on psychological barriers and defences.

Thus, we believe that modern adult education is not only and not so much about the process of developing professional competencies, but, above all, working with cognitive resources, the individual's potential and the opportunity to realize oneself.

A person's awareness and development of their own potential allow them to effectively realize their abilities in personal and professional life, to feel satisfaction from their own achievements. In the conditions of modern social transformations, the role of active attitude to self-development is increasing. A modern individual needs to have not only sufficient professional knowledge and skills but also to be able to build their own life strategy, adapt to changes, integrate into various communities, independently determining their internal potential for development. Adults' self-actualisation deserves special attention and study, and so does the creation of specific educational environments, forms and technologies for its controlled development.

2. METHODS AND RESULTS

2.1 Research Design

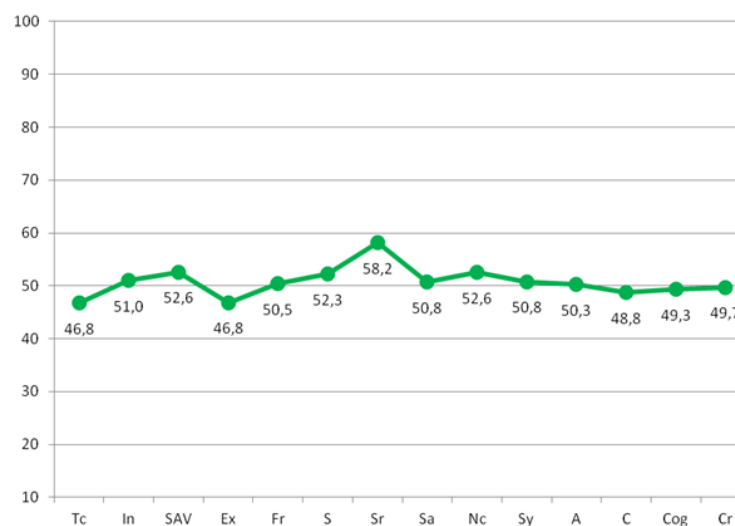
Self-actualisation is a phenomenon that manifests itself in all spheres of modern life since it is considered a construct that explains a person's effectiveness in the fields of culture, career, education and life in general. Therefore, we assumed that determining its level will give us the basis for designing the most appropriate educational programmes.

Our study was conducted in a group of Russian teachers and was designed according to the classical rules of the educational experiment with the measurement of the indicators before and after a certain stage. The goal was to establish changes in self-actualisation in comparison with the expression and generalisation of its main indicators as a result of education. The experiment involved 72 people, aged from 32 to 56 (average age 44.6 years), 37% of men and 63% of women. The study of the specifics of self-actualisation was carried out using the Personal Orientation Inventory developed by Everett L. Shostrom to measure the attitudes and values related to the construct of self-actualisation: its Russian-language modification (Shostrom, 1964, 1996; Aleshina et al, 1995).

2.2 Results and Discussion

The research objective was to study the change in the self-actualisation of adults through a special training programme. The study of the features of *self-actualisation* as a person's striving for self-realisation made it possible to obtain the following results (Figure 1).

The relative homogeneity in the level of self-actualisation is established. This fact testifies to the lack of distinctness characteristic of the studied group of subjects in the manifestation of the potential for self-actualisation. The fluctuation of indicators varies within the limits of the average statistical norm (the asymmetry values of all indicators of the methodology do not exceed critical values and are close to zero). It follows that the participants are characterized by an average degree of internalisation (appropriation) of those behavioural and value indicators that characterize the self-actualising personality. This average statistical representation of the self-actualisation phenomenon is observed in all the main spheres of life of the self-improvement of a person - cognition, values, attitudes toward oneself, other people, and life as a whole.



Tc – time competence, In – independence (support), VALUES: SAV – value orientations, Ex – behaviour flexibility, FEELINGS: Fr – sensitivity to one's own needs and feelings, S – spontaneity in expressing feelings behaviorally, SELF-ACCEPTANCE: Sr – self-regard, Sa – self-acceptance, HUMAN CONCEPT: Nc – Nature concept, Sy - synergy, INTERPERSONAL SENSITIVITY: A – acceptance of aggression, C – ability for contact, ATTITUDE TO COGNITION: Cog – cognitive needs, Cr – creativity.

Figure 1. Average values of self-actualisation indicators for the study participants

The measured indicators of self-actualisation appeared to be relatively homogenous. This evidences the lack of pronounced distinction that would characterize the studied group's potential for self-actualisation.

