

Orientation of second-chance schools towards students

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Abstract Adult learners enter the school education system in quite specific situations. There is no clear delineation of the scope of second-chance education nor the breadth of the target group itself. Adult learners are differently motivated to learn and have different learning needs, interests and attitudes. It is necessary to take into account different personal dispositions and life experiences in the process of conceptualising and implementing second-chance education. The paper discusses the non-standard conditions of second-chance education, its significance and the form of educational work oriented towards second-chance school students concerning their specificities and individual prerequisites.

Keywords Adult education, second-chance education, early school leaving, early school leavers

1. SPECIFICITIES OF SECOND-CHANCE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

The very status of second-chance education is unclear. The current Act No. 568/2009 Coll. on Lifelong Learning does not include school education among the types of further education. In the past, Act No 386/1997 Coll. on Further Education (§3) included education at primary, secondary and higher education institutions, which prepares the participant for obtaining a degree, among the types of further education. However, the amendment of this Act excluded education at universities from the types of further education.

In agreement with Lukáč, Temiaková (2021), we conclude that in the conditions of our territory, there are no conceptually uniform conditions that would distinguish second-chance education from standard formal education. There is no universally valid and accepted concept of second-chance education, separate support schemes and no network of second-chance schools.

We also perceive considerable inconsistency in the differences in its conception at the level of the relevant literature in the field of andragogical science. There are considerations that school-based adult education does not represent a characteristic adult education, as a certain degree of rigidity of procedures and contents influences the formal school system (Šerák and Dvořáková, 2009, p. 28). Contrary to this belief, Palán and Langer (2008, p. 95) state that

adult education occurs in primary, secondary, and higher vocational schools and universities. Thus, in terms of categorisation, this specific way of educational work with adult clients can be classified as a type of further education. According to Prusáková (2005), second-chance education, or substitute school education, makes it possible to replace school education generally acquired at a younger age. It serves as a tool to compensate for the lack of success, options or opportunities for learning in traditional school education.

The concept of lifelong learning is an instrument for change at both the individual and societal levels. A necessary condition is to ensure the most optimal access to education for non-traditional learners and to identify the vital pathological aspects and intrapersonal reasons crucial concerning their active participation. It is necessary to intensify efforts to create an inclusive environment for all students in second-chance schools and to analyse the current state of second-chance education in local and international contexts, which are necessary to take into account in the development and implementation of action plans and strategies. We perceive the focus of the issue at hand not only at the level of describing the legislative and strategic foundations of second-chance education but also on the individual characteristics of the persons of this heterogeneous target group.

Foreign trends in the field of second-chance education reflect the need for its innovative implementation. In Australia, there is a choice of both formal and informal pathways. Secondary education is provided in secondary schools and education centres for adults with difficulties participating in formal education. Learners can achieve vocational education in specialised accredited courses. In Sweden, municipalities are obliged to provide education for adults without compulsory education in municipal schools. In Belgium, they established adult basic education centres and adult education centres to enable learners to obtain secondary education (Rigová et al., 2021).

The field of research abroad grasps the topic of second-chance education mainly through a qualitative paradigm, either with learners or educators. The research carried out in the conditions of our territory "Vyučovanie v školách druhej šance z perspektívy učiteľa dospelého učiaceho sa" (*Teaching in Second Chance Schools from the perspective of the teacher and the adult learner* – solution period 1st July 2019 - 30th June 2023) focuses on a specific target group of adults with no education or with primary education, on their teachers and the absence of andragogical training. The main

aim of the research is to identify vital aspects of teaching through teacher self-reflection and learner reflection, and the main outputs of the research endeavour will be a competency model and a typology of teachers of adults with no education and with primary education.

1.1 The importance of exploring second-chance education of adults

The contribution of understanding the social contexts of the current state and the development of second-chance education in the Slovak Republic is significant. We seek to define current, actual and potential problems in implementing this unique adult education in the formal education system. Last but not least, it is necessary to point out the relational interfaces between pedagogical and andragogical approaches in performing the practical reality of second-chance education.

Equally important is the analysis of the problems of the successful transformation of second-chance education models into practice, associated with the inconsistency of conceptual and strategic starting points. Thus, it is essential to open the theoretical discourse on the issues of the practical-applied contexts of second-chance education. The object of interest for its effective implementation is the effort to identify the specific aspects of the process in question in the intents of the educational curriculum, goals and ways of working in this interaction between teachers and students. We consider the state optimal when the core of the implementation includes knowledge based on relevant literature, the experience of participants, the domestic and foreign environment, the teacher's competency model in second-chance education and the subjective experience and reflection of the students themselves.

