

ADULT EDUCATION IN PRACTICE: TEACHER TRAINING AND ITS POTENTIAL FOR CHANGING SCHOOL TEACHERS THROUGH ADULT LEARNING

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Abstract

“Belem Frameworks of Action” the main document launched at the Brazilian Belem City Adult Education Conference, CONFINTEA VI, declared Adult Education’s priority importance and urge all World Authorities to follow CONTINTEA’s Resolutions (Brazil, May 2009). “It is time to act, because no acting costs a lot” – stated the Final Resolution, ratified by the representatives of 156 countries and Georgia among them (CONFINTEA V, Final Report, 2009). The content, management and delivery of adult education and the accessibility of learning opportunities for adults need improvements and new studies to be involved. This study reports data gathered from schoolteachers about their perceptions of the compatibility of the certification training (Georgia, 2010) with principles of adult learning and the identification of the learning motivation, level and sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction held for this training by the teachers. This study was carried out to reveal the causal effect of adult education principles on the attitudes of schoolteachers towards preparatory training for certification tests and the interaction quality between the adult learning and the transform of the pedagogical beliefs and practices of Georgian schoolteachers in transition period.

Key words: *adult education, pedagogical beliefs, teacher training, adult learning practitioners, andragogy, knowledge society.*

Introduction

First information on Adult Education in Georgia is found in the work of the Greek philosopher, Themisti (317-188 B.C.). Here we read that there was a school of rhetoric in the vicinity of Phasis (current Poti, port of Georgia), where Themisti and his father have received “Rhetoric Education” (Vasadze & Gagua, 1980). In the 6th century A.D. the Assyrian Fathers were practicing at Peter Iberian’s Syrian School and their goal was to provide Georgian adult population with theological and philosophic knowledge (Gamsakhurdia, 1984). Later, associations for the elimination of illiteracy in Georgia in XIX Century were founded by Ilia Chavchavadze, an outstanding Georgian Educator, and his associates: I. Gogebashvili, E. Ninoshvili, N. Nikoladze These were typical Adult Education Centres. Their goal was to provide Georgian adult population with basic skills and professional knowledge (Рамишвили, 1986).

During the Soviet period adult education in Georgia and in the whole of the Soviet Union was directed toward increasing the quality of professionals. In analyzing the works of adult education scholars of that period, one finds that this trend in adult education was mainly caused

by state dictates. Adult education has visible economic implications, contributes to the growth of society, helps bring about change, and improves the quality of life for the individual. Adult learning is all about change - change in attitude, change in knowledge, change in behavior, change in a skill, change in how we think, and change in productivity (Korsgaard, 2002). The major processes experienced by adults, such as a search for self-fulfillment and individual change, are related explicitly to their decision to enroll in adult education courses and trainings. Likewise, the benefits of adult education are constructed in terms of reframing identity, well-being, self-growth, and rather than responding to purely extrinsic motives.

From a life-stage perspective, the motivation of adults (in this study school teachers undergoing certification tests) to enroll in a training program is different but the meaning they attach to adult education is very much dependent on cultural aspects of their country. For example, adults may face issues with completion of courses, including personal obstacles: health, money issues, job pressure, family pressure, lack of perseverance, a problem with internal motivation. Nevertheless, all professionals may face the necessity to improve and/or change their qualifications due to reforms undergoing in the country. This is the case in Georgia.

Teacher Training in Georgia

Courses preparing educators for upcoming certification tests in Georgia may have a positive impact on development of adult education in the country. A new system of state certification is aimed at producing many changes including 1) increases in the requirements for initial preparation, 2) the addition of many new fields of certification, 3) new trends in alternative preparation, 4) developments in the initial and continuing assessment of educators, and 5) a move toward national certification. This creates an opportunity for scholars to research adult education processes. One of the main goals of the study was to determine if the use of adult education principles in training cause an improved perception by teachers of that training.

Teacher Professional Development Centers (TPDC) in Georgia were established to facilitate the creation of comprehensive teacher training and development. Teachers received training vouchers that enabled them to finance their professional development. The TPDC entered into agreements with 19 providers with accredited TPD programs to deliver the training courses around the country. These service providers offered 138 training modules in total. To ensure that the teachers had a choice in identifying a desirable TPD program, a list and summaries of the accredited training programs were developed and distributed to schools. Detailed instructions for voucher administration were prepared for all stakeholders. The program was publicized through regional meetings with the Education Resource Centers, local school directors and teachers. The program was launched in 2010. Teachers' Professional Support Center at Ilia State University is one of the training providers preparing schoolteachers for certification tests.

