

# Andragogy: Prerequisites for Adult Educators

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## Abstract

This work is the result of a qualitative research that tries to highlight, through an interview with an adult educator, the qualities, skills and qualifications a trainer in adult education should have. His qualifications must be of high quality because the difficulties and obstacles in adult learning are different and perhaps more numerous than in formal education. So the trainer must be able to coordinate and direct the educational process and at the same time be the educational consultant of the team and also its guide. This versatile role must include the capacity of the facilitator throughout the educational process. The teacher also should try to help adult learners regarding their educational obligations taking into account that they are workers with families and leisure available is minimal and in some cases perhaps even nonexistent.

**Keywords:** *adult education; qualitative research; adult education; adult trainer; adult educator*

## 1. Introduction

The adult trainer has its own way to encourage students to continue what they started and try to prevent them from leaving their educational path. Additionally he should always try to motivate the learners to have an active participation and to lead them to that direction in order to process the knowledge and information obtained while using and exploiting the experience and assumptions them so that they are able to compare, or to review and be able to develop a critical thinking. Here we should add that in many cases the difficulty for an adult learner is not just the learning process but also the fact that he must to set aside and unlearn something previously erroneously learned, so the trainer should be able to find a way to lead and convince the trainee for this wrong knowledge (Rogers, 1999). The educator's role is very encouraging, concluding the six admissions of the Andragogy approach by Knowles (Knowles, 1984), the educator must approach the trainees by encouraging them, avoiding the intense teaching and the guide like traditional character so they can share their experiences, their problems and difficulties as participants in the educational process. Second Chance Schools accept individuals who are over 18 and haven't completed the 9 year compulsory education. SCSs award the individual with a secondary certificate after a successful two-year course. They aim at the re-introducing the adults to education, and at the same time they try to link the local community and businesses with school and education.

## 2. Adult Educator Working Analysis

Let's try to identify the main features of the work and responsibilities and the skills, knowledge and experience that one has to have, to be a trainer in Adult Second Chance Schools (Koutouzis, 2005).

### 2.1 Activities and Purpose of a Literacy Teaching in Second Chance Schools.

The trainer should be able to program, in a general plan, the individual modules to be taught (material planning), which will be referred to throughout the course. Furthermore, teaching hours must be shared in subsections that literacy has per week, so that there is a plan in which they should move. This plan can be flexible and be made each time with slight variations depending on the requirements of each educational group. Planning and study is needed for the preparation of the lesson material, ie for each teaching week the trainer should know what hardware he needs to give the trainees like photocopies and other printed material or even to further understand the concepts he is likely to need some extra material for whenever different educational techniques should be used.

## *2.2 Working Framework.*

Here the trainer must know the weekly teaching hours i.e. what days and what hours he should be at school, when the beginning and end of the school year is, and what school days the school will be closed due to holidays. He should also know which days there will be festivities and what are the obligations of the organization concerning these celebrations. Additionally he should know which classrooms can be used and, in the hall of trainers, which office and which cabinets can be used if needed. Each instructor must know what technical equipment may be used, such as photocopiers, computers, printers, projectors, etc., if he is allowed to use the laboratories and to what extent, and what access he has to the school records as protocol, correspondence, students register etc. He should also be aware of all the rest of the teaching staff for possible cooperation between literacies and for the smooth running of the school. Especially for the Second Chance Schools that operate in prisons there are some peculiarities the instructor should be aware of. He should know that each time you enter the area of the prison will be subject to control by the guards, he should not have a mobile phone with him or any sharp objects such as knives etc. and also that any transaction with the prisoners-trainees is prohibited.

## *2.3 Knowledge and Experience.*

Teaching a literacy in Second Chance Schools, apart from the knowledge someone is needed to have to teach the subject of the literacy, which can be proved by a corresponding title university or technological education studies, should also have some expertise in teaching adults. This can be proved by any previous teaching experience either in the same or a similar institution. Postgraduate studies, trainings and conferences on adult education are useful and necessary in this area. Knowledge of the use of technology such as computers and various media are considered additional qualifications which can be of use.

## *2.4 Other Characteristics and Other Skills.*

Given that in a school each teacher has some other obligations in addition to teaching, they may be the recording of absences of trainees and information about them, the export of various statistical data regarding the characteristics of the learners such as age, sex, marital status, etc., filling and distribution progress sheets, preparation and coordination of a festive event, completion and maintenance of some of the school books as protocol, register students, etc., and possible participation in students candidate interviews when its about learners in jail (note that the interview is the selection way of students when the number of applications exceeds the prescribed number).

## *2.5 The Specific Performance Requirements.*

The institution which oversees and coordinates the Second Chance Schools expects from the instructor in charge of teaching literacy, to be working in this school certain hours and days each week, which should not exceed eleven hours per week. This will appear in the contract to be signed by the organization and the learner. Every semester the teacher is also required to deliver in writing a descriptive assessment of trainees to the teacher in charge of each department, who in turn should summarize these evaluations of all literacy and then prepare an overall assessment based on the previous which will then be distributed to the trainees. The institution also specifies that every month there should be a meeting of teachers on completion of the course, in order to discuss any problems encountered regarding the operation of the school or the learners.

