The Andragogy, the Social Change and the Transformative Learning educational approaches in Adult Education

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Abstract

This paper is concerned with the methods and techniques used in adult education in order to allow the educator to successfully respond to suitable learning experiences on the part of the learner as well as to reinforce interaction between the learners. The strategies adopted, teaching aids and the choice of suitable teaching material also is discussed in order to achieve a successful outcome in the learning process. The goal of the educator is not only to transfer knowledge but also to urge the learner to search for knowledge himself. A further goal of the educator is to encourage the learner and facilitate the learning procedure. In addition the general framework for the first meeting of adult learners in lifelong learning is mentioned. Also the obstacles an adult is confronted with on beginning a lifelong learning program are explained, focusing on mental, financial and social obstacles which make the learning procedure difficult owing to a lack of self-esteem.

Keywords: adult education, lifelong education, andragogy, transformative learning

1. Introduction

The educational techniques are the activities which help the educator to achieve a part of the program's goals by activating the trainees by covering their educational needs (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2005). Referring to the characteristics of constructive adult training, it is important that in order for the educator to meet up with his role's demands, he must use a variety of methods and techniques that will permit him to help the trainees have learning experience but also to empower their interaction. An ancillary role in this attempt is without doubt the techniques he follows, the teaching aids, even the class' arrangement (Jackson & Caffarella, 1994). The selection of the curriculum has proven to very important for success or failure of the learning process (Jarvis, 2000).

2. Methods and techniques in adult education

The first technique may be applied in team assignments, a technique that is based on dividing the educational team in sub-teams which complete assignments given by the educator and they discuss the subject. The trainees learn by practicing, while at the same time all the trainees part-take actively on condition that if some member doesn't feel comfortable to express himself to the team, he functions better in the sub-team's framework. Other than that, an environment of support, consistency, trust, collaboration is cultivated and the trainees' interest is unflagging. Besides what has been mentioned, active participation is secured and the communication between the trainees' develops substantially. Expressing personal opinion is free within the team, and the exchanges are more arbitrary. The fact that the assignment is done in a team frees the participants from the fear of failure. This framework develops a spirit of reciprocity. The participants learn to help each other instead of competing with each other (Knowles, 1978).

Enhanced motion is also used by asking questions by the educator while the answers are given by the trainees' who are involved in the teaching process as their interest and attention have been increased. The pace must be quick, this way the main disadvantage of teaching is avoided, which is boredom. It is about an educational technique that can be easily used at any stage of the educational process. It is recommended that the access to the subject is permitted by asking-answering questions. That is why the technique is called "elenctic method". They are generally asked by the educator but that doesn't alter the fact that he encourages the trainees to ask questions. Usually this technique is combined and alters with another one (mainly exercise or suggestion), which offers variety and makes the teaching process interesting (Kokkos, 2005). The adult form a team whose goal to learn is different from the minors. For the adult training to be more effective is necessary to conform to some basic conditions of adult learning. Moreover, it is required to connect the lesson's subject with the trainees' needs and experiences. It is useful for the educator to choose a theme that is related to trainee's everyday life, giving him

the opportunity to use his knowledge and experiences (Kokkos, 2005). Gradual encouragement is a mile stone in adult training. Depending of the atmosphere that is created in the classroom and the will the team has to learn, the educator must give space to the participants to take initiatives, so they themselves can actively participate in the educational process.

The curriculum must be properly formed so it clarifies the learning goals, to encourage application and insight to the meanings of the teaching framework, to offer elements that will allow the trainees to interact with the subject they are studying and with examples that will help them to do learning activities. If the Supervisory Tools are used correctly, they will be able to stimulate thinking and discussion, they can help them concentrate and memorize the information, to broaden and make more precise the educator's messages. This way, they will be able to draw the learners' attentions and to offer opportunities to increase creativity in their work. However, using well the by itself Tools doesn't guarantee the teaching quality. The tools cannot replace the teacher. They can supplement him in developing educational techniques, as long as they are in a specific framework.