Theoretical Base

Many scholars of adult education focus on understanding job satisfaction and self-actualization in order to help adults meet job market expectations. Disciplines that form the theoretical foundation of teacher training in Georgia can be found in work in social pedagogy, industrial psychology, and andragogy. Social pedagogy is an academic discipline concerned with theory and practice of holistic education and care (Smith, 2009). Social pedagogues work within a range of different settings, from early years through adulthood to working with disadvantaged adult groups as well as older people. They study topics such as self-actualization, human dignity, self-respect, mutual respect, trust and equality. Industrial Psychology is 'the scientific study of the relationship between man and the world of the work . . . in the process

of making living' and is related with job satisfaction (Guion, 1965). The 'industrial' side of Industrial and Organizational Psychology has its historical origins in research on individual differences, assessment and the prediction of performances (Scott, 1991). In many countries there is a growing conception of 'andragogy' as the scholarly approach to the learning of adults. In this connotation andragogy is the science of and supporting lifelong and lifelong education of adults (Reischmann, 2004). *The art and science of helping adults learn' is built upon two central, defining attributes: First, a conception of learners as self-directed and autonomous; and second, a conception of the role of the teacher as facilitator of learning rather than presenter of content* (Knowles, 1984).

A Georgian philosopher, Merab Mamardashvili, was one of the first initiators of studies on andragogy in the Soviet Union. Based on his theories his successors have founded the Department of Andragogy at the Institute of General Education of the Russian Federation and Department of Acmeology at the Academy of Social Sciences, later renamed as the Russian Academy of Management (Zmeyov, 1998).

Mamardashvili's colleagues and successors in Georgia, K. Ramishvili, L. Chikvaidze, S. Gamsakhurdia, E. Davituliani, N. Imedadze and others started to publish their first works on adult education during perestroika (1986-1990). Unfortunately, due to the social and political cataclysms of the transition period (1990-2005) and the restructuring of state universities and science institutions, adult education scholars were unable to continue to develop their field. The current professional development reforms promise to reintroduce adult education in Georgia as a significant field of study in the capacity building reforms of the nation (National Report for COFINTEA VI, 2009). This study offers one example of how adult education can be applied to teacher professional development.

Methodology of Research

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of the study was to examine training that incorporated the principles of adult education could be linked to an increase in teachers' positive feelings about certification and state provided courses. Specifically the study sought to answer several questions:

- 1) Is there a difference in the perceptions held by teachers in courses structured according to principles of adult education in contrast to those in courses with no adult education content?
- 2) Does content based on adult education principles positively impact an individual's attitude toward training.
- 3) What do teachers report about their training in state provided certification courses?

Population and Sample Selection

This study was conducted at teachers' training sites in four Georgian cities: Kutaisi, Zugdidi, Zestafoni, and Khobi. Table 1 presents the distribution of participants.

Table 1. Number and Location of Participating Teachers.

City	Number of Teachers
Kutaisi	75
Zestafoni	75
Zugdidi	75
Khobi	75
Total	300

Two homogenous samples were created: one was a “treatment” group and the second group was a “control” test unit group. At each site, teachers were randomly assigned to one of these two groups. Quantitative data measuring perceptions of the training were gathered using a Likert Scale questionnaire. Qualitative data were gathered using 30 face to face interviews in each city (120 in total during both the base-line phase of the study and during the post-treatment phase of the study). The purpose of the interviews was to identify teacher perceptions, learning motivation, level and sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction held for the training.

The “treatment” contained information and practices aligned with principles of adult education. The members of this experimental group were informed about adult education principles and asked to complete questionnaires specifically produced for this study. Those in the control cluster received neither the information about adult education principles nor instruction that was intentionally aligned with adult education principles.

By providing information on the subject of adult education principles in the treatment cluster, the study both disseminated the values on adult education and initiated the possibility for a discourse on adult education principles among members of this group. We acknowledge that this created the potential for bias. Additionally, the survey respondents in this experimental group were instructed to consider the content of Adult Education during their training. The follow-up survey with these select participants measured their views on training after being subjected to the treatment. The attitudes towards training prior to treatment (obtained through the base-line survey) and after the treatment (obtained through a post-treatment survey) were compared. In addition, the attitudes on training between the groups exposed to treatment and the control groups were compared.

