

From Pedagogy to Adult Training: A Comparative Research on the Roles of the Educator-School Teacher and the Adult Trainer

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Abstract

According to findings of research conducted in Greece in the last decade within the Adult Education and Training field, a high percentage of the certified adult trainers in Greece are graduates of Education Studies. Even though a great number of adult trainers originate from the Education field there is no - so far - comparative research neither on the multivariate relationship between the roles of the school teacher and the adult trainer, nor on their convergences and deviations.

The current research attempts the comparison of the above mentioned roles, through the detection of those personal and social motives which influenced the professional journey of the school teacher-adult trainers. It will investigate the identification of the convergences and deviations, the characteristics of the school teacher which can hinder or encourage the development of the adult trainer role and the valuation of the job satisfaction gained from each one of these roles.

The research sample consists of experienced full time school teachers, who all work as part time adult trainers for certified Vocational Training Centers, running "Greek as a foreign/second language" training programmes, in which the participants-trainees are repatriates, refugees, immigrants etc.

Research conclusions may provide developmental opportunities to the school teacher-adult trainer's teaching alertness and general professionalism, and assist their contribution to the wider socioeconomic development and the modulation of criteria upon which each citizen will pursue their self-determination and emancipation. Conclusions can also be exploited by the Greek Education Departments of the General Secretariat for Adult Education and Training in regards to the design and development of the training programmes attended by school teachers and adult trainers. Finally they can be correlated with data found in bibliography of the two vicinal fields and contribute towards a prolific examination of their interaction.

Keywords: Educator-school teacher, Adult trainer, Trainer-facilitator, Socio-cultural school, Teacher-centered training model, Lifelong learning, Social skills, Heterogeneous training environments, Professional field, Political educator

1. THE ISSUE OF DISCUSSION

Globalization has been affecting both the professional roles and the modeling and re-modeling of the multiple and changing identity of school teachers. In a constantly changing society new data and responsibilities are

created which are controvert to the substance of education as it has been established during the 19th century and developed through the 20th. Thus, the role of the educator-school teacher needs to be radically reformed (Mialaret, 1996:62-66). Both the educator-school teachers and the adult trainers need to cope with a continuously growing and changing spectrum of requirements, and are called to develop a multidimensional professional role.

1.1 The Role of the Educator-School Teacher

The radical scientific, economic, demographic and cultural changes indicated since the beginning of the 1990's presuppose an alternative learning theory and refer to a complete change of the school teacher role through training and development, since such role's contribution to the improvement of the education offered is catalytic (Hargreaves, 1994:35-40).

Literacy, (in its broadest sense), problem solving, flexibility in communication skills, critical thinking, metacognition, and intercultural empathy, are all key skills that the 21st century school teacher must possess and develop (Konstantinou, 1994:38).

Contemporary Education Science is focusing its interest towards the relationship between the micro-level of the school unit or classroom and the macro-level of society. This is correlated to a general shift of interest from pupil-centrism to socio-centrism (Kogoulis, 2005:70-73). In the 21st century "**sociocultural**" school, the ideals and goals of education are closely related to its social role. Thus Education aims to the citizens' emancipation from obsolete compulsions and extra-determinations, as well as to a social reconstruction (Gotovos, 2007:99). The constitutionally established educational function transfers its focus from knowledge acquisition to the multilateral development of the students, targeting to the emergence of their potential in various fields and not just in core subjects (Hargreaves, 1994:44-47; Sachs, 2003; Kossivaki, 2003:54).

The school teacher's theoretical expertise in the 21st century's "**sociocultural**" school is characterized by a deep knowledge of the social context's role in the learning process and personal development (Gotovos, 2007:101-102). That means that teachers during the learning process should opt for a communicative and interactive approach regarding learning experiences, and should apply active training techniques, such as team work, case studies, role plays etc. Hence, learning is transformed from a linear to an interactive, non-linear training process, in which the student can and should act with flexibility within various sources of information and knowledge (Matsagouras, 2009:78-82).