Also, the board and projector can be used, which are based on stimulating the sense of eye-sight. The educator must enrich the educational process by using these means without overstating their use. Also the classroom's pattern in a Π shape helps to adapt to theses means since the projector and board are visible and time limited so boredom is avoiding and there is no need to erase elements from the board in order to write down all the information. By giving notes, the educator offers learning opportunities through observation and recording the messages, helping also the trainees to memorize the new information (Noye & Piveteau, 1999). The educator's role is to guide, to encourage, to coordinate, to help in approaching the matters he suggest, he encourages the heuristic course to knowledge, he is constantly interacting with the trainees, he offers them stimulus, he creatively cooperates with the. Also, he gives the ability of free participation in solving matters by giving time, sometimes limited, for discussion, questions and doubting a response. Through the teams in which the educator has places the trainees, the adults solve the specific matters, developing their critical thinking applying techniques in a friendly way, which encourage the trainees to complete the educational process.

In conclusion, the educator contributes to the formation of the teaching atmosphere where discussion is the main point, he coordinates and organizes the teams by following the methods of organizing educational activities, he stimulates the trainees so they can participate actively in all the activities, he defines in the appropriate way the context of the teaching chapters, he applied the educational techniques that aim at the combination of theory and trainees' experience, quite often but not always successfully (Silberman, 1998). The educator responds, despite any weaknesses, effectively to the modern model of adult training that is about using active techniques like group projects, exercises, broaden learning discussion, questions that lead to good adult training outcome.

3. The first meeting of adult learners in lifelong education

The introduction to the meeting is the key point for the whole teaching process and learning. This way the educator will try to free the participants' mind and emotions so the proper atmosphere is created in order to help and support them during the teaching process. When the first meeting takes place, the educator must inspire them trust him, to collaborate with him, to face their fears, guilds and worries, to cultivate an active participation and to inform them about the program he will follow. To make a learning commitment is very important, but first he must secure the reduction of psychological pressure, the comprehension of the program's goals and he must find out the trainees' expectations from the program (Jackson & Caffarella, 1994). As far as achieving goals after the educator's self-presentation is concerned, it is mandatory for him to meet the team's members. There are different meeting techniques and they depend on the educator's experience, the program's purpose, the framework in which the teaching takes place, the trainees' relationship with learning, the personal experiences and knowledge, the participants' available time, as well as their support in the teaching environment in which the teaching process takes place (Jarvis, 2004).

First, the educator presents himself to the team, which is seated in a Π shape, emphasizing on his educational course. Continuing, the team is separated into pairs and via double interviewing each individual's educational course and the reason for participating in the program is made known. Moving on, the presentation takes place in front of the team and then the educator assembles teams that are greater in number and he follows the process as he did with the pairs (Knowles, 1998). The diagnosis of the educational needs will be analyzed by teams of 4-6 people, which discuss the educator's questions and the representative will present them to the whole team. When all the teams have finished, the educator will guide the participants by encouraging questions and answers so there can be a composition of the teams' opinions, needs and goals (Knowles, 1978). From this point, the formation of the teaching contract begins where the connection of the team's goals takes place by exchanging

speculations. Moreover, for securing the team's proper function, the educator states rules for arranging the meeting, i.e. starting hours, course ending, breaks (Kokkos, 2005). Nowadays, it is even more perceived that education is mainly part of a teamwork process that takes place in two-by-two relationships. The educator isn't the knowledge transmitter but the stimulation for the trainees to look for it, the encourager of the team's educational process, of the one who makes it easier for the team. As a coordinator of the educational process he is obliged to track down all the phenomena that have to do with relationship dynamics which are created within the team (i.e. the reserves, the inactivity, the resistances against something new, the obvious or non-obvious conflicts). The general plan of the first meeting is defined as it is designed beneath in the following board. Moving on, it alters, depending on the theoretical and training model the educator adopts.

