

Adult Education Program and Its Differentiation From Minors

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Abstract: In the present suggestion is presented a program aimed at adult learners: Environmental Literacy in SDEs. The program is part of adult education as it concerns people who are experiencing adulthood and in addition has taken into account during the design their special characteristics. Adults have specific goals and expectations, a tendency for active participation, shaped ways of learning, experiences and encounter obstacles during learning. These characteristics were taken into account in the design of the adult education program, in conjunction with the conditions for effective learning. Another feature that separates adult education from programs aimed at minors, is that the educator acquires a new role, which enhances in every way the active participation of learners. Learners should actively participate and co-shape the learning content with the instructor according to their needs.

Key words: environmental literacy, characteristics of adult learners, programs, trainers

1. Introduction

Over the years, the discussion about adult education has been strongly intensified and, as a consequence, more and more programs aiming at adult trainees are created. However, there is need to detect the features that will entitle a program to orientate towards adult trainees and not nonadults. The goal of this specific recommendation report is to present a program and document the reason why it regards the field of adult education, as well as the points that differentiate this specific program from nonadult education.

The first part of the recommendation report presents the program as this is completed and implemented by various educational organizations. The second part of the recommendation report documents the reasons why this specific program is incorporated in the field of adult education. The third part of the recommendation report highlights the points that differentiate this specific program from the education that is orientated towards nonadult trainees. Those characteristics refer to trainees, trainers and the program's features. Lastly, the most important conclusions are summarized.

2. Presentation of the Program for Adult Education

Subsequently, the program that is orientated towards adult trainees is presented. Regarding this program, the presentation will demonstrate the title, the content, the organization of implementation, the features of the trainees, the time of implementation and the wider administrative and organizational environment.

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3. Environmental Literacy in Second Chance Schools

The presented program concerns the Environmental Literacy, a program that is implemented in the Second Chance Schools. Adult education constitutes important field in the industry of education. Given that an individual may be ready to learn till the end of his life (Dimitropoulos & Kalouri-Antonopoulou, 2003), the Second Chance Schools are orientated towards adult trainees over 18 yrs old who, for whatever reason, did not manage to complete the mandatory education and wish to reintegrate in the school network. “The differences between reference schools and second chance schools are significant. The borders in the second chance schools are surely looser than the borders in the reference schools, therefore new positions are created (for trainers and trainees), there are different options of learning theory and teaching practices” (Chontolidou, 2003v). All lead to the opinion of Leagans (1971) stating that learning is personal issue of the trainee, which overwhelms the entire personality, since it constitutes the substance of the individual growth. The programs in the second chance schools follow the principles of adult education, supply general adult education programs and last two years (Flogaiti, 2010). The Environmental Literacy is included in those programs.

The Environmental Literacy wishes to render environmental knowledge and transmit specific attitudes friendly to the environment, configure citizens with ecological education and conscience and active participants in the society (Flogaiti, 2010). The Environmental Literacy in the Second Chance Schools intends to make the trainees acquire consciousness, knowledge, attitudes, values, skills to solve environmental problems and participate in actions regarding their prevention and treatment.

The content of the program is flexible and revealed throughout the program, depending on the interests and the needs of the trainees. General discussion subjects about the environmental issues are the following: the reduction of biodiversity, the soil degradation, the depletion of renewable energy resources, environmental notions e.g., space, time, natural resources, energy resources, environment as network, technology and its effects and social environmental movements (Flogaiti, 2010).

The teaching methodology of the Environmental Literacy does not follow the classic pedagogical approaches of the secondary education but is rather based on the active participation of the trainees, the growth of individual initiative and social interaction through team work, the formation of learning and research conditions and the development of the trainee’s interest (Flogaiti, 2010). The Environmental Literacy program follows the problem solving method and the project method in combination with other educational techniques, e.g., discussion, case study, notion surveying and others.

Regarding the wider administrative and organizational environment, it is worth noticing that the Second Chance Schools operate in school buildings of the typical education following different schedule, therefore there is availability of proper rooms and auxiliary spaces, e.g., laboratories and personnel areas, like secretariat, director, trainers and support staff.

4. Arguments in Favor of the Program’s Incorporation in the Field of Adult Education

The program presents certain significant points that may be considered as reference points for adult education. However, an important point that should be highlighted is the notion of adulthood. Adulthood does not imply age criteria but basic features, like maturity, sense of perspective and tendency for self-definition (Kokkos, 2008). Maturity means that adult trainees are able to understand their skills and goals, the sense of perspective

means that they do need personal growth and the tendency for self-definition means that they can decide for their own lives with mature and responsible spirit (Rogers, 2008).

