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Development of Professional Competences in Russia and Lithuania: an Example of Successful International Cooperation in the Field of Adult Education

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ABSTRACT

The article presents one of the directions of international cooperation in the field of adult education. It is review of a monographic book on professional competences, prepared jointly by andragogy researchers in Russia (Pushkin Leningrad State University in St. Petersburg) and Lithuania (Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas). The authors put the Russian-Lithuanian publication on the background of the significant in modern European andragogy achievements of St. Petersburg's research community, and adult education conferences organized there annually for more than a decade.

1. INTRODUCTION

As generally known, adult education has for many decades been an important area of international cooperation. It is appreciated not only by the theorists and practitioners working in the field of social sciences and humanities or politicians involved in education, but also by individual societies, who by observing the solutions adopted in other countries can (and do) profit from valuable guidance on how to build their educational offer and/or modernize their informal educational projects addressed to members of their own community [1]. It is enough to recall such institutional solutions recognized worldwide as open universities, self-education circles, folk high schools or universities of the third age to see that curricular and organizational forms of adult education that worked well in one of the countries, were almost immediately "taken over" – after a certain adaptation to local conditions - by other countries, reaffirming their transnational universality and effectiveness. It was similar with theoretical categories distinguished over the years for the analysis of the phenomena occurring within adult education, although these – let us add – often (too often?) bore a certain stigma of a currently valid political "fashion". Such categories as literacy, participation in culture or in-service training took their strong part in the history of adult education of the second half of the twentieth century in different countries. In the last quarter, largely under the influence of the interaction between science and politics, these categories were supplemented by the following: civic education, multiculturalism, social inclusion, social capital, sustainable development, lifelong education, education for the job market, etc. [2,3].

Nowadays the category of competence has also become extremely important and cognitively plausible for the analysis of educational phenomena. This resulted in a visible development of theoretical thinking in this area in the studies of European and North American representatives of the humanities and social studies, as well as in the emergence of a series of reports on educational practice analyzing the development of competences (professional, social, civic, political, cultural, educational, religious, ethical, emotional, linguistic, etc.).

2. DESCRIPTION AND DISCUSSION

The monograph prepared in cooperation of Russian and Lithuanian authors entitled “*Continuous education as a prerequisite of the development of professional competences*”, published at the end of 2013, became a noteworthy example of a study on the competences of adults. It was prepared in cooperation of Pushkin Leningrad State University in Saint-Petersburg (PLSU) and Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas (VMU). It was written by a team of 26 authors from both countries. On the Lithuanian side the project was coordinated by prof. Natalija Mažeikienė (Vice-Rector for VMU Development, Kaunas) in collaboration with assoc. Aušra Rutkienė (VMU) and prof. Margarita Teresevičienė (also VMU), and on the Russian side – by prof. Nikolai A. Lobanov (Director of the Research Institute for Social-Economic and Pedagogical Problems of Continuous Education) and prof. Vyacheslav N. Skvortsov (PLSU Rector, Saint-Petersburg).

The entire study was published by Scientific Publishing House of Pushkin Leningrad State University in two languages: Russian – as *Непрерывное образование как условие развития профессиональных компетенций...*, (335 pages, ISBN 978-5-8290-1271-7; 978-5-8290-1273-1/рус.) [4] and English – as *Continuous education as a prerequisite of the development of professional competences...*, (280 pages, ISBN 978-5-8290-1271-7; 978-5-8290-1275-5/eng.) [5]. Thus, the publication is available in two main conference languages, which is worth emphasizing, because this allows a broader reception of the research findings of individual authors and analysis and some generalization. Reviewers of the document - one from each country - are a guarantee of a high substantive level of the texts. Prof. Semen G. Verslovski, a prominent Russian andragogue, with major achievements in the world was the reviewer on the Russian side of the project. On the Lithuanian side the publication was reviewed by prof. V. Vaičiūnienė.

The monograph presented in this discussion consists of 18 articles prepared by the authors from both countries. Among the papers included in the publication there are 9 prepared by Russian scientists and 9 by researchers from Lithuania. Therefore, the partnership character of the publication is clear also from the quantitative point of view - the same number of texts written by both nations.

The publication was divided in seven parts, covering the following topics:

- i. Spiritual-moral and psychological-pedagogical foundations of professional competences in the paradigm of continuous education (articles by: V.A. Mosolov, A.M. Novikov, I.V. Volovik).
- ii. Universities as scientific centres of innovations and continuous education (V.N. Skvortsov).
- iii. Conceptual and paradigmatic aspects of professional competence in the context of continuous education (N. Macianskiene, T. Yu. Lomakina, G. Mazeikis, G Gedviliene & S. Karaseviciute).
- iv. Education in non-governmental institutions and vocational education at a factory in the system of continuous vocational education (N.A. Lobanov & T.V. Prok, L.D. Tyulicheva).
- v. Continuous education as a subject and object of transformation and modernization and reflection of these processes in professional competences (Z. Ludeka, A. Volungeviciene, V.I Klyushkin & A.S. Mischenko, M. Tereseviciene & A. Rutkiene, N. Maskaliuniene & L. Kaminkiene).
- vi. Continuous education as a subject and object of research (N. Mazeikiene & A. Dorelaitiene, J. Ruskus, V. Zydziunaite & N. Pileickiene).
- vii. Continuous Education in the sphere of culture and art: features of formation of professional competences (M.B. Glotov).

Is not the place to discuss in detail the substantive content of the monograph. Let us therefore focus only on a few more general remarks. As outside observers of Russian and Lithuanian field of adult education and andragogy achievements we found particularly interesting that in both countries there seems to be – despite different political, social and cultural experiences

of Russia and Lithuania – the same affinity for both directions of exploration research on development of professional competences and for processes for formulating generalizations or constructing theories about the role of continuous education. On one the hand, it is an expression of the fact that the overview of the challenges associated with the practice of adult vocational education and the development of andragogy (and pedagogy of work) that contemporary societies of all European countries are facing is sometimes similar, so it determines the direction of the national (in this case, Russian and Lithuanian) research and practical measures for the field discussed in the monograph described here. On the other hand – this clearly shows that the penetration of ideas and concepts, as well as organizational forms that we indicated at the beginning, are also corroborated in theorists and practitioners of adult education circles in Lithuania and Russia. This is all the more interesting that one could get a similar impression by analyzing the effects of the twin scientific publishing project entitled *Непрерывное образование как социальный факт* implemented jointly by the PLSU in Saint-Petersburg and The Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce in 2011 [6-8].

3. CONCLUSION

Congratulating therefore both the scientific circles of Pushkin Leningrad State University in St. Petersburg and Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas on a new publication, we expect that the scientific cooperation established between the centers in the field of andragogy will soon bring further interesting effects in the form of joint research projects and publications.

It is also worth noticing that the Pushkin LSU in St. Petersburg, which released the discussed Russian-Lithuanian publication (like a similar Russian-Polish publication three years ago), grew into an important center of European andragogic thought during the last decade. This is undoubtedly thanks to the conference on adult education held there annually since 2002 in collaboration with UNESCO and other bodies under the main idea of: *Lifelong learning: continuous education for sustainable development* (cf. e.g. [9-11]) published yearly under the same title, in the form of papers created on the basis of the speeches delivered during the conference (cf. e.g. [12-14]).

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