GOALS	RESULTS
• Educator's self presentation	• To know each other.
• Meeting each other and creating team spirit	• To begin developing a team identity.
	• To get in touch with the team on a spiritual level.
• Searching for the needs, fears and expectations.	• To make their needs and expectations of the program known so they themselves can feel that they are participating in its formation.
	• To discuss fears and objections so the team isn't restless
	• To express emotions.
	• To recognize what they lack in.
• Information about the program (goals, essence, educational techniques, time duration, educator's role)	• To comprehend the goals and the anticipated results.
	• To discuss the educator's role.
	• To negotiate how the team will work.
• Contract	• To define matters for organizing (arrival, departing , breaks, mobile phone use etc).

3.1Adopting the Andragogy approach

In this framework the educator's role is very encouraging and easy. Concluding the six admissions of the Andragogy approach by Knowles, 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. Approaching by being alert, the educator is obliged to relief and help fight anxiety but also the guilt they may feel because of their lack of involvement with the teaching subject. Moreover, the team can proceed to corporate editing of the problems that emerge during the teaching process by exchanging information, experiences and emotions. The educator is obliged to know that the adults want to learn so they can use the knowledge in their every-day life and not to develop general academic skills. The technique knowing by characteristic is still under trial. The educator after presenting himself, divides the team in groups of 5 individuals who will exchange and note down information about their professional roles. Later on they will provide interesting information about themselves in order to show that each of them is a unique personality. Moving on, the trainees are expected to create a catalogue of questions, problems for which they seek answers during the educational process. Every time the group's representative will inform the team about these matters. The educator must determine specific time limits during the whole meeting and in the end by giving feedback he can accept as part of the program as many of the trainees' expectations concerning the subject they will be taught (Noye and Piveteau, 2009).

3.2Adopting the approach through social change

According to Freire, the educator's role is to intervene and his main duty is to develop proper communication with the trainees (Silberman, 1998). According to the theory of social change the educator presents an important social issue for discussion. A common way to make acquaintance is to acquaint the groups. Consequently, discussion is the main instrument the educator uses so that everyone can participate by exchanging opinions and everyday experiences. The educator can give a questionnaire and groups of 4-5 people investigate the issue, they

spot the key-words which tell the problem's meaning (research stage). Then they search for the meaning from its social point of view, they decode the highlighted words and they review the outcome meaning (meaning stage). After that, the educator encourages the trainees towards social action by combining all the teams' opinions. The trainees are finally able to realize where they belong in the world and by this perception and by comprehending their conclusions, they are able to stage. (skeptical stage). Consequently the educator at the first meeting develops discussion by asking questions, he researches to know what the trainees what, he promotes collaboration and cultural combination by working in teams. Even in this case, the final stage is to sign a learning agreement.

3.3Adopting the theory of Transformative learning

According to Mezirow (2007), the educator's role is to support the trainees' in searching for the dysfunctional of admissions and practices and comprehending their experiences through different point of views, The education's goal is to help the female immigrants understand their place in society, the abilities they are offered for recognition and social evolution. The educator, however, must first search for his admissions in relation to his attitude towards the general place of the trainees and then to encourage the team's participants to look back on their experiences and feelings, to find which of them are dysfunctional and to record ways with which their past experiences can be transformed and evaluated based on the new reality. During the first meeting the educator must encourage constructive discussion, freedom of choices and critical thinking of experiences, beliefs and admissions. A good way to have the seats is to place them in a Π shape. The acquaintance can be achieved by presenting each team's members by its representative. The techniques which are available for the educator, is the encouragement of knowledge, role play and stimulation. The appropriate technique is defined by the type of the educational program (Tenant, 1997). In every case, the educator supports open participation to discussion with questions and desire for a greater stimulation by the participants. Through discussion, self-knowledge and positive change are promoted.