It is important to note that in the field, the language spoken was Georgian. Questionnaires were also constructed using Georgian. The English version of the questions during the interview phases are presented in Appendix A. We have not carried out a rigorous assessment of the accuracy of our translation but believe we have captured the perceptions of our subjects.

Data Collection and Analyses

A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was used to characterize the influence of adult education principles on the attitudes of school teachers towards preparatory training for certification tests. **Qualitative analyses were directed at two main statements** (see the results below). After the experiment, a schoolteacher population of 300 teachers was asked to complete a questionnaire on the main statements of the study. Data from this questionnaire and the resulting analysis is presented below. A null hypothesis of difference was tested. That is, parameters of difference were set at the .05 level when using the t-test for two independent samples in order to retain or reject a null hypothesis.

The study was carried out in three phases. First, 80 subjects (20 from each city) were interviewed prior to the training. Second, participants experienced the intervention or the training. Third, follow up interviews were made with 20 subjects from each city (n = 80).

In addition, prior to assessing the knowledge gained during the training, a survey was administered to determine how subjects perceived the training. These data are presented below in Table 2. Then, a test of content mastery of professional skills was randomly administered to 10% of the subjects in the experimental group (n = 8) and another 10% to those in the control group (n = 8 after the completion of the course). The purpose was to determine if the actual knowledge acquired during the training differed according to whether or not the principles of adult education were included. A T-test (see Table 5 below) of independent samples were used to determine if there was a significant difference in the mastery scores based on group membership (in the control or experimental group). Thus the researchers tended to find a significant t statistic indicating a difference between the experimental and the control

group for supporting the hypothesis that including principles of adult education in professional development training has a positive impact.

Results of Research

Tables 2-4 present the results of the survey. Table two below reports responses from teachers about whether or not they perceived the principles of adult education to have a positive impact on the training they had received.

Table 2. Perception of Teachers of the Positive Role of Adult Education in Professional Development (n = 300).

Responses	Number of Teachers	Percent of total
Don't Agree	3	1
Partly Agree	45	15
Fully Agree	252	84

Of the whole population, adult education was perceived to be a positive influence. Table 3 examines teacher perceptions pertaining to the national Voucher training program and whether this training program was oriented only to the obtaining of a certificate or more broadly to professional development. The statement read, “The voucher financing program supports only successful passing of teachers’ certification tests but does not guarantee professional development”. Here perceptions were more mixed.

Table 3. Teacher Perceptions about the Voucher Plan (n=300).

Responses	Number of Teachers	Percent of total
Don't Agree	180	60
Partially Agree	111	37
Fully Agree	9	3

Most of the teachers responding to this query found that the training program consists of mixed goals that included both certification and professional development. Well over half of these teachers did not agree that the program was focused only on certification. In a similar manner, teachers were overwhelming in supporting the importance of adult education over just preparation for tests. Eighty five percent of the respondents preferred to view the training as education for professional skill development in contrast to only 15% who saw the training as preparation for tests.

To address the critical question of the study - does training conducted using principles of adult education impact outcomes, eight randomly selected subjects in both the experimental and control group were administered a content examination at the conclusion of the training. The test covered knowledge of the teacher’s professional skills that constituted much of the training. Table four below shows the raw results of this assessment, which was evaluated from 1 to 10.

Table 4. Comparisons of Test Scores on Professional Skills.

Test scores								
Experimental Group (X)	6	7	9	8	9	7	6	8
Control group (Y)	8	2	4	6	5	4	1	2

A t-test was conducted for two independent samples using the data above for finding a significant t statistic indicating a difference between the experimental and the control group (see Table 5 below).

Table 5: Test Data.

x	$(x - M_x)^2$	y	$(y - M_y)^2$
6	2.25	8	16
7	0.25	2	9
9	2.25	4	0
8	0.25	6	4
9	2.25	5	4
7	0.25	4	0
6	2.25	1	9
8	0.25	2	4
$\Sigma x = 60$	$\Sigma(x - M_x)^2 = 10$	$\Sigma y = 32$	$\Sigma(y - M_y)^2 = 46$
$M_x = 7.5$	$S_x^2 = 1.428671$	$M_y = 4$	$S_y^2 = \frac{46}{7} = 6.571$

The data in Table 5 produced a significant t statistic indicating a difference between the experimental and the control group ($t(14) = 3.5$, $p < .05$). The researchers conclude they can support their hypothesis that including principles of adult education in professional development training has a positive impact.

