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SPECIFICS OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS' DESIGN IN ANDRAGOGIC PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

Being an adult is an ontogenetic status whose qualitative characteristics define possibility of subject position display by a person in a role of a learner. Therefore, developing personal characteristics of adults through the channeled process of educational activities becomes a crucial necessity that stands before the educational sector of today. Nowadays, adults in Russia see the high value of education as a factor of professional and personal success and numerous efforts are extorted by the Russian system of higher education to utilize these potentials.

This paper presents an analysis of theoretical approaches to adult education's organization in Russia and describes the key principles of andragogy as pedagogic conception. Our empirical analysis is based on expert face-to-face interviews. The purpose of the interviews was to reveal restrictions in andragogic principles' implementation in elaborating educational programs for adults. The results of our empirical exercise enable us to come up with the number of unique characteristics of adult educational programs' designing process in Russia as well as abroad.

JEL CLASSIFICATION & KEYWORDS

■ I20 ■ I21 ■ Educational activity ■ Educational programs ■ Educational project designing ■ Adult education ■ Andragogic practices

INTRODUCTION

The reference to a problem of educational activity is dictated today by cultural, social and economic transformations in Russia. As Slobodchikov [12] holds: "Today, education has become largest and probably the only useful social institution. It is through this institution that the implementation of basic values and purposes of the development of Russian society are carried out. In the conditions of radically changing ideological views, social representations, ideals it is education that allows to carry out to adaptation to new vital forms, to back the reproducing social experience process, to fix new political realities and new landmarks for development in public consciousness and practice".

Many researchers [2, 5, 12] ascertain the crisis of the knowledge paradigm in education which is not capable of meeting the requirements of the social order. The volume of knowledge which curricula cannot hold any longer often becomes outdated by the time education is completed. The new educational paradigm is formed on the basis of the idea of education as 'formation of a cohesive personality. The essence and the purpose of new education is a real development of the general, patrimonial abilities of a person, learning by him/her the universal ways of activity and thinking» [12]. In this context, developing subjectivity of a learner is one of the key results of new education. A tool that implements new education's principles is educational programs.

An educational program provides with its content, according to Yakimanskaya [15], "an original 'meeting' of the knowledge from a learner's subjective experience with the knowledge fixed in social-scientific experience". The purpose of an education program is 'to culture' learner's experience as personally relevant one. In this case scientific knowledge becomes personally oriented. Thereby an educational program is directed to coordination of values, senses, meanings of an education subject and socially significant experience.

On the basis of researches conducted by [5-11,14], one can define the following principles of an educational program:

1. Principle of subjectivity, i.e. implementation of an initiative, personal position of an education subject at all basic educational stages - from a goal-setting, planning, implementing his/ her own educational activity to its control and correction.
2. Principle of activity which is shown in the description of content, organization forms, description of results.
3. Focus on substantial meta-space, i.e. accenting the problems allowing learners to reveal laws to construct any knowledge, irrespective of its connection to various fields of study; way of organizing his/her own educational activity as intellectual, research, creative one.
4. Principle of self-reflection, i.e. if an educational program provides opportunities for constant judging by learners themselves on the key parameters of educational process, their actions, and furthermore, their own changes.
5. Orientation to research activity.
6. Projecting, as a way of construction and implementation of a program.

Educational activity and adult education in Russia

In the context of adult education, educational activity is especially actualized due to existing specificity which consists in the fact that "it is not simply a superstructure to the existing education but the particular area with special relations between participants of educational process, special educational motivation, special purposes" [1]. The distinctive features of adult education, ways of its optimum organization, approaches to its quality assessment – these issues make up the substance of intensively developing conception of modern pedagogical science – andragogy.

Nowadays, adults in Russia see the high value of education as a factor of professional and personal success. Adult is an ontogenetic status whose qualitative characteristics define possibility of subject position display by a person in a role a learner. On the basis of the literature analysis of the literature that reflects social-psychological features of adults, it is possible to define the basic features of this position:

- Realizing one's own educational deficiencies;
- ability to form the purposes of one's own education independently;

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- need and ability to choose time and form of education;
- conscious choice and acceptance of an active or passive position in educational process;
- self-control of one's behavior in educational process;
- ability of social-communicative integration and adequacy while carrying out educational communications;
- aspiration and opportunity to introduce personal experience' substance in education [1-4, 13, etc.].