In the teams, the educator talks about matters which the participants are asked to interpret, to solve by searching for reliable arguments. This intellectual course is possible to provide new points of view (Brown & Atkins, 1997). Through the educational process the participants re-examine the way they perceive beliefs, social and political values. By following the ten steps of transformative learning, the educator must bear in mind that the adults have come forth to a disorientated dilemma, and he must proceed deeper into the problem, to help them evaluate critically their feeling of isolation, then he must connect their discomfort with the other members' experiences, to search for new ways to act, to create an atmosphere of trust, to provide feedback with new knowledge and dexterities, so the trainees ,as a result, can be part of society again.

5. Learning obstacles in adult education

The matter concerning the adults' learning difficulties was arisen recently on an international level and it is mainly about the so called flexible policies in the job market, which increase the demands for specialization, retraining and vocational training. Thereby, while the completion of the educational process was formally considered to be the end of the problem and therefore learning difficulties were only a child's issue, the mass influx of adults in educational processes the last years bring forward the adults' difficulties. In this current study we will refer to the internal and external obstacles of a group of unemployed people who participate in a lifelong learning program. The learning difficulties an adult often faces are about life situations (situational) during the time period when the learning process takes place. Also, they are also institutional barriers that include the practices and processes that discourage the working adult from participating in educational activities as well as dispositional barriers which are related to the person's attitude and perceptions towards himself as a student.

Longworth and Davies (1996) records specific categories of barriers, first the intellectual – spiritual barriers that refer to the lack of educational culture in the family or social environment, the lack of ambitions and self-esteem etc. Moreover the financial barriers and the difficulties in accessing the learning places and the lack of time and the digital illiteracy are limiting factors in the process of lifelong learning. In conclusion, it refers to the lack of teaching material specially designed for the needs of the adult trainees as well as for the shortage of consulting services. To be more specific, lack of free time, children care, possible family and financial problems, previous unsuccessful educational experiences, which work suspensive for the adults, the low self-esteem and the fear of failure as well as the lack of comprehending texts, directions and different reading, writing, and mathematic calculation problems are some of the most important problems that adult students face. It has been observed that adults many times postpone the solution of a problem in order to protect themselves in possible trials. For the

above reasons, the lesson planning, the teaching material, the teachers' attitude and the teaching approach are now the most important facts that encourage or discourage the participation of adult students in programs of lifelong learning. The most important problem a teacher has to deal with when he gets in touch with an adult who has learning difficulties, is that he himself must understand that lack of actual communication which results from concentrating on learning on the one hand, and the student's weakness of being able to learn on the other. When the teacher feels he has reached a dead end or understands that there is a problem then a more personalized approach is required towards the student with the final goal of overcoming barriers.

On an educational level, the main condition is that the teacher must secure with his attitude an environment of acceptance, encouragement and making it easy to learn. Use of assisting technology must be allowed and made easier, easing the collaboration between trainees, use of multiple teaching methods, alternative and individual examinations, the alternative use of time barriers, reduction of external stimulation and report to the trainees themselves to determine the help they need. It is suggested that encouraging discussion about learning difficulties because that also help alternative methods emerge and it acquits the trainees and it helps them to disengage learning from exercising power and encourages the educators to develop alternative techniques.

On a psychological-social level, the educator must concentrate on low self-esteem. Taking initiatives, fighting the fear of rejection, feeling of incapability and helplessness are often required. He is obliged to help the student to realize his difficulty, to know what to do in order to make up for it, to defend himself and to insist to learn as he can and not to give up.

According to Merizow (2007), the adult educators must support and broaden the rules, the social practices, the institutions and systems that empower a fuller and more open participation in intellectual discussion, transformative learning, considerate action and a bigger stimulation of the participants. They are obliged to give and empower opportunities with rules that support a more free and more complete participation in a discussion, and in a social and political democratic life. It is also necessary for them to work towards making a positive change. This can be achieved from the moment they distinguish their goals and expectations from those of the educators and to promote discussion and the trainees' participation in it, avoiding dogmatism.

In conclusion, the educator must act as a complete coordinator of the training/educational process, as an advisor, supporter, guide and helper on the path to knowledge, to motivation, to editing knowledge, experiences and admissions that are given by the trainees.

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