Thus, the study was framed in two parts. In the first part the researchers wished to gather perceptions from teacher training participants about the use of adult education principles in governmental professional development training. These teachers reported a positive affirmation of the importance of adult education. In addition, a quasi experimental study was conducted examining whether or not the usage of principles of adult learning in a professional development program for teachers had a positive impact on the learning of the teachers. Two groups of teachers experienced the curriculum developed by the Teacher Professional Support Center at Ilia State University, Tbilisi. Again, the impact of adult education on the training was observed. In this case, those teachers in sessions informed by principles of adult education scored higher on the test of content than those in the control group.

Discussion

Three closely related changes over the past 20 years have transformed Georgian economy. First, a shift to higher value added services – technology and knowledge intensive industries. Second, a shift from traditional physical assets such as machinery and buildings to investment in intangible assets such as software and human capital. Third, we have seen an increase

in the number of employees with higher levels of qualifications and unemployment, at the same time. Development of the employees with higher levels of qualification is the main task of the reforms taking place in the country.

Georgia's national educational reforms are large in scale and ambitious. A critical part of the success of these reforms will be teacher development. Georgian educators, long schooled in a more autocratic and centralized system, responded favorably in our study to principles of adult education as they worked to master the professional development skills identified by the Ministry of Education as important to the success of the national reforms.

The study was mainly exploratory in intent. The results are encouraging enough to suggest more needs to be learned about how the principles of adult education can be used to improve teacher training. This may be of particular importance in former Soviet nations where a highly centralized educational structure obviated the need for the participatory elements common to adult education. Developing initiative and agency in the national teaching force is an important foundation for professionalizing this educational reform.

Conclusions

"Once you have self-respect, it's harder to lose!" (Maslow, 1954). It is the role of the adult education to develop such feelings as self-respect, confidence, competence, achievement, mastery, independence, and freedom in adult population and mostly during the transition period. It is especially important to develop those feelings in school teachers growing future generation and building knowledge society of their country.

Since 1990, a number of East European countries have made important breakthroughs in the areas of contemporary adult education. But progress has been uneven and even started to wane. Many countries lag behind. The authors of the paper recommend accelerating the processes and filling this gap by developing appropriate environment in the field of state-funded adult trainings for the purpose of achieving effective results in transition period.

There is no way to guarantee quality in adult training but there are some ways to assure it. In particular, the authors recommend training providers of school teachers to pay additional attention to adult education principles during the preparatory trainings on development of professional skills for teachers' certification exams in Georgia in order to stimulate teachers to transform their pedagogical beliefs and practices.

Using adult education principles can be characterized as a factor facilitating the teachers in understanding their needs of self-actualization. All this encourages the teachers to enhance their insight into the world and into themselves.

As the results of the study show, the knowledge of the specificity of adult education leads not only to effective training and better scores in the tests, but also to self-actualization and wellbeing. Thus, the teachers appear to profit more when the training is based on adult education principles and it's the role of the training provider to supply educators with the knowledge about those principles in order to give the teachers necessary tools for successful development and modernization of their professional skills.

Furthermore, Georgia's teachers are not alone in seeking to modernize their skills. It is quite feasible to believe that national teacher development programs in other transition nations could also be informed by the results of this study. We recommend that further research be done exploring the positive benefits of incorporating the principles of adult education in all teacher preparation programs.

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Appendix A

Questions Used in Interviews

- 1) What are the general categories to emerge in a first review of teachers' training for you? (probes: reforms, motivation, exams, salary)
- 2) What motivates you as an adult and as a school teacher to attend the training? (probes: voluntary training, issue of time, level of interest, your orientation to learning)
- 3) What impacts your planning to pass the certification exams after training? (probes: fear of exams, lack of confidence, cost, salary)
- 4) What is your previous experience with training? (probes: new skills, increase in qualifications, professionalism of trainer)
- 5) What are your perceptions of the current training? (probes: new skills, interest in new pedagogy, salary increase)
- 6) What causes your interest in principles of adult education? (probes: new perspectives, salary increase, understanding, self actualization)
- 7) What is most important for you in the training? (probes: self actualization, change of status, increase in salary)

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