

The Transformable Adult Learner in a Contemporary Society

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Data published by the European Commission reveal that one in five adults in Europe has a low rate of literacy and numeracy skills. Based on the review published by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the European Commission on 8th October 2013, even a university degree on the same subject that adults may have across Europe, is not a proof that they have the same level of knowledge and competence. In my opinion and based on my experience in adult education, every adult needs to develop two key skills