The opening of school to the society and its dynamic involvement to community matters can not succeed when the teacher solely possesses the role of the classroom technician, and when the classroom functions as a private training action area. The educator needs to develop an activist's role, to be a **political educator** characterized by a strong political and social drive, one who will promote and establish a powerful democracy and consolidate democratic principles in all constitutions. (Note 1)

Conclusively, the professional identity and development of the Educator-Teacher working in the 21st sociocultural school should not be evaluated only by his/her managerial performance, proficiency and sufficiency, but mainly through his/her civic professionalism. An alternative professionalism that mirrors expresses and promotes the democracy's ideals in a complex economic and sociopolitical environment (Karakatsani, 2005:5-6).

1.2 The Role of the Adult Trainer

The geometrically progressive changes occurring in the recent years in the social, financial, cultural and technological aspects of our societies have been evoking strong liveliness within the Adult Education field. The flexibility needed by the working population regarding cooperation, change of working patterns or even change of profession, is a characteristic example of such liveliness. Hence, European Union has recognized Adult Training as an indispensable activity of contemporary societies and has integrated it in its policies and encourages its members to strategically opt for it.

A successful confrontation of today's challenges can be achieved through the introduction of new learning methods, which can empower human resources, providing them new knowledge and skills, so that they dynamically encounter changes and insecurities derived by them. The role of the adult trainer within lifelong learning is changing direction. The redefinition of this role arising from the contemporary needs of the Knowledge Society, is associated with the support of Social Skills, which enhance lifelong learning and apart from basic skills (such as reading, writing, mathematics), include: decision making, team working, problem solving, intercultural empathy, continuous learning and computer skills. Adult trainers should be able to support the development of social skills, regardless their expertise or field of training (Note 2). They should be able to

integrate in their daily practices, activities which will provide the trainees with the opportunity to work in groups, develop their critical thinking, test their flexibility, etc (Karatza, 2005:4-8).

Contemporary trainers can meet the requirements of their role by incorporating in their practices a series of knowledge, skills and attitudes. When the philosophy and basic principles of Adult Training and Education, as well as the particularity of the adult trainee is taken into account, the traditional, teacher-centered model of trainer who tries to transmit knowledge (regulating role), is proved inefficient and non proper for the realization of the aims of the adult training process. Adult training should focus on the trainee and the trainer should act during the learning process as a facilitator rather as a source of knowledge and data (Jarvis, 2004:81-90). Furthermore the facilitative function seems to be preferable compared to a teaching one, since it activates the learning cycle and the trainees' critical thinking. Access to learning is accommodated when opportunities for practice, application and acquirement of experiences are provided. The learning progress is more rapid when trainees are actively taking part in it (Jaques, 2001:32-33).

1.3 Convergences and Divergences of the Two Roles

A comparative study of the two roles is of high importance since it reveals their convergences and divergences and detects those particular characteristics of the educator-teacher role which can promote or hinder the role of the adult trainer. Such study can also provide growth prospects to the teaching alertness of the educator-teacher, and renders him/her a more complete professional, able to contribute to a broad socioeconomic development or the formation of certain criteria, so that citizens will seek their self-determination (Kokkos, 2005 a:90)

1.3.1 The educator-teacher role as a growth driver for the development of the adult trainer role

The contemporary role of the school teacher is clearly defined through the quality of his/her theoretical background, know-how and competences regarding emotional and social identity. More specifically, general education, professional training, initiation to psycho-educational research, and intercultural education are the four areas synthesizing the educational profile of the European Educator (Konstantinou, 1994:40-43; Matsagouras, 2009:80-81).

In a contemporary and demanding training context, the educator-teacher should combine an array of attributes such as **leader, organizer, designer, inspirer, facilitator, researcher, counselor, innovator, presenter or evaluator**.

The majority of the principles, strategies methods and roles of the contemporary educator-teacher are also mentioned in the lengthy list of today's adult trainer's "credentials" (Jarvis, 2004:81-90). However, the theoretical quest of the adult trainer's desirable qualifications has not yet been concluded to a commonly accepted categorization (Kokkos, 2005 b:20-24).