## *2.6 The Relationships with Other Members of the Organization.*

The trainer will report to the school principal for any problems faced either by colleagues or learners. In the event that the school works in a prison, when the trainer carries a potential problem to the director of the school he will in turn transfer the problem to the director of the prison or the warden, to find a solution.

## **3. Characteristics of an Adult Educator**

The qualitative research interview with the adult instructor took place in Lamia, Greece on the 19/11/2015. The transcript of the interview can be found in the Annex of this paper. The respondent is an experienced trainer in adult education. According to the respondent an adult instructor is a difficult and multidimensional role. An important skill that should be held by the teacher is the flexibility he should have regarding the adjustment of the teaching modules and the course's teaching material according to the educational group he has. Also an important skill is the ability to increase or reduce the rate of instruction and adapt every time depending on the cognitive skills of each learner. So we observe that this adult instructor, according to all that is reported to us, has great experience in this difficult educational process-course. In addition to having suitably trained through various relevant seminars and conferences, thus obtaining the necessary background knowledge on the theoretical learning models, principles and philosophy of

adult education, we see that in the act he tries to apply these models to have a suitable and desired effect. Considering the prevailing theory of adult education models and in particular the theory of Andragogy of Malcolm Knowles (Knowles, 1984), the theory of Social Change of Paulo Freire (Freire, 1970) and the theory of transformative learning of Jack Mezirow Learning (Mezirow, 2007) we see that the teacher in the interview is using data from the above three models taking each time the characteristics he deems necessary for the individual learning process in which he participates (Kokkos, 2005).

#### 4. Educational Techniques in Adult Education

From the interview we see that this trainer uses a variety of instructional techniques to get the desired result. These are suggestion, brainstorming, work in groups, role play and simulation. Let's look at some examples, the trainer with the technique of "suggestion" gives the group the necessary knowledge on how to fill out an application and then asks each student to write an application with his own data. Regarding the technique of "brainstorming" the trainer could give the team a word to elaborate the concept of this word. That will require learners to report the words that come spontaneously to their minds when they hear the word announced by the instructor. Then write all the words that are said in the table without criticism and without any modification. When everyone has finished he proceeds to the conceptual explanation of each word and adds some of his own words. Finally the words that fit more with the original word given are selected. Another example based on the teaching technique "work in groups" is the following. The assembly is divided into two groups (or more), so that each one can seek out employment advertisements in newspapers. The trainer distributes real items he has taken from newspaper clippings about finding a job. Each team will have to find items that fit to its members. Groups seek ads simultaneously and have at their disposal a specific time that the instructor has set. By the end of this time, the representative of each team shall communicate to all the items that were selected. The teacher coordinates the entire process and debates and helps with the interpretation of the various terms that may confuse the learners.

Using the technique "role play", he could choose some of the trainees to impersonate the unemployed to be interviewed by the potential future employer. The trainer comes to the role of the employer and begins the interview with each one of these students while the others watch and take notes. Each interview is followed by a discussion involving everyone, analysing identified weaknesses. Finally with regard to the simulation, which is a kind of role play, the trainer could divide the students into groups and share some photos of various professions to each one. Then he could ask the members of each team to guess the profession each photo describes and thus to start a discussion about it.

#### 5. Conclusions

The trainer of the interview teaches the Greek language in a Second Chance School in which many foreigners attend. According to respondents, the trainees are diverse educational groups of various ethnicities, ages, religions with different educational and knowledge bases. Most of them do not know how to write and read the Greek language. As is understandable, since the requirements of our age are ever increasing and also taking into account the current difficult economic climate, being able to read and write is an asset essential and something which most often is the case in a job. If we look at the past and go back five years we will certainly see that again reading and writing the language was necessary assets for daily life, professional or everyday dealings with various institutions and organizations. But the fact that there was no financial crisis and manual labor was on demand, meaning that there were jobs in areas such as building construction, road construction, agriculture etc. This meant that there was no particular need for any economic migrant to know how to write and read the Greek language. But the difficulty that the economic migrant had when trying to converse with a public service such as the Migrants Department or the The Greek Manpower Employment Organization (OAED) was obvious and therefore knowledge of the Greek language was necessary. Today the employment data has changed significantly and considering the difficulty to find a job even though one has increased qualifications, we can easily conclude that the knowledge of writing and reading the Greek language is considered given and unquestionable. According to the newspaper Ethnos on 16/12/2011, which one can find posted on <http://www.alfavita.gr/artrog.php?id=53077> site, unemployment rates in the third quarter of 2011 considering the level of studies as a criterion are recorded as follows: 25.1% for those who have not attended school, which is the highest percentage, 24.6% for those who have completed some classes of primary school, 20.1% for those who are higher technological education graduates while 13.9% are higher education graduates and finally 9.5% to holders of postgraduate and doctoral studies. So the economic migrant should be able to read and write because this way he could for example look at a newspaper in work finding items or he may even be able to fill out an application to the Employment Agency for a future job. In addition, the high school diploma that someone that has