The subsequent analysis of descriptive statistics made it possible to reveal the following features. In terms of "time competence", there is a tendency to prevail in lower than medium and high values in terms of expression (Xsr: Mean = 46.8; standard deviation: std.dev. = 8.03). It was found that 37.33% of the participants are characterized by low values in this indicator, and high ones are expressed in 8.7% of participants. The data show that more than a third of the participants in the study find discrete perception of their life path, focusing only on one of the segments of the time scale (past, present or future). And only a tenth of the participants exhibits the psychological perception of time typical of self-actualising personalities. According to many authors, competence over time positively correlates with the personal development of a person (Kronik, 2008).

According to indicator In "Independence/Support", the basic indicator of self-actualisation, it was found that low values are characteristic of 27.8% of participants and high of 31.7%. The analysis of measures of variability showed a wide range of variation of individual values (excess Ex <0, Ex = -0.78). It follows that the educational programme is attended by quite different people in relation to the inherent locus of control of their behaviour, both "from the outside" and "from within directed "personalities" (following A. Reisman's idea, cited from Aleshina et al., 1995).

Significant differences in the expression and generalization of the measured parameters (Mann-Whitney U test, $p = 0.003$) were identified in the sphere of values (scales SAV – Value orientation, Ex – Behaviour Flexibility, Figure 1). It means that the majority of the participants share and accept the values inherent in a self-actualizing person (scale 3, $M = 54.12$), but show a lack of willingness to orient to these values in their own behaviour (scale 4, $M = 47.98$). The declared and actual aspects of value behaviour regulation do not match: the subjects demonstrate they are unprepared for behavioural flexibility in realizing their values.

A similar trend was observed in the sphere of feelings (scales Fr – Sensitivity to one's own needs, S - Spontaneity, Mann-Whitney U test, $p = 0.000$). The study participants tend to highly appreciate their strengths, positive character traits, to respect themselves for these (scale 7, $M = 60.4$), but on the behavioural level, they are not willing to accept themselves as they are, regardless of the evaluation of their merits and shortcomings.

Another feature of the self-actualisation profile was identified in the sphere of interpersonal sensitivity. The analysis of the central tendency measures showed that most participants are characterized by low, rather than high, capacity for contact (scale Con, $Me = 43$, $Mo = 37$). Hence, the subjects demonstrate a weak ability to quickly establish deep and close emotionally intense contacts with other people. It should be noted that the capacity for contact as a self-actualisation indicator is understood as sensitivity and tactfulness in interpersonal relationships, as an indirect indicator of social intelligence. The analysis of the study participants' communicative sphere showed that they are characterized by a high and non-frustrated need for communication, with a tendency for dominance, perversity and conformity. However, the subjects do not demonstrate harmony or ecology in interpersonal communication, that is, their high communicative ability is of an egocentric nature.

Thus, the self-actualisation profile is distinguished by an average level of self-realisation drive, the inconsistency between the declared and behaviorally demonstrated values, the discrepancy between high self-esteem and self-acceptance, and low interpersonal sensitivity.

Comparative analysis (Wilcoxon) dynamics in the process of attending the educational programme of the desire for self-actualisation, measured using the technique "Self-actualisation test" in the adaptation of L. Ya. Gozman et al., led to the following results (Figure 2, Table 1).



Figure 2. Mean values of self-actualisation indicators before (lower green line) and after (upper red line) the training

The trajectories of two self-actualisation profiles with a visual assessment (Figure 2) show concurrent trends in the expression of the indicators. However, the shift (according to the T-criterion of Wilcoxon) of values of self-actualisation indicators (profile) with respect to the level of their expression was statistically reliable (Table 1). A highly significant shift of all values of self-actualisation indicators towards their increase is established upon repeated measurement after taking the educational programme. An exception was the indicator "ability for contact" (C) from the block of interpersonal sensitivity as the area of self-realisation of a person ($p = 0.177$).

Anticipating the interpretation of established empirical facts, it is necessary to designate the conceptual definition of self-actualisation, which is the basis of the experiment. In the course of the existential-humanistic approach, the phenomenon is treated as a striving for self-realisation, more precisely, the tendency to actualise the potential. This tendency can be called the desire of a person to be as close as possible to whom they can become (Gozman et al., 1995). Indicators of self-actualisation, presented in the form of judgments in the test, were behavioural and value characteristics that distinguish a healthy self-actualising person from a neurotic, as well as a person who manifests marginal forms of behaviour.

It follows that psychological technique, which was the basis of the educational programme, initiated the desire of its participants to realise their potential. An essential feature of this initiated aspiration was not just informing and accepting the values of self-actualisation (the first scales in each of the self-actualisation blocks in the methodology), but also the willingness to realize these values in the behaviour (the second scales in each of the techniques blocks).