The necessity for the school teacher's development of intercultural empathy is also an important element for the adult trainer, since he/she needs to deeply understand and accept the trainee's diversity (Gotovos, 2001:28-35). The socio-centric training approach which the emancipatory-critical education adopts (Dewey, Freire, Delmouzos, Glinos, Sachs etc) and the Adult Education and Training principles (Freire, Knowles, Rogers, Jarvis, Mezirow, Kokkos, etc) are communicating vessels with intercultural education.

It is commonly accepted that the Adult Education and Training field borders fields such as Pedagogy, Psychology, Sociology, Human Resources, Vocational Counseling, etc. Studies in these fields include teaching methodology, team dynamics, and communication development, all reinforcing the adult trainer in the implementation of his/her role (Leftheriotou, 2005:72-73).

Overall, theorizing and systemizing emancipatory-critical education and adult training (in relation to knowledge, ideals, philosophy, aims, principles, methods and techniques), contributes to the professionalization of trainers, and leads to a deeper realization of the multidimensional character of the school teacher-adult trainer dual role. It also assists them in developing the ability to change and transform attitudes, beliefs and behaviors, through self-study, reflection and re-negotiation. Through critical reflection the teacher-trainer can re-define his/her roles, re-evaluate given attitudes and reconsider ways of perceiving, acting and believing (Mezirow, 2007:68).

1.3.2 The educator-teacher role as a hindrance to the development of the adult trainer role

The pedagogic model gives to the school teacher full responsibility of decisions regarding what, how and if learning will take place, and delegate to their students the passive role of following the teacher's instructions (Knowles, 1998:94-98).

"Learning, up to age of twelve, is a process with no censorship and full trust to those who teach. What differentiates adult learning is the trainee's **selectivity and skepticism**", as supports Illeris (Note 3).

From babyhood to preadolescence and as individuals mature, their need and ability for self-determination increases respectively. Skills such as the exploitation of experiences in the learning process, the recognition of readiness for learning and the organization of learning in relation to life problems, expand during this period and explode during adolescence (Knowles, 1998:94-98).

Handling adults as children breeds their passiveness and creates an internal conflict between the dependent trainee model and their subconscious need for self-directed learning. The outcome of this psychological conflict is the creation of barriers in adult learning and the abandonment of adult training programmes. Illeris (2009) underlines that “the concept of learning what we choose to learn (**selectivity**) and of transformative learning (**skepticism**), seems ideal and constitutes the difference in adult learning”. These aspects of learning should always be placed by the adult trainer in the centre of the learning process.

Another critical and catalytic element affecting the quality of the adult trainer’s role is the different experiences adults and children have. The importance of school students’ experiences is apparent, since they become the centre of the educational methodology of contemporary school curriculums. However, adults come to training with more and different experiences than those children have. This difference in quantity and quality has variant consequences in Adult Education (Knowles, 1998:198-201).

Accumulated and rich adult experiences encourage learning since they energize trainee’s participation and thus become the focus in the training process (Jaques, 2001:75-77; Kokkos 2005a:87-90). On the other hand they contribute to the creation of stereotypes and prejudices, which tend to “close” the trainees’ minds towards new ideas and alternative thinking modes, and they end up as learning obstacles (Knowles, 1998:198-201). If the school teacher-adult trainer fails to balance this particularity in adult learning, trainees might leave the program or may feel entrenched.

Furthermore, experiences for children are happening in the present time as they are growing up, where experiences for adults are the ground of their identity. Every time the school teacher-adult trainer ignores these experiences, adults perceive it as rejection of themselves.

Finally the school teacher-adult trainer needs to balance the difference regarding readiness for learning. Children are willing to learn what the teacher is telling them to learn in order to succeed in school. Adults will and want to learn only what is relevant to their needs and interests in order to meet everyday requirements. “Adults are not willing to learn something that has no meaning to them” Illeris outpoints (2009).

