



A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CONTEXT OF E-LEARNING IN NON-FORMAL ADULT EDUCATION

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- Introduction
- Methods and Methodologies
- Theoretical Framework
- Research Design
- Findings of the Empirical Research
- Conclusions and Prospects for Development

- **Adult education** has become **a priority** for reaching the objectives of the Europe 2020 such as strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (European Commission, 2010, p. 12).
- In order to ensure Europe's success and enhance employability, the impact of non-formal adult education has to be improved as **the demand for non-formal education increases** with regard to learning without leaving the place of residence, not interrupting work performance, family life (Vilkonis, Bakanoviene & Turskiene, 2013, p. 181).
- For the creation of empowerment opportunities within non-formal adult education, **e-learning** is considered.

- The **guiding research question** is as follows:
 - What is the context of e-learning in non-formal adult education in selected European countries?
- **The aim of the article** is
 - to analyse the context of e-learning in non-formal adult education in selected European countries
 - underpinning elaboration of recommendations on training for teachers who provide e-learning in non-formal adult education.
- The **methodology** of the present scientific research:
 - non-formal adult education → context analysis → an empirical study within a multicultural environment → conclusions.

Theoretical Framework (1)

- **Adult** is a person who has reached the age of 15 years, “that after a break continues general or professional education (formal, informal)” (Basic Guidelines of Lifelong Learning Policy for 2007–2013, 2007).
- **Adult education** covers **all formal, non-formal and informal** learning undertaken by adults after they have left their initial education and training, whether for professional reasons (such as re-skilling and up-skilling) or for private purposes (e.g. social, cultural, artistic and societal learning) (European Commission, 2013a).

- **Adult education** is a multi-dimensional educational process of persons, which, ensures the development of the individual and his or her ability to compete in the employment market, during the course of a lifetime of a person (Education Law, 1998 – 2011).
- **Adult education** includes all types of formal, non-formal and informal education including **further and interest education, professional upgrading and in-service training**.
- **Non-formal education** is any organised educational activity outside the established formal system - whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity - that is intended to serve identifiable learning clienteles and learning objectives (Coombs, Prosser & Ahmed, 1973).



- **E-learning** is the use of new multimedia technologies and the Internet to improve the quality of learning by facilitating access to resources and services” (European Commission 2008, p. 6) as well as remote exchanges and collaboration.
- **E-learning** includes such terms as
 - Distance education,
 - Blended learning (combination of distance and face to face learning),
 - Online learning,
 - Virtual learning,
 - Web-based learning
 - Open education.

- **Context analysis** is done to develop a strategy on an issue (Aļeksejeva, Zaščerinskis, Zaščerinska, Andreeva, 2013: 9).
- Context analysis is traditionally **differentiated** into
 - the analysis of the **macro-level context**, namely, the level of a nation in the present research,
 - the analysis of the **mezzo-level context**, namely, the level of an organisation in the present research,
 - the analysis of the **micro-level context**, namely, the level of a students' group in the present research.

- **Guiding question:**
 - What is the context of e-learning in non-formal adult education in selected European countries?

- The empirical study was carried out in February – March 2015.

- The **methods of obtaining data** included
 - desk research,
 - focus group interviews,
 - individual in-depth interviews, and
 - survey.

- **Explorative research** has been used in the empirical study (Mayring, 2007, 6).

- **Interpretive** research paradigm

Study Results: Belgium (1)

- A wrong vision on e-learning could be provided if this vision ignores the **psychological backgrounds and different educational models of blended learning**.
- Active learning, collaborative learning & creating knowledge and problem solving learning are basic concepts of a modern e-learning.
- There are four distinct learning theories:
 - Behaviorism,
 - Cognitivism,
 - constructivism and
 - recently connectivism.

- **Connectivism** (Siemens, 2010) means the network of the students and external field experts is given a prominent place in the learning process.
- In this approach to learning networking is getting the clutch between the formal and informal learning via the learning community.
- Four learning styles (Vermunt, 2013).
- Each learning style describes
 - what motives a student to learn, and
 - how the student's learning behavior looks like.
- The main stream form of e-learning is **blended learning**.

Study Results: Germany (3)

- E-learning is considered as "**Adaptive Learning**".
- Concerning Adaptive Learning experts welcome such applications where the learners are involved in the process of **individualization of learning content** and consciously make decisions.
- The trend towards **internationalization** of e - learning industry manifests itself in the recent survey, especially in the great agreement of the experts for the thesis that e-learning providers are set up in the next few years on need to offer their learning content in all major world languages.