Table 1. The results of a comparative analysis of indicators of self-actualisation in the group of participants before and after the passage educational programme

NB. 1. Comparative analysis was performed using the Wilcoxon T-test (Wilcoxon T-test) for dependent samples, $n = 72$. 2. The table shows the probability of error (p), the sum of the ranks of the negative shifts, the sum of the ranks of the positive shifts

Indicators	Error probability, p ; shifts		Change dynamics, ↑ ↓	T- Wilcoxon
	The sum of negative shifts	The sum of positive shifts		
Time competence (Tc)	116,0	$p=0,000$ 4829,0	↑	-5,541
Independence / support (In)	740,5	$p=0,000$ 5700,5	↑	-7,108
Value orientation (SAV)	1023,0	$p=0,000$ 4333,0	↑	-5,452
Behaviour flexibility (Ex)	1774,0	$p=0,001$ 3897,0	↑	-3,348
sensitivity to one's own needs and feelings (Fr)	794,0	$p=0,000$ 4562,0	↑	-6,206
spontaneity (S)	1212,5	$p=0,000$ 3938,5	↑	-4,623
self-regard (Sr)	1044,0	$p=0,000$ 5397,0	↑	-6,238
self-acceptance (Sa)	1999,5	$p=0,000$ 4441,5	↑	-3,500
Nature concept (Nc)	917,5	$p=0,000$ 4032,5	↑	-5,441
synergy (Sy)	1285,5	$p=0,000$ 3274,5	↑	-3,694
acceptance of aggression (A)	1576,0	$p=0,000$ 4310,0	↑	-4,193
ability for contact (C)	2600,0	$p=0,177$ 3505,0	0	-1,350
cognitive needs (Cog)	661,0	$p=0,000$ 4389,0	↑	-6,414
creativity (Cr)	1524,0	$p=0,000$ 4471,0	↑	-4,459

The peculiarity of the dynamics of the self-actualisation profile is that the declared indicators (the first scale in the block) in all spheres of self-realisation revealed a greater shift in expression ($p < 0.01$) than generalized indicators (the second scale in the block), showing the realisation of self-actualisation values in behaviour. Thus, the mean of the Wilcoxon T-test in the group of indicators of self-actualisation values (scales SAV, Fr, Sr, Nc, A, Cog) was $X_{mean} = -5.657$, in the group of generalized indicators (Ex, S, Sa, Sy, C, Cr) - $X_{mean} = -3.494$. The result of this comparison indicates that the desire for self-realisation among programme participants, the measure of their acceptance of self-actualisation values, is expressed much more intensely than the readiness to implement these values in their own behaviour, attitudes, and activities.

The strongest shifts in the T-criterion (Table 1) in the direction of increasing values are recorded in such spheres of self-actualisation as feelings (self-sensitivity and spontaneity), self-perception (self-esteem and self-acceptance) and attitude to cognition (cognitive needs and creativity). It follows that the impact has led to changes in the sphere of self-reflection, the accuracy and subtlety of self-understanding, respect for oneself and the desire to acquire new knowledge.

Highly significant shifts are also recorded in the values of the basic indicators of self-actualisation - time competence (Tc) and independence (In). This fact can be interpreted as follows: the participants at the end of the programme showed a more harmonious, non-discrete perception of their own time, as well as a greater independence of their values and behaviour from external circumstances, a tendency to internal rather than an external locus of responsibility.

These results can indirectly be considered as indicators of the content validity and the targeted orientation of psychological technique implemented in the educational programme.

3. CONCLUSION

The attempt to study the level of self-actualisation in adults who are seeking opportunities for self-development and self-realisation through further education allows us to draw the following conclusions.

- Those with a strong need to confirm their potential (hidden) personality traits and a low level of cognitive resources search for educational opportunities for personal development.
- The level of self-actualisation according to all indicators has average values and is rather indistinct.
- The level of generalization of self-actualisation indicators for all blocks exceeds their level of expression.
- The desire to actualize reserves is present but does not manifest itself in real behaviour. It is this result that evidences the decision to participate in educational programmes.

Thus, the study revealed that adults who seek opportunities for self-development through enrolling on further education programmes do so in the desire to enhance their hidden merits, to use, preserve and enrich their cognitive resources and, thereby self-actualize.

The practical implications of the study results include, but are not limited to the following: understanding the specifics of self-actualisation of adult learners can facilitate tailoring further education programmes to their needs; by diagnosing self-actualisation in adults educational managers can identify their target audience and select prospective participants for further education programmes.

The development of adult education as a factor of integration into the contemporary reality is inextricably linked with activating the adults' cognitive capabilities, identifying potential resources and modeling modern educational environments that would adequately provide for the operation of self-development mechanisms.

Increasing the adaptive capacity of an adult to ensure a constructive response to socio-cultural changes is essential and can be realized through promoting new models of lifelong education.

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