The Educator-school teachers in order to successfully meet the demanding requirements of the Adult Trainer role, they should understand and appreciate the Adult Education philosophy and culture and realize their great influence in the Knowledge Society (Karalis, 2006:25-27). Adult trainers should be consistent advocates of life long learning and should act as continuous learning models for their trainees (Noyé & Piveteau, 1999:173-182 ; Courau, 2000:114-115).

1.4 The Professional Field of the School Teacher –Adult Trainer

Education Studies graduates are a large percentage of the Adult Trainers in Greece who are employed in the Adult Education field as certified trainers and they conduct programs of Greek as a foreign language for socially excluded groups (repatriates, refugees, immigrants) (Note 4). The main aim of these programs is to teach Greek as a foreign or second language, so that trainees can receive upon examinations an equivalent certification by the Center of Greek Language. This will assist them in finding employment and integrate into active employment policies. The adult trainees’ absolute necessity for conversational fluency and discrete language skills (Cummins, 2005:102-109), is inseparable with Lifelong Learning and the Adult Education principles (which target to the trainees’ development of self-reliance and emancipation through learning), and fight of poverty and illiteracy (Note 5).

The programmes’ content is determined by the conceptual sequence of *knowledge* (as defined by the Teaching Greek as a Foreign/Second Language scientific field) the acquisition of useful and practical *skills* and the adoption of positive *attitudes* regarding contemporary Greek. The understanding and production of spoken and written language constitute the four language skills certifying knowledge of Greek. Hence, alternation amongst the practice of these skills, in combination with the communicative-practical teaching of the language’s structural and functional mechanism, are the programme’s basic components, and are described in the comprehensive testing outline of the Greek Language Centre (Efsthadiadis et al, 2001:63-114).

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Topic Selection Criteria

According to findings of empirical research conducted in the last decade in the Field of Adult Education in Greece, a high percentage of the nationally certified adult trainers are Education Science graduates. However, there is no research regarding the professional development of those who study or work in the Adult Education and Training field. The comparative and multiparameter relationship of the Educator-teacher and the adult trainer's role, the transition from one role to the other, as well as their convergences and divergences, and the sensitization regarding the training needs of the socially vulnerable groups, has not yet been studied.

2.2 Research Objective

The purpose of this research is the comparative analysis of the Educator-School Teacher and the Adult Trainer roles, through the *detection of those personal and social motives* which influenced their professional course, the *investigation of the convergences and divergences* of the two roles, the *analysis of the characteristics* which hinder or encourage the development of the Adult Trainer and the *evaluation of professional satisfaction* gained by the two roles. The school teacher-adult trainers of the research sample, work in the Adult Education field and teach Greek as a Foreign Language to repatriates, refugees, immigrants etc, in Vocational Training Centers.

2.3 Research Questions

- a) How and under what social-personal conditions did the partial or exclusive transition from school teaching to adult training take place?
- b) Where and to what extent does the research sample believe that the two roles converge and diverge?
- c) Which characteristics (knowledge, skills and attitudes) of the School Teacher role encourage and discourage the development of the Adult Trainer role?
- d) How does the research sample evaluate the satisfaction gained from the two different professional roles?

2.4 Methodology – Research Tools

The qualitative approach has been chosen, since it allows a deeper analysis and interpretation of situations, events and behaviors. The research tools used are the self - descriptive depth interview and the focus group interview. The research sample is asked to express their views in relation to two incidents of the Greek training reality (for the focus group technique). More specifically all the members of the focus group expressed their views in regards to the following: a) The way the executives of a Vocational Training Center dealt with the trainees' request to be able to pray during training in a specially designed area (Note 6).

b) The actions developed by the 132nd Primary School of Grava, in central Athens, with the majority (72%) of its students being immigrants, and the heterogeneous reactions caused (Note 7).

In an attempt to reinforce the research credibility the focus group interview offered the interviewees the ability to answer freely in regards to the way they perceive the multidimensional character of their profession.