The regularities of productive adult education are thoroughly presented in the works of Western and Russian researchers.

As an illustration of a certain unity of views among various scholars on the basics of adult education, on can cite the principles adult education, developed by the scholars from St. Petersbourg, and andragogic principles formulated by Zmeyev [3, 4].

The main andragogic educational principles by Zmeyev [3,4]:

- Priority of self-education (principle of subjectivity).
- Principle of joint activity.
- Principle of basing on learner's experience.
- Individualization of education.
- Systematic approach to education.
- Context education (the term coined by Verbitsky).
- Principle of actualization of education results.
- Principle of elective education.
- Principle of educational needs' development.
- Principle of conscious education.

The principle of self-education corresponds with the following ideas:

- Individualization of education, i.e. orientation to learners' concrete educational needs and aims, their level of preparation and other features. In this context one should consider their selectiveness of purposes, content, ways of purposes' implementation. Thus, on the one hand, target orientation of an educational program must be strengthened, on the other hand, the idea of cooperation in education should be implemented, i.e. the conditions for joint creative activity for adult audience must be set up.
- Variability, flexibility of an educational program, i.e. creating the conditions for choosing by a learner the purposes, content, forms, methods, sources, means, terms, time, place of education, assessing education results [13].

Implementation of conscious education principle, or self-reflection principle, is connected with creating the conditions for comprehension of personal experience by a learner him/herself, for work with senses and values not only in their individual professional activity, but also with comprehension of their educational experience to use the conclusions related to the substance of such experience in work of organizations and collectives where an adult learner is involved. It becomes possible if an andragogy will contribute to creating self-reflection educational environment that can be provided by the following methods:

- Assistance in actualizing individual experience of each participant;
- focus on learner's self-reflection of content and results of educational experience (this focus can be carried out using exercises, tasks for self-studies, keeping self-reflection diaries);
- organization of discussion process in a particular way so that they become "collecting of experience" when participants, comparing the information heard from others with their own ideas and opinions, could move ahead in their own activity, helping in professional-personal formation of others [13].

Implementing the principle of educational needs development, one should understand that adult learners are motivated to study only the things that, in their opinion, correspond directly to their interests in a concrete actual situation in their professional or private life.

Thus, the experts that design content of adult education (curricula) and academic work programs for subjects, always face the issue of finding out the educational needs of adult learners. At the same time, the request to potential learners to formulate accurately and particularly their requirements to educational programs' content cause difficulty. When in process of education learners get involved into discussing various issues, they come up with questions and ideas about educational programs' content. In this context working with learners' educational requirements, with their formulating their own offers on content of education, demands serious preparatory organizational efforts. And here it is important to reveal "not only obvious, but also hidden, yet unconscious or non-verbalized educational requirements" [13].

Moreover, it is important to consider that it is insufficient to get oriented only to learners' requirements and life experience. Adult education cannot be based only on today's requirements of a learner. It is expedient to construct education, not only revealing and fulfilling momentary "deficiencies" of a learner, but also contributing to development of new educational requirements among learners. It is necessary to explain to adult learners, to show on convincing concrete examples that the main tool of successful performance in any activity is often not particular knowledge, but, for example, ability to find this knowledge, i.e. certain personal qualities and skills. Their development should be actualized in andragogic process. In implementation of educational requirements development principle, one can fulfill the ideas of personality-oriented education, openness and innovativeness of education that assume familiarization with progressive educational concepts and orientation of educational process to their development.

Observance of education results actualization principle provides practice-orientation of its results, i.e. opportunity of timely correcting and making changes in educational activity by learners themselves. This principle can be considered as the most significant feature of any educational program in andragogic praxis.

Answering the question "How to provide andragoginess in adult education?, [2] comes up with rather interesting, in our opinion, comments concerning implementation of the stated andragogic educational principles [2]. She notices that there are obstacles in adult education in the following aspects:

1. In a goal-setting: the purposes in programs are often formulated from position of teachers (accent is on what teacher will do - teach , familiarize, form, prepare); the purposes are limited, basically, with learning subject orientation (formation of concrete professional knowledge or skills), without considering personal components (what is connected with self-cognition, self-development, self-education of participants);

2. in content construction: in a program it is limited only by standard space;
3. in the technological matters: the preference is given to face-to-face, lecture education forms.

