

Adult education and regionalism

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Abstract: In our study we will present a summary of one fragment of the researches concerning the relations of adult education and regionalism in Hungary. We will give an insight into the way the system of adult learning and the role of learning can be interpreted in Hungary. Following this we will highlight four researches which examined the relations of adult education and regionalism partly in terms of Hungary, partly from a broader, European point of view.

Key word: Adult education, Regionalism, Hungary, Autonomous learning

The system of adult learning

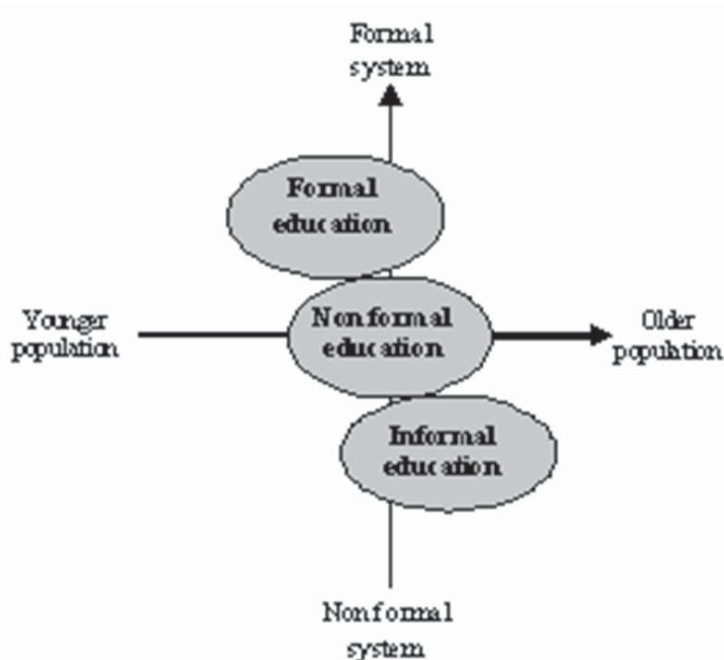
When examining adult learning we use the term based on the third point of the Hamburg Declaration (1997): “Adult education denotes the aggregate of all the learning processes, let them be formal or others, with which people’s – whom society they belong to considers adults – abilities develop, knowledge grows and professional qualification reaches a higher level or is led towards another direction, so that they could satisfy their own needs and that of society. Learning in adulthood includes formal education and continuous training, non-formal learning and the wide sphere of informal and occurrent education

which are available in a multicultural learning society, where theory and practice based approaches are acknowledged.” (Harangi, Hinzen, Sz. Tóth, 1998, pp. 9–10)

In this way in our interpretation adult learning is mastering any kind of knowledge, skill or even attitude as an adult either within an institutional/school system or through extracurricular activity. It can be done within formal, non formal or informal frames through direct or accidental learning process.

Besides recognising the broadly defined learning frames it is also an important point that with aging the opportunities for non formal and informal education gain an increasing dominance instead of the knowledge attainable within a formal educational system as the research examining the Hungarian learning characteristics also shows. (Radó et. al., 2009).

Figure 1
The schema of complex learning activity
(Source: Radó et. al., 2009)



Adulthood is a life period following growing up, a physical and intellectual maturity which is reached by a person at a certain age due to an inner progress and external influences. Adulthood is defined in the professional literature in different ways taking numerous determining

factors into consideration (e.g. sex, culture, social time, financial status) thus deepening the concept. (More details among others in Tát-rai, 2004.) In our research we reckon a person to be an *adult* who has reached 18 years of age as per his or her chronological, calendar age. Besides this in the definition taking the legal points into consideration we put the emphasis on the able adults having an independent decision-making possibility.

As at given ages of life, formal, non formal and informal training contents appear on the given levels of training as well in different proportion. (We use the term of ‘level of training’ as defined by ISCED. More details: Forray – Juhász, 2008.) The interpretations regarding the concepts of these training contents are dealt by Sarolta Pordány in her paper as well in detail (Pordány, 2006), therefore presently we do not want to deal with the differences of interpretations and terminology.

The document of the European Union entitled *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* was chosen as a crucial notional basis from the point of view of the research. In this the definitions of the forms of the learning contents are as follows (based on European Committee 2000 with our own complementation):

Formal learning: it is realized in institutions of education and training (in a school system) with quite stiff, formal rules (laws and orders, regulations) and its learning achievements are acknowledged by certificates, qualifications.