The findings of both the individual interviews and focus group interview were processed by the content analysis method, which led to the categorization of data and their relation to the research aims.

2.5 Research Sample

- “Non probability” sample, consisting of **ten** experienced Educators-School Teachers, who have post graduate degrees in Adult Education and are part time employed as Adult Trainers.
- Selection criteria:
 1. Considerable experience in school teaching and continuous training in Education (seminars, specialization in training methods and the subjects they teach).
 2. Proven experience in adult training, (theory and practice).
 3. Ability to effectively communicate with the researcher.

3. FINDINGS -CONCLUSIONS

Regarding the first research question: (Note 8)

- Transition and journey towards Adult Training are characterized **coincidental** and are the outcome of fortuitous events. Their occupation with adult training is part-time and or occasional.

- **Financial incentives** have mainly influenced this transition. However, they positively evaluate the Adult Education field and have entered it in order to diversify their professional spectrum, enhance their role, interact with trainees, face new challenges and advance in general though multiple training environments.
- An additionally important incentive is the **negative experience and critique** they express in regards to the teacher-centered educational model which dominates the Greek Society and is detected in all levels of education. Contrarily they express their positive views for the Adult Education principles embraced by the National Train the Trainer Program they have participated.

Regarding the second research question: (Note 9)

Similarities of the two roles:

- All sample members recognize the educational dimension of the Adult Training field
- Some fail to recognize adult training as a distinct scientific and professional field. The rest characterize neighboring and complementary the two fields.
- The roles of the organizer, facilitator, counselor, coordinator and mainly inspirer are common for both fields. The inspiring/facilitative function is detected and characterized as imperative by teachers of special education and those employed in multicultural schools.

Differences of the two roles:

They aptly detect the characteristics of adult learning (existing knowledge, experiences being central in the learning process, visible benefits, criticism, selectivity, self-determined, internal/personal motives) and through them indicate the differences in the two roles: More specifically they believe that the adult trainer role:

- Builds an essential interaction with trainees and a co-equal relationship
- Is a more demanding role
- Can not adopt an authoritarian dimension

Regarding the third research question: (Note 10)

School teacher characteristics encouraging the adult trainer role:

- The school teacher has an “a priori” advantage in comparison to other professionals entering the adult education field
- Existing Knowledge of the school teacher: the teaching method of Greek as a Second Language, learning theories, methodology of education, teaching design
- Existing Skills of the school teacher: selection an usage of training techniques, implementation of innovative project plans
- Existing Attitudes of the school teacher: acceptance and respect of diversity, through specific actions and not merely to a “politically correct” level.

School teacher characteristics discouraging the adult trainer role:

The research sample believes that the school teaching practices hindering the adult trainer’s role are:

- Effortless criticism
- Complete and direct guidance
- Imposition and despotism
- Complete dedication and focus to subject matter
- Authoritarian body language
- Excessive lecturing time
- Misconception that they are dealing with children

Regarding the fourth research question: (Note 11)

- The satisfaction gained from the Adult Trainer role is closely related to factors such as: *participation, interaction* between trainer and trainees and *mutuality*.
- The satisfaction gained from the Educator-School Teacher role is closely related to factors such as: the *journey* towards teaching and their *current position* in primary education.

- Confronted with the dilemma of hypothetically choosing one of the two roles, the majority of research sample opts for the Adult Trainer role, each one of them for different reasons.

4. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

- School Teachers-Adult Trainers have significant qualifications and experience through heterogeneous training environments, both as trainees and as trainers. Hence, they are highly interested in their professional development, and have adopted a positive attitude towards lifelong learning.
- Their employment and practice in primary education greatly effects their perception of the school teacher-trainer dual role.

5. GENERAL RESEARCH VALUE

Summarizing all of the above mentioned findings one concludes that the most revelational outcome derives from the teachers-trainers' critical attitude and their attempt to deconstruct the teacher-centered training model penetrating all levels of education.