2. PARTICIPANTS IN SECOND-CHANCE EDUCATION

The Education Act (§19) does not oblige adults to acquire a certain level of education. The target group of participants in secondary education thus appears to be very heterogeneous. The participants do not even have to come from the same ethnic group, which significantly complicates the requirements for the work of the educator. The diversity of techniques, methods and approaches used in education, based on the participants' different age and social characteristics, must also respect their intercultural differences. Lukáčová (2014, p. 76) defines the group of people with no education or with primary education as the highest level of education in the system of second-chance education, in particular:

- members of socially excluded Roma communities,
- the unemployed registered at the labour offices,
- convicted prisoners serving a prison sentence.

In this way, polarization in social stratification, higher unemployment rates, poverty, social exclusion, crime, and other pathological phenomena that disrupt social cohesion are deepening. The economic costs of dropping out of formal education are also considerable. At present, it is possible to observe a positive development in the population's educational level. Nevertheless, there is a significant group of individuals and social groups with a low level of education. The significance of this issue also reflects in the lack of personal development and social inclusion of actual or potential participants or candidates for studies (Rigová et al., 2021). The diversity of the target group of second-chance education suggests that, in its implementation, we have to analyse the motivational factors of the participants themselves, their expectations and other learning aspirations. Knowing the barriers

that eliminate participation and defining the problems related to the course of study is also essential. Functional models must operate with the reasons for dropping out of the initial study. A prerequisite for successful implementation is the effort to prevent recurrent problems that stem from the pathological, subjective and objective, formal and informal structures of the participants in second-chance education.

The subjective reflection of the participants opens up a description of critical points concerning the techniques, methods and approaches teachers use during the educational process. We see room for improving evaluation/self-evaluation strategies and criteria here. Equally important is the continuous learning about the organisational-managerial, material and procedural conditions for successfully implementing the second-chance education process. The potential of this specific type of adult education is indisputable. However, it is desirable to define the steps leading to its achievability.

The fundamental question remains who can be included in this large target group. Adult non-traditional learners who entered (or re-entered) education with a large gap from previous formal education, are 25 years of age or older, enrolled based on life or work experience, and returned to the system later to upgrade their qualifications and professional competencies, are non-traditional learners according to Scheutze, Slowley (2002, in Dopita, Špatenková 2018).

In the context of secondary education and its specific aspects, based on the overlaps and common characteristics, non-traditional learners in the formal education system can be classified as learners:

- those aged 16 and over, or those in emerging adulthood, young adulthood and middle adulthood,
- people who have completed at least compulsory schooling (which does not mean they have completed primary education, it means they are without the education), or have completed primary education but not completed secondary education,
- learners entering education several years after the initiation, which can significantly impair their ability to learn,
- primarily working people alongside their studies (this does not have to be a full-time job; unemployed non-traditional students are not excluded),
- people who are motivated internally but also by external motives.

2.1 Teaching oriented towards students

When designing second-chance education programmes, it is necessary to operate with the specificity of the participants themselves. If only implying external conditions and causes in the implementation process, it is impossible to expect that the success and effectiveness of the course itself will increase significantly. We consider it necessary to analyse the subjective perception of students in the context of the procedural background of this issue.

In this regard, Lukáčová (2014) states that in the process of implementation of second-chance education, teachers use the same resources as in the formal process of education and training of children and youth. It seems optimal to view the issue of second-chance education through an integrative theoretical overview. Thus, the primary task remains to clarify the current status of second-chance schools, their readiness and capacity to provide this type of education, and the problematic aspects of second-chance education from the perspective of the participants and the key (de)motivating factors.

Personal, family, health, institutional and economic factors are significant concerning re-entering the school system in adulthood. The extent to which these are known depends on the research participant's willingness to comment on personal issues. However, it is indispensable to intensify research efforts in the given area. To some extent, the school's characteristic pedagogical environment conflicts with the diversity of the specificities of the andragogical target group of second-chance education. These realities place specific demands on the teacher in second-chance schools. The question of preparing teachers to work with groups of adult learners and the differentiated view of their professional competencies becomes significant.

3. CONCLUSION

We believe that creating an alternative space in the education system to obtain a comprehensive degree for non-traditional adult learners is a necessary and essential part of the lifelong learning concept (Lukáč, Temiaková, 2021). The openness and accessibility of education at any age allow people to obtain at any stage of their life the education they failed to obtain at the age designated for it for various reasons. We think that the optimal conceptual direction of second-chance education has the potential to endow the conditions leading to the subject openness and accessibility of education for adult participants who have prematurely completed their initial studies. However, it is not possible to establish this education in an isolated space. It is crucial to imply the specificities of adult learning, the heterogeneity of motivational factors for learning and the differences at the level of personal determinants in the process of conceptual anchoring of second-chance education.

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