All the stated restrictions can be overcome at the designing of a program stage To define the ways of improving andragogic practices one gives the key value to the analysis of existing experience in the field of educational designing for adults, especially the issues connected with the way to organize joint activity of developers and other interested subjects, their eagerness to reflect educational content in adult education.

Interviews with experts dealing with educational programs for adults

The author conducted the research which was based on the technique of carrying out expert interview with the developers of educational programs for adults. The purpose of expert interview was to reveal restrictions in andragogic principles' implementation in elaborating educational programs for adults. To achieve the stated purpose the following tasks were completed:

1. Finding ways to work out educational programs for adults.
2. Designing the list of program developers, requirements applied to them.
3. Defining degree and tools of influence on education content of education process's participants.
4. Studying ideas on key results of adult education.

The experts involved in the interviews were: O. Molchanova, D.Sc.Economics, head of the chair of state administration theory, Department of State Administration, Moscow State University (Moscow); G. Bazarova, Cand.Sc.Psycology, director of Institue of Practical Psycology, National Research State University High School of Economics (Moscow); V. Menshova, Cand. Sc. Sociology, associate professor, head of the Department of education quality coordination and monitoring, Novosibirsk division of Federal State budget high professional education establishment Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (Novosibirsk, Russia); L. Smyshlyaeva, deputy director of Tomsk division of Federal State budget high professional educational establishment Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (Tomsk, Russia); N. Telegina, Cand.Sc.Economics, associate professor, head of Manager Training for National Economy Program, High Business School, National Research Tomsk State University (Tomsk, Russia); G. Alekhina, Cand.Sc.Economics, director of International MBA Center National Research Tomsk Polythecnic University (Tomsk, Russia); N. Brit, Cand.Sc.Economics, tutor of International Institute of Management LINK (Seversk, Russia); S. Litvina, Cand.Sc.Psycology, Department of Psycology, Tomsk State University (Tomsk, Russia); T. Mineeva, Cand.Sc.Phylosophy, deputy chairman of Civil Srvice Management Committee, Administration of Tomsk Region (Tomsk, Russia).

The selection of experts is stipulated by need in analyzing a wide range of educational programs offered for managerial human resources.

The first question of the interview was aimed at defining the experts' experience experience of designing educational programs for managerial human resources. Their experience proved to be rather extensive. For Molchanova O. P – programs of professional retraining and improvement of professional skill for federal civil servants by request of the various ministries of the Russian Federation; Bazarova G. T – open business trainings for executives of various level, corporate educational programs for executives, human resources reserves; Menshova V. N - programs of professional retraining and improvement of professional skilsl for the state civil servants; Smyshlyaeva L.G. - programs of professional retraining on municipal management; Alekhina G. A – program MBA, short-term courses of advanced sudies «Management in sphere of innovations», Brit N.V. – 'the Corporate reserve' of Sibur company; Telegina N.A. - programs of professional retraining and short-term computer courses for executives as part of 'Presidential Program' of professional training; Mineeva T.M. - programs of professional retraining and short-term computer courses for state civil and municipal employees.

Thus, the research represents experience of designing educational programs for adults, various professional groups are presented. It also includes the format of educational programs that were worked out and implemented by the experts, including all kinds of programs: from short open trainings, short-term open educational programs, to programs of professional retraining.

The answers of experts to the second question: «What requirements, in your opinion, should an educational program for adults meet?» demonstrate a variety of opinions. Thus, for instance, the experts involved in process of creating of professional retraining programs, representing the various organizations (spheres), noticed conformity with existing standards as an obligatory requirement.

The experts who have experience of taking educational 'orders' for business first of all emphasize the necessity of 'meeting the expectations' of a customer and a learner. It is necessary to mention that terminology applied by experts when speaking about learners, also varies. For instance, the developers of "open" programs name learners as by "listeners" as it is established by standard documents (Federal Law about High Professional Education, standards for federal civil service, etc.). While the administrators of "business orders" are inclined to use terms ' a participant of the program', 'a trained one'.

At the same time, there is unanimity concerning such requirement as flexibility of process organization, presence of variable parts in programs.