- **Fragmentarism** in non-formal adult education in general and e-learning as well as teacher training in non-formal adult education in Latvia in particular.
- E-learning in non-formal adult education in Latvia is placed into the concept of Latvian lifelong learning that **combines the humanistic and economic approach**:
 - the development of the personality in connection with raising qualification and requalification combining it with formal, non-formal and informal learning in the integrated perspective of innovations and entrepreneurship (Birzina, 2012).
- The new target of the European Union adult education policy including Latvia has shifted **from citizens to workers** and the competence development model (Maniscalco, 2013).

Study Results: Latvia (5)

- ‘Politization’ of research (Roger, 2002)
- Rooted-in-the-policy definitions (Kuļšs, 2014b, 141)
- Recognition of non-formal and informal education (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2010)
- An **adult as a whole** who learns by transforming experience into bodily feeling, soul emotions and ideas of mind (Babajeva, p. 456)
- The focus of learning theory has shifted
 - from cognitive
 - to **holistic approach** (Babajeva, 2012, p. 456).

Study Results: Latvia (6)

- Due to a number of problems such as timing, financial, etc teaching materials in the national language are not enriched.
- There is no information as well as research on teacher training for teachers who are involved in non-formal adult education in Latvia in general and in e-learning in non-formal adult education in Latvia in particular.

Study Results: Poland (7)

- There is an increasing trend in business in using e-learning tools in improving employees' skills.
- The most popular tools are:
 - Moodle platform and
 - webinars.
- The role of international training courses:
 - reduction of costs,
 - targeting bigger amount of participants and
 - dividing education process into working on
 - attitudes/behaviours in the class trainings (face to face trainings) and
 - knowledge via e-learning courses.

Study Results: Poland (8)

- The quality of the courses - active method perspective:
 - People who are responsible for creating courses are experts in their field but their knowledge and skills about their role in such a distance course is not enough.
- The **role of trainer in e-learning**:
 - Leader of distance education (Education distance Leaders - Beaudoin 2003),
 - To change the behavior of learners,
 - Facilitator of the change and guide on the Internet rather than the expert only,
 - Educator will create the educational situation (training) but the learner will decide where and when will use it.
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- Summarizing content analysis (Mayring, 2004) of the data reveals that the situation in e-learning in Belgium, Germany, Latvia and Poland is found **favourable** as partners identified the main issues in their countries to be overcome in e-learning:
 - **In Belgium**, the psychological backgrounds of different educational models of blended learning are to be considered.
 - **In Germany**, e-learning is considered as Adaptive Learning where the Learners are involved in the process of individualization of learning content and consciously make decisions.

Findings of the Empirical Study (2)



- **In Latvia**, in regard to the European Union (including Latvia) policy on adult education fragmentarism in the implementation of e-learning within non-formal adult education is revealed.
- **In Poland**, the increase of the quality of the courses from the active method perspective is required.

- The comparative analysis of the context of e-learning in non-formal adult education in the selected European countries is found heterogeneous.
- The recommendations refer to differentiation of such domains of training teachers who provide e-learning in non-formal adult education as
 - training preparation,
 - training content,
 - training methodology,
 - training methods, and
 - training tools.

- *Training preparation* should include
 - rooted-in-the-policy definitions (Kuļšs, 2014b, 141) in the light of ‘politization’ of research (Roger, 2002),
 - the psychological backgrounds of different educational models of blended learning,
 - the creation of educational scenarios using new technologies,
 - educational processes online, moderating the discussion in such a way that the representatives of different cultures can among themselves exchange experiences related to the topic of training and different perspectives in looking at this issue,
 - preparing courses for people with special needs like visually impaired or blind people,
 - certification and qualification of training for teachers.

- *Teaching materials in national languages* for training teachers have to be ensured.
- *Training content*
 - application of e-Business, e-Commerce, Enterprise 2.0 or even 3.0, e-Government for citizens, etc.
 - Major topics and content for corporate e-learning include the e-learning topics “product training”, “compliance” and “IT applications”.
 - The potential of Open Educational Resources (OER) for market opening has to be re-evaluated as risks to commercial e-learning providers exist.

Conclusions (4)

- *Training methodology*: the learner should play an active role.
- *Training methods* should provide a variety of methods applicable to the competence development model in e-learning such as used by employees in a particular field.
- *Training tools*
 - E-tools needed for a particular subject, e.g. e-Business, e-Commerce, Enterprise 2.0 or even 3.0, e-Government for citizens, etc.
 - Social media such as
 - social networks and
 - communities,
 - "Mobile / Apps".

- Limitations of the present research:
 - The inter-connections between non-formal adult education, e-learning and context have been set.
 - Another limitation is the empirical study conducted by involving the participants of the selected European countries only.

Prospects for Development (1)

- Further research tends to focus on empirical studies to be carried out in **other countries**.
- And **a comparative research of different countries** could be carried out, too.



Thank you for your attention!

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