finished the two courses in the School of Second Chance, will obtain, is equivalent to a high school diploma of the standard three-year education. Several jobs have compulsory education as a prerequisite qualification as well as some subsidized programs of OAED. Here we must point out that good language skills will help the learner to understand and other lectures that he will participate during the two courses. It is obvious that with the passage of time and taking into account the economic crisis that exists in our country and throughout Europe, in five years from now, the demands on qualifications and skills will be quite elevated than today because the jobs will be more and more limited, so that knowing how to read and write will be the least one needs for his work and personal life. Based on the above we can fill a table which shows the situation in the manual labour market in relation to the knowledge of writing and reading the Greek language today, five years ago and five years after (Karalis, 2005).

**Table 1.** Status Table of Manual Labour Market in Relation to the Literacy of the Greek Language

	Situation in the manual labour market	Required knowledge and skills on the writing and reading of the Greek language
Five years ago	Good	Not required
Today	Difficult	Necessary
After five years	Very Difficult	Necessary

An important role of the adult educator is to be able to link the training of learners and the labour market, i.e. to give them the skills they need without tiring them with the possible details and perhaps more than the necessary and basic knowledge.

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## Annex

Transcript of the interview

- Tell us about your studies and your involvement as adult trainer
- I finished the faculty of Philosophy and done postgraduate studies. I have also successfully completed training seminars on adult education as well as adult education for vulnerable social groups and teaching in Second Chance Schools. I have also participated in seminars and conferences on learning the Greek language to immigrant employees.
- From what I understand you have significant experience in adult education. What in your opinion are the desired characteristics, qualifications and skills necessary an adult instructor must have.
- The role of the adult educator is multifaceted. I believe that the teacher has to act as a comprehensive coordinator of the educational process, as a consultant, facilitator, guide and facilitator on the path to knowledge, motivation for activity, processing of knowledge, experiences and assumptions available to the trainees. Let us not forget that it is sometimes very difficult to change the wrong impression and position of an adult student over a topic. To "unlearn" something requires a lot of experience from the instructor. Moreover, I would say that it is useful for the instructor to

select and properly identify the content of the teaching modules and the appropriate learning materials.

- The modules to choose based on the knowledge base of his learners or some other criterion?

- The teacher must adapt his teaching of the subject at the level of each group as well as shape his learning pace each time, depending on the cognitive skills of each learner.

- Could you talk to us about your experience regarding the subject that you teach in a particular program in which you participated?

- I will refer to the teaching of the Greek language in the Second Chance School in which the students that were attending it were from various nationalities, religions and ages.

- Can you tell us a little bit about the Second Chance Schools?

- The Second Chance Schools are a relatively new institution in Greece, which as indicated by their name, interest people who have not finished compulsory education and specifically high school. A prerequisite for registering a student is the possession of a primary school certificate. These schools have a two-year compulsory education and provide high school diploma equivalent to high schools of formal education.

- These schools have compulsory presences? Are performance tests given with a score for the trainees as in formal education?

- Yes of course attendance is mandatory, only a specific number of absences is allowed. About the performance tests, they are given every four months, but their assessment is done by descriptive words not some score.

- Is there a specific timetable?

- Of course, as is done in a typical high school education.

- How is the selection of trainers being done?

- Every July a proclamation positions is conducted concerning trainers from IDEKE where there are points awarded depending on the qualifications of trainers candidates. This usually relates to the basic certificate, postgraduate - doctoral, trainings on the subjects taught in adult education, computer knowledge and knowledge of a foreign language. Tables are then compiled showing the points awarded to candidates and they are selected according to those tables. This is the summarized process.

- You said that you teach the Greek language at a SCS, what do you think is the usefulness of this program and how can it help learners at some point in the labour market?

- Considering that many students lack specific literacy we understand that this program is very useful to them. The integrated learning of the Greek language helps them to respond to all the literacies offered at school thus acquiring the necessary skills that are required in order to claim a place in the labour market.

- In connection with the past do you believe that the requirements in knowledge and skills have increased? So that typical and essential qualifications to be gained from this program will help them effectively?

- Sure. When you consider how difficultly one finds work in the current economic climate, qualifications and skills are more than ever necessary. From what it seems the global situation will increasingly become more difficult, which means that the future will require more and more skills to find a better job. Now with respect to this program I can give you some of the benefits that they will potentially acquire, for example, they will be able to properly fill out an application in a public service or to look for jobs through newspaper classifieds. Something else that I can think right now are the programs of OAED which have prerequisite to the holding of the high school diploma.

- What educational techniques do you use for teaching your literacy?

- To answer you, depending on the mood of the group I choose a different training technique to keep their interest undiminished. The technique that I use less is suggestion and the one I use the most is brainstorming, working in groups, role play and simulation.

- Thank you for taking the time and for the valuable information.

- You are welcome.