Some experts define as an indispensable condition - the system approach to the analysis of situations, the interdisciplinary approach to considering practical problems.

The only time S.A. Litvina voiced the position according to which the educational program should be aimed at 'actualizing a position of social responsibility', at 'creating an environment in which all participants will be equal subjects of education'. In this case the expert's potion of dialog education format was demonstrated.

Attention accented to creating qualitative methodical maintenance of educational process (in the form of a set of cases, anthologies, a package of business games, etc.) was showed by a rather insignificant number of experts.

Thus, the following requirements to an educational program for adults are formulated more often: meeting expectations, flexibility, system approach. The specific requirements for a special kind of programs are: conformity to standards, inclusion of variable parts. The requirements to the program as a process of dialog elaboration between equal partners are not spread.

The third and fourth questions of the interview detected scope of participants, their roles, and also the specificity of educational programs´ designing process for adults. In this case one can distinguish two distinct models of organization of educational programs´ designing process. Кроме того, прослеживается важная роль собирателя материала и технического составителя программы, которую выполняют методисты (специалисты по учебно-методической работе). In the first case, the commission of experts notice that the programs are worked out by administrators who act as coordinators and goal-setters; teachers who often happen to be so-called "practitioners" and from this point they 'clear up important details, actualize tools, approaches'. Moreover, one can notice the important role as collectors of material and technical composer of a program performed by methodologists (experts in academic work). In experience of this expert group the 'customer' is state administration institutions (Administration of Tomsk region, Ministry of economic development and trade of the Russian Federation). Their participation is often constrained to formulation of formal requirements (methodical recommendations, technical assignments, educational standards). The opinion of potential participants of education is studied in rare occasions. Interaction between developers is carried out by the coordinator; one can rarely see collective discussion of concept and content of a program. Process is nominally presented by the following stages: studying of the technical assignment by an administrator; appointing a group of developers (3-4 persons); designing of a breadboard model of a program, formulating the content with experts; program editing – teachers and methodologists

The experience of the experts involved in creating programs for business has appeared to be of another kind. There is team work of participants in designing a program. For example, while creating programs by the order of Sibur the contractor is the interuniversity consortium where representatives of different high universities and industries work together. The consortium unites the professionals specializing in designing of educational programs and their methodical maintenance. When the consortium has developed a product, it is presented to "customers" who make suggestions and changes, proceeding from their understanding of practicality of training for solution of real business problems. The candidates for participation in the educational program are selected using the technique of 'Assessment Center'.

When designing programs for a Tomsk LLC "X" the project approach to the process is demonstrated. A project head as the director of problems is nominated, a manager of meetings who will organize communications, exchange of materials; team members – authors of separate programs – participants of discussion, on content and purposes.

Thus, the interrelation between the type of an educational program and the way of its designing has been detected. The more is the influence of standards and requirements of a remote "customer" (Ministry of Science and Education, Ministry of economic development and trade, Federal resource center), the less often the format of collective designing of programs appears. Furthermore, the interview has shown that opportunities of clarifying of educational needs of real "customers", potential participants of training, promotes development of application of design methods and the collective subject of designing programs.

The fifth question was aimed at studying the experts' opinion on the requirement a developer of adult education programs should meet.

The requirements designated by the experts, are rated in decreasing order of preferences: presence of practical experience in the given sphere (understanding of its specificity) – 5 persons; pedagogical professionalism (experience in an education sphere) – 5 persons; intellectual initiative (orientation to development) – 4 persons; capability of dialogue – 4 persons; system thinking, analytical abilities – 3 persons; creativity – 2 persons, an adequate self-esteem; team interaction – 1 person; ability to inspire – 1 persons; universality, universal preparation – 1 person.

The experts' answers to the sixth question allowed us to analyze degree and tools of influence of participants on education content.

In most cases traditional tools are applied: input and output questionnaires aimed at detecting subjective expectations, results of training, emotional satisfaction. As a rule, learners are asked about vital topics of programs, about quality of methodical maintenance, about quality of teaching, including application of interactive educational technologies.

The research of the program of professional retraining 'Management of organizations' within the format of the Presidential program (High School of Business, Tomsk State University) has shown that the specific input requirements are applied to the 'listeners': before the beginning of the training they develop the project coordinated with management and interests of the organization. Then during the training within the topic of a project, a student can be given additional consultations by the program teachers. Moreover, the supervisor contributes to multilateral study of the given project and its successful defense as the final qualifying work. Thus, the program shows the project approach in training organization and aiming at coordination between the purposes of training and customer's organization problems.