Their coincidental employment in the Adult Education field assists them in developing their self critical abilities, as well as in adopting a reflective attitude and embracing educational principles such as participation, interaction and mutuality.

Through the multiple training environments vehicle and the excellent studies deriving by that, they are led to the understanding of the absolute necessity for the creation of a new anti-teaching model befitting the multidimensional role of the teacher-trainer's needs and requirements.

6. FURTHER RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

All of the above lead to the necessity of further research regarding the relation between the Educators-Teachers' formal education studies and their following vocational training (which should include informal educational activities and alternative training methods based on the adult education philosophy and principles). As concluded in this research, the up to now negative experience school teachers have regarding post educative participation in seminars and training, is opposed to their positive critique on the National Accreditation Train the Trainer Program which they characterize as a highly valued and reflective experience. Thus the school teachers' vocational training should focus in offering opportunities regarding the school curriculum as well as the experiences within the school and the wider community. Therefore a school teachers' training needs analysis regarding their lifelong learning opportunities should be implemented, in order to provide data in relation to content, value and alternative methods of their future training.

It would also be interesting to investigate the influence secondary factors have (such as working within special social groups) on the dual role of the school teacher-adult trainer. As this research found, special educators working in multinational schools have developed a more facilitative dimension in their practices. Further study of the professional profile of those educators working with and encountering various forms of social exclusion, could lighten silent manifestations and approach the subtle issue of the facilitative training method through personal journeys and activities of the Greek reality. The emergence of such findings could be an extremely interesting activity since it could probably assist the wider educational community in the adoption of a general critical stance towards traditional educational methods.

Consecutively, it is supported that the parallel employment in the two fields (Education and Adult Training) provides the School Teacher-Adult Trainer with development prospects regarding their teaching alertness, and makes them more comprehensive professionals capable of contributing to the wider socioeconomic growth and to the formulation of criteria which will assist citizens in search of self determination and emancipation. In other words such dual role leads to the creation the **political educator** and trainer.

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Notes

Note 1. The term has its roots in “emancipatory” education with main supporters John Dewey and Paulo Freire, who both claimed that democracy is an activity realized through learning and a process that can be consolidated through praxis. According to Judith Sachs, a fundamental task for a teacher is to be able to engage in a wide range of social aims, pursuing the promotion and establishment of a powerful democracy and securing a complete citizen identity for all humans.

Note 2. In the field's bibliography one can detect different definitions of the terms "skills" and "abilities" (Jarvis, 2004, Coleman, 1995, Descy & Tessaring in Karatza, 2005) and various descriptions of their specific functions, all of which refer to the meeting of adults' needs and are directly related to their tendency for self-determination.

Note 3. As announced by Knud Illeris at the "Adult Learning Process" seminar, organized by the Hellenic Adult Association in Athens (November 28, 2009).

Note 4. According to an evaluative study (Kokkos, 2008), regarding the characteristics and training needs of Adult Trainers, 67% of Adult Trainers in Greece are Education Studies graduates, while 42.2% are primary and secondary education teachers. A descriptive study on the characteristics and qualifications of the Nationally Certified and Accredited Trainers (Efstratoglou, 2005) showed that 40.5% of the adult trainers in Greece are graduates of Education Studies. The duration of the programs is 300 hours and is run by certified Vocational Training Centers.

Note 5. According to Quane in the 1st world forum on life long learning that took place in Paris in October 2008.

Note 6. Muslim trainees attending a Greek as a Foreign Language Program targeted to unemployed refugees and immigrants.

Note 7. Part of which are relevant to Adult Education.

Note 8. How and under what social-personal conditions did the partial or exclusive transition from school teaching to adult training take place?

Note 9. Where and to what extent does the research sample believe that the two roles converge and diverge?

Note 10. Which characteristics (knowledge, skills and attitudes) of the School Teacher role encourage and discourage the development of the Adult Trainer role?

Note 11. How does the research sample evaluate the satisfaction gained from the two different professional roles?