What Are the concerns of Part-Time Adult Students in Some Albanian Faculties?

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Abstract: *In Albania, like everywhere else in the world, the adults are facing a lot of challenges. They should confront with a lot of complex problems that are dealing with continuous transition of economical, social and cultural aspects of our society. In these conditions, adults should give solutions to these problems. One solution is to return to school, to adapt better with the challenge of our time. But, what are the concerns of adult students, when do they take the status of students? What are the real conditions on which the teaching and learning activities take place? How do they experience the learning process in the classroom? The main aim of this paper is to present some of the concerns of the adult students when they frequent the part-time study in some Albanian faculties. In this study there are used the qualitative analysis, and more specifically, the thematic analysis. The instrument that is used for gathering data is the semi-structured interview. As a conclusion, one of the more important findings of the study is that, the adult students that frequent part-time study are not quite satisfied from solutions that institutions offer for them. Moreover, the auditorium conditions should improve more. The lecturers should improve the teaching and learning methodologies, in such a way for the adult students to feel more included in the learning process.*

Key Words: *The adult students' concerns, the motivational factors, teaching and learning activities.*

1. Introduction

Lifelong learning is a new and very important reforming area for Albania and all South Eastern European Countries. Its importance is even higher considering the path of the economic reforms implemented during the transitional period. Also, the size, the structure and the development level of the private sector, requires average skill level of the work force, which for the sake of the truth, is far from guaranteeing the economy and the work force to become competitive in a regionalized and globalized world.

In these new conditions like in every country in development, adults return in school. The main reason that adults come back again to school in Albania, is that they want to adapt better to these conditions, to be more successful in the developed economy and to be more flexible in the job market[1]. Thus, the emphasis on education may be seen in the context of the development of a knowledge economy or a learning society, where learning and development of a new qualification is the mean for maintaining and developing individual and social welfare and wealth (Field 2006). As learning becomes the vehicle of welfare and prosperity the access to learning becomes crucial for economic and social inclusion (Desjardins 2006).

In this point of view, the institutions that are in charge of the formal adult education, such as university and centres of formal vocational education have a very great importance, because these institutions are responsible for giving solutions to all the problems that are dealing with adult education and to create all the conditions for a higher performance for this education.

The main aim of this paper is to present the opinion of adult learners regarding some problems that concern them, such as overloaded curricula, classroom teaching and learning conditions, communication, learning environment in the classrooms, etc, that are present in some faculties, that offer part-time degrees in Albania.

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[1] MASH,(2007) "How to Develop the Adult Education in Albania"?

2. Methodology

Procedures and sample.
A non-probability sample is chosen for the qualitative part of this study. As a type of the non-probability sample is chosen the snowball sampling, where first of all there is identified a small number of individuals who have all the characteristics that fit the aim of the study. Then these people are used as informants to identify others who qualify for the inclusion and these, in turn, identify yet others-hence the term of snowball sampling. (Cohen, L, Manion, L & Morrison, K, 2005).

   The sample is chosen from adult students from Elbasan and Tirana Faculties, populations of adult students that are pursuing part time formal education. The variation age of the sample is from 27 to 56 years. 85 % of them are women and 15 % are men. The total number of this sample is N= 18.

The interview
As a result of the literature review, there are defined the crucial points of the study. According to these points it is designed the instrument of the study, that is a semi-structured interview, as the main instrument of the gathering of the data. The semi-structured interview format is mainly based on essential questions that are involved in the study, it is formulated with simple vocabulary that is familiar to the participants of the study and reflect the attempt of the humanist to support the word from informative perspectives. (Berg, 1989)

The questions that are involved in this semi-structured interview are:

- Which are the main motives that return you again to school?
- What do you think about teaching and learning conditions in classrooms?
- What do you think about the curricula of your branch? Is it overloaded?
- How does the lecturer or file clerk communicate with you?
- How motivated do you feel in the classroom?
- How does the learning experience contribute to the developing as a community of learners who feel respected and connected to one another?
- How does the learning experience use learners' volition and promote personal relevance to contribute to a positive attitude toward learning?
- How does the learning experience engage participants in challenging learning?
- How does the learning experience create an understanding that participants are becoming more effective in learning?
- What do you think about the exams tests?

The first question reflects the first part of the study that is connected with motivational factors that return adults in school. Other questions are about solutions that lecturers offer in the classrooms for this group of students. Using this questionnaire does not predict the "open" or "closed" nature of qualitative research. As a result of this technique of gathering data, both writing and answering of questions were adopted during actual interview. Also, during the process of interview, the questions rarely are made word by word, but sometimes were emphasised in open or closed method. Furthermore, using of interview guide was a very effective methodological strategy, to be sure that specific issues will be covered. (Patton, 1990)

Sources of error
In common with many other studies in the area of adult education, the part of the study that is presented in this paper is based on self-reporting. The results therefore depend on how the respondents understood the explanations given by the interviewer and their readiness to participate with honest answers in process. Some of the question allowed for interpretation by the respondents.

Analysis

In this paper it is discussed only about the qualitative data, therefore the analysis included the codification and the choice of the categories that are noticed from the transcription of the interview. The data analysis is done from the thematic analysis (Berg, 1989). The main aim of this method was to discover the crucial themes in answers of the respondents.