In general, one can notice insignificant degree of participants' influence on their education. During training they can express their opinion on increase/ decrease of academic hours for particular educational subjects, on changing a teacher.

The low degree of activity of listeners in this sphere attracts our attention. It was also demonstrated in the fact that when there appears an opportunity for learners to formulate their expectations or recommendations concerning the program, their answers are often formal. According to the results of personal observations given by some experts the degree of the listeners' initiative in 10 % of cases is high, 10 % - low, 80 % - average. It is possible to assume that the majority of listeners show a semi-subject position.

The interview results on the seventh question proved the practice of educational programs' implementation with application of such educational techniques as discussions, role plays, case-studies, moderation, and project design. In rare occasions psychological techniques (self-reflection) were included in the programs.

The answers to the eighth question clarified the experts' ideas of key adult education results based on the output of various educational programs.

The results formulated by the experts, are rated in decreasing order by number of mentions:

- Acquiring the information of experience (7 persons);
- development of necessary competences (5 persons);
- development of concrete skills (4 persons);
- outlook expansion / acquiring new knowledge (4 persons);

- systematization of knowledge (4 persons);
- self-introspection and self-esteem (4 persons);
- new contacts (3 persons);
- increasing motivation for changes (1 person);
- creating a circle of like-minded professional who support changes (1 person).

Thus, according to the experts, in most cases listeners finish the program with the information on different experience; with cleared system of knowledge on a problem; with some new knowledge and contacts.

The last question of the interview was dedicated to the experts' wishes of experts concerning the adult educational programs' designing process.

The answers concerned the issues of educational process's standardization of. In one case the wish about necessity of unification and specification of registration standards for similar programs was stated. But in general, those experts who have to get oriented to educational standards or recommendations of the superior organizations, expressed their wish to weaken the requirements to content and organization of educational process for executives.

Some experts designated their position on the issue of the subject of programs' designing. In this case the following opinions have been expressed: there is need in a group of professional education; it is necessary to organize collective work of teachers on a program's content.

In development of these opinions there were wishes to include potential participants into a group/team of designers before a training starts. They suggested the ways of influence on the content, particularly creation of cases from real practice by participants, including the procedures that would allow learners to formulate results of training, criteria and methods of their assessment by themselves.

Enhancing of educational motivation remains a problem to be solved. There one should consider not only learners but more active involvement of customers in the process of educational purposes designing. This situation is stipulated by the need of more accurate assessment of education results that should be conducted at workplace some time after training completion.

Concerning the content of educational programs they stated a wish to re-orientate training from the purposes 'knowledge systematization', 'skills development', etc., to discussion of the valuable basics of professional activity. Creating conditions for formation of a like-minded professional circle where real burning issues would be discussed should be considered one of the main tasks of programs for adults.

Conclusion

Based on the result of the expert interview one should define the essential characteristics:

1. In practice of educational programs' design there is a need to comply with various standards. On the whole, the experts have expressed their point about weakening standardization regime (except unification in formatting).
2. One can ascertain detecting of at least two ways of programs designing: from the point of standards (downwards) considering opinion and offer of listeners and from the point of customers – listeners and an organization's administration (upwards).
3. The scope of developers in the first case: administrator (divisions of further professional education), methodologists, teachers – holders of content on separate sections, methodologists – collector of content and technical designers. Interaction in these groups is limited, collective work has no significant value. In the second case, a team of professional developers is formed, there participants of the process are in equal position and at the same time are responsible for a particular section of the work.
4. Nowadays a lot of 'stake-holders' are involved in program's designing process In most cases insufficiency of customers and potential listeners' participation has been detected. Low activity of learners in discussing the purposes and the results of programs has also been noticed.
5. Programs are designed with insignificant orientation to competence models with a larger accent on Knowledge-Abilities-Skills component.
6. Programs are held with application of interactive techniques that is considered to be an indispensable condition of result achievement nowadays.
7. Certain dissatisfaction with participants' motivation has been detected.
8. Scenarios of programs' reorientation to other educational purposes have been offered.

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