Among the features of adult trainees are their specific goals which are influenced by their needs, the configured learning ways, their many and different experiences by nonadults, the tendency for active participation in learning and the fact that they face obstacles related either to external or internal factors (Kokkos, 2008). The external factors may arise from the programs or the social obligations of the individuals while the internal factors that cause obstacles might be preexisting knowledge and values but also psychological reasons, e.g stress and concern for the program's requirements (Kokkos, 2008).

The above features should be taken under consideration in adult education programs. This specific program demonstrates that all those features have been taken into account. First of all, the program's goals extend to a great scale in order to meet as much as possible all the trainees' needs. Thus, whether the goals of the trainees are professional, social or personal, there is great attempt to make this program meet all the types of goals (Kokkos, 2008). On the other hand, the content of the program is directly related to the experiences of the trainees, since in the first case the trainers will be able to take advantage of their professional experience in the program and in the second case the trainees, through real problems related to their lives, will be able to take advantage of their experience aiming at learning (Rogers, 2008).

In the program, the flexible teaching methodology may serve all types of learning, while the teaching approaches and practices seem to adopt active educational techniques in order to meet the tendency of adult trainees for active participation in learning (Kokkos, 2008). As for the obstacles, the Second Chance Schools operate at the afternoon in order to avoid eventual obstacles arising from morning, daily social obligations. Therefore, there could be stated that the program is incorporated in adult education, since it takes into account both the trainees' adulthood and their basic features.

5. Differentiation of the Program in Comparison to Nonadult Programs: Trainees, Trainers and Program Features

As stated by Kokkos (2008), the specifications for efficient learning, which are based on the above mentioned trainees' features, are summed up in a series of eight fundamental principles. The first principle is that education is voluntary and the pressure towards the adults almost always leads to negative outcome. The second principle refers to goals, which should be clarified by the trainer at the beginning of the program and be as much realistic and related to the trainees' needs as possible (Kokkos, 2008). The third principle refers to the fact that the educational program should be well organized at all levels, from the secretarial support and infrastructure to the educational material and the financial liabilities towards the participants (if any).

The fourth principle concerns the content of learning, which should be immediately related to the trainees' needs and experiences (Kokkos, 2008). The subjects and the examples used should result by the problems of real life, so that the trainers are able to correlate them more efficiently with learning. Moreover, the fifth principle is to take under consideration the preferred learning ways through systematic observation and diagnosis, so that the learning content will meet all trainees' needs and skills. The sixth principle is to encourage the active participation of the trainees to the educational procedure, the initiative and the motivation (Kokkos, 2008). The seventh authority states that the obstacles occurred in learning should be investigated in order to decide the ways of treatment. Lastly, the eighth principle states that a learning environment should be shaped, characterized by

substantial communication, collaborating spirit and mutual respect. Regarding this specific program, it seems that all eight principles of efficient learning are fulfilled.

That way, this program is differentiated from the programs orientated towards nonadults, since it is voluntary, with flexible learning content depending on the trainees' needs and flexible teaching methodology, contrary to the typical education with specific material and content. Another difference is that nonadults do not face so often obstacles in learning, as compared to adults (e.g., family obligations) (Kokkos, 2008).

Regarding the trainers, they are called to assume a more complicated role than the role of trainers in the typical education. The trainers "define the educational frame, where they act, as innovative and realize the upgrading of their role in this procedure" (Katsani, Tsafos & Chatzitheocharous, 2004). The trainers with the trainees should configure the educational content of the program, decide together about the goals, have skills to implement active educational techniques and correlate efficiently their daily life to learning and taking advantage of their experience (Kokkos, 2008). They should also observe and investigate the learning ways in order to respond efficiently, figure out whether the trainees face obstacles in learning and try to solve everything with respect and establish a positive setting in collaboration and efficient communication (Rogers, 2008).

Consequently, the trainers become animators and coordinators of the learning procedure (Brookfield, 1986; Jarvis, 2004; Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 1998), while they do need to facilitate learning in any way.

On the other hand, the trainees are liable to configure together the learning content, depending on their interests and needs, however they should also collaborate smoothly and try to solve eventual problems that occur in learning, take advantage of their experiences and take active part in the learning procedure.

6. Conclusions

This recommendation report presented a program orientated to adult trainees, regarding the Environmental Literacy in Second Chance Schools. It is incorporated in adult education since it refers to individuals that experience adulthood and its planning has taken into account their particular features.

The adults have specific goals and expectations from learning, tendency for active participation, configured learning ways, experiences and deal with obstacles throughout learning. Those features are taken under consideration in the planning of adult education program, in combination with the requirements of efficient learning. Another feature that differentiates adult education from programs orientated to nonadults is that the trainer acquires a new role, by absolutely enforcing the active participation of the trainees, he becomes animator, coordinator of the teaching procedure and facilitates learning in any way. The trainees should participate actively and configure together with the trainer the educational contract and the learning content.

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