All the themes are concluded as a result of the combined process with knowing data and making logical associations with interview questions. As well, all categories, main topics, or subtopics were identified and registered in one ″code notebook ″(Glesne&Peshkin 1992). This notebook is used continuously during the further qualitative analyses.

3. The preliminary result of the study

The results of this study are structured in such a manner that consist in three main topics, four subtopics and thirty one categories (C).

In the first topic there are summarised issues of the motivational factors that return adults to school. In the second topic there are summarised issues about physical conditions in which teaching activities take place. In the third topic there are issue about rapports of responsible structures that are in charge of adult student with adult students. In the last topic there are collected issue about the development of teaching and learning process in the classrooms.

First topic: The motivational factors
         C1: The job problems
         C2: Developing their selves (as a person or self confidence).
         C3: Interested in subject.
         C4: Meeting (new) people.
Second topic: The physical factors of the learning environment.
         C1: The noise level.
         C2: Lighting.
         C3: The temperature.
         C4: The equipments of auditorium.
         C5: Time of day.
Third Topic: The rapports of responsible structures (secretariat, financial office) with adult students.
         C1: The communication with file clerks.
         C2. The readiness of these structures according to adult students.
         C 3: The correctness.
Forth topic: The development of teaching and learning process in the classrooms.
         Subtopic 1: Establishing inclusion.
         C1: Student and teacher have opportunities to learn about each other.
         C2: Lecturer interacts respectfully with all students.
         C3: Students help each other.
         C4: Students work is displayed.
         Subtopic 2: Developing a positive attitude toward learning.
         C1: Using students′ prior knowledge and learning experiences.
         C2: Encouraging students.
         C3: Maintaining flexibility.
         C4: Overloaded curricula.
         Subtopic 3: Enhancing meaning.
         C1: Helping student to activate prior knowledge.

C2: Creating opportunities for inquiry and projects.
C3: Lecturer asks higher order questions.
C4: Using logical questions in exam tests.
Subtopic 4: Engendering competence.
C1: Communication of criteria of the evaluation.
C2: Identifying accomplishments.
C3: Connections between new and prior opportunities.
C4: Opportunities for self assess learning.

4. Discussion

First topic: The motivational factors
On this point of the discussion the respondents, almost rapport that one of the most important motivational factors that return them to school is to keep the job. According to them, nowadays everything is in development and they want to be more prepared and more qualified for the work that they do. Moreover they confess that for some of them, the school has been a prohibited dream in the monism time, and they want to realise this dream. Four of them, also report that they like the school atmosphere, they enjoy being the students, they want to develop their selves as people and to meet new people.

Second topic: The physical factors of the learning environment.
In this aspect, all the students point out that the conditions on which the lessons take place should improve. The auditoriums should be warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer period. Also, the auditoriums should be better supplied with the equipments that help visual learning, such as projector, video etc. The time of lessons is appropriate and the noise level is okay for them.

Third Topic: The rapports of responsible structures (secretariat, financial office) with adult students.
In Albanian universities the structures that are in direct contact with adult students (except lecturers) are the secretariat and the financial office. The adult students indicate that they lose a lot of time looking for information near these offices. Sometime the clerk offices that work there do not have the readiness or the willingness to help them with information. According to them to improve the situation on this direction, it would be better to have an on-line system, where they can have the possibility to find all the needed information, such as information about the payments, the schedule lessons, the topics, and the evaluation or about sessions of exams.

Forth topic: The development of teaching and learning process in the classrooms.
In this aspect, the adult students present some of their concerns. First of all, they want to be more included in the learning and teaching process. In the classroom, the lecturer should work harder on the creation of a community of learners who feel respected and connected to one another. As well, the classroom agreements, rule and consequences for violating these agreements should be negotiated.
    One evident point of the interview of the adult students is their feeling about learning. They wish that the lecturer should do more to facilitate the process, in such a way that adult students have possibilities to develop a positive attitude toward learning. They suggest that the learning environment created in the classroom should use more efficiently to their volition and promote personal relevance. Likewise, the lecturer should use the students' experiences, concerns and interest to develop the course content, to review the curricula in accordance with their interest and the lecturer should encourage the students to understand, develop, and express different points of view, as well.
    Another aspect of the interview was the opinion of adult students about enhancing meaning. They suggest that the lecturer should help students activate their prior knowledge and use it as a guide to learning. The

lecturer with the students also should create more opportunities for work groups and projects. Moreover, the lecturer should be more careful with exams test, because a lot of questions that are in these tests are asking for memory answer and few of them are asking for logical answer.

The last point that the interviewers expose from their interview was the engendering competence. In all of cases, the lecturer communicates the purpose of the lessons and the criteria of the evaluation. But, in some cases for some lecturers these criteria is not respected. Furthermore, the lecturer should create more opportunities for students to make explicit connections between their learning and the real world and to provide opportunities for students to self asses learning in order to reflect on their growth as learners.

5. Conclusions

In this paper are used qualitative analyses. To gather the data, individual semi structured interview are used. This paper describes the opinions of adult students about their concerns toward school. One of the more important findings of this study is that the adult students require more attention. They are not quite pleased with classroom conditions, with their curricula or with the information system. Furthermore, they expect more improvement on the direction of the enhancement of teaching and learning methodologies that their lecturers usually use during the lesson.

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