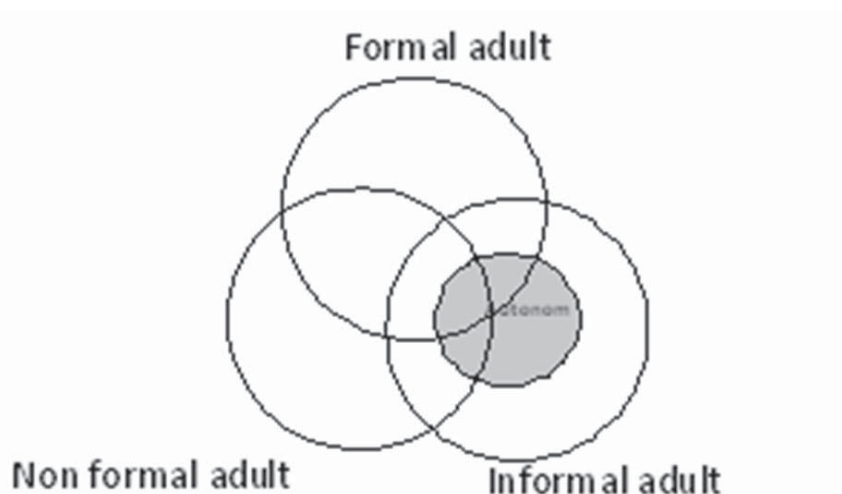
Non formal learning: It occurs besides education and training of the school system, and it is usually not rewarded with an official qualification, although it may give a certificate. A possible scene of the non formal learning is the workplace, but it can be realized within the scope of the activities of civil social organizations and groups (e.g. youth organizations, trade unions, political parties). It can also be done through organizations or services complementing the formal system (such as art, music courses, sports education or exam preparation in the form of private tuition). Its aim is to obtain new knowledge, thus retaining or renewing the position on the labour market, which is usually achieved on shorter, course-like trainings.

Informal learning: It naturally goes together with everyday life. In contrast to the formal and non formal learning forms, informal learning is not necessarily conscious learning and it is possible that even the individuals are not aware of the expanding of their knowledge and skills either.

We created a more detailed definition for informal learning. On the basis of this we regard *adult informal learning* to be any kind of voluntary learning process attached to any life activity beyond the school and institutional system, on any location. In the classification of these we differentiate usually random *spontaneous* learning processes realized in unconscious, unintentional, unorganized forms and on the other hand conscious and organized learning processes realized by the individual's free will – these are called *autonomous learning*. This kind of autonomous learning may be a process with aims planned on our own but in many cases it may also be an effective compliment of formal and/or non formal learning.

The following figure illustrates the relations of the different forms of learning to each other according to our interpretation

Figure 2
The place of autonomous learning in the system of learning
(Own design)



Autonomous learning constitutes clearly a part of informal learning and as we tried to demonstrate it is a smaller part (the bigger part is a spontaneous, random learning process). However we wish to

emphasize that any of the learning forms can be imagined without independent autonomous learning done and organized by the individual's free will, thus autonomous learning also appears as part of formal and non formal adult learning – in different scales per training.

In the system of education and adult education, based on all of this, in our research we consider *learning* all the activities from which the adult expects to contribute to acquiring everything that she or he wants to learn for any reason (whether it is external pressure or learning at home related to formal learning or their own inner motivation). *Autonomous learning* is when learners initiate learning on their own and they realize an independent, self-directed learning program, they investigate things that they cannot remember well, check their existing knowledge, refresh their earlier acquired knowledge of their own free will. This autonomous learning can be connected to work or learning activities of adults or their hobbies and directly to daily issues whether it is about searching for ways of environmentally conscious energy intakes, renewing our dressing according to the fashion or trying out a new recipe.

Adult education and regionalism through the researches

The study of the adult education and regionalism has been focused on in some of our researches, now we will give a brief outline and summary of these. The researches are as follows:

- ◆ Adult Education Atlas research took place between 1997–2001.
- ◆ Teaching and researching andragogy in the Hungarian higher education research took place between 2001–2005.
- ◆ The role of the church in andragogy in Central- and Eastern Europe research took place between 2007–2009.
- ◆ The Impact of Tertiary Education on Regional Development research took place between 2008–2010.

Adult Education Atlas research took place between 1997–2001. The basis of the research was the initiative of the University of Görlitz, where a complex adult education atlas of the community was made.

This was adapted by the Budapest Project Office of Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association with the help of a research work group, whose member was the author as well. The main coordinators of the research were Heribert Hinzen and Dénes Koltai. In first phase of the project the county seats were surveyed, about which component studies (such as Juhász 1999) as well a review study (Bajusz, Hinzen, Horváthné, 1999) was published. In the second phase the author made a survey of all settlements in Hajdú-Bihar county and was looking for regional differences and similarities too (e.g. Juhász 2001b, 2002a, 2002b, 2005). Since 2001 these have provided a basis to research the institutional system of adult education. Then on the basis of the Act *CI* of 2003 on Adult Education (to the birth of which this country-wide research also contributed) the record system of adult education was created: the different organizations of adult education, such as the registered ones, the ones with accredited programs or accredited institutions became separated. In the research process we studied Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county between 2001 and 2003, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county between 2003 and 2005 and Heves county from 2006 to 2008. It was complemented by the regional researches beginning from 2008: Márta Miklósi obtained a doctoral degree on the studies of the institutions of the Northern Great Plain Region (Miklósi 2009, 2010), Tímea Oszlanczi is doing researches on the adult education of the region of the Northern Hungarian Plain Region in her doctoral research (Oszlanczi 2010).

The research entitled *Teaching and researching andragogy in the Hungarian higher education* took place between 2001–2005 as part of an international research, which examined the same problem in connection with Eastern and Central European countries (Hinzen, Przybylska, 2004). The aim of the research was to assess the place of andragogy in higher education. There were two major fields of research: what is taught concerning andragogy, where, to what extent, in what depth and by whom; and in topics related to andragogy who does researches, with what aims, in what topics. Surveying Hungary was supported by the Budapest Project Office of Institute for International Cooperation

of the German Adult Education Association and the *Hungarian Folk High School Society*, the research was conducted by the author (main reviews: Juhász 2001b, Sári 2004). The results of the research did well in practice at the accreditation of the BA and MA andragogy majors.

The part research entitled *The role of the church in andragogy in Central- and Eastern Europe* took place between 2007 and 2009 as part of „Religions and Values: Central and Eastern European Research Network” research, which was funded by the **Seventh Framework Programme**. The research of education issues was delegated to the **University of Debrecen under the leadership of Gabriella Pusztai** (Pusztai, 2008). The aim of our part research was to make a survey of the church-maintained and/or religious adult education. As a result we gathered the related scientific literature on the religious adult education of the given countries, and we made case studies with countries having a dominant religious adult education (e.g. Slovenia, Romania) (see Juhász, 2008a). In the course of our research three main hypothesis of ours were verified.

1. Besides vocational training, religious/church maintained adult education institutions have a determining power that can hold communities together, which is ensured by different programs and projects.
2. Religious/church maintained adult education institutions play a significant role in helping the local communities to catch up, aiding individuals lagging behind and other groups (such as women, minorities, unemployed, handicapped) to be integrated into the society.
3. The religious/church maintained institutions of adult education have different dominance per region: their educational and adult educational role is determining especially in disadvantageous regions.

In the research entitled *The Impact of Tertiary Education on Regional Development* between 2008 and 2010 we studied how the so-called fourth stage (Kozma, 2000a) starting to gain ground in the 1990s is

present in Partium region (Süli, Zakar, 2010), what regional differences can be observed in the three countries making up Partium region (Hungary, Romania, Ukraine) concerning the system of adult education and how the dynamically progressing fourth stage can contribute to the economic developments of the region, complementing higher and other education. In our research on the basis of the available professional literature, provisions of law, research materials, background materials and the case studies made in the institutions we studied the legal system, financing, institutional system, the participation in adult education, quality assurance and the training of adult educators and andragogists, all of them in connection with the adult education of the region of Partium. We strove to find model institutions as well to present “good practices” (See the results: Juhász, 2010).

The researches containing regional segments as well provide a good basis for comparative adult researches, in which regional differences of a country or in a broader sense similarities and differences between Euro regions can also be demonstrated. These will help the researchers and through them the decision makers to be able to examine and carry out the development of trainings, human resources and the development of the region responsibly connecting the achieved results and other micro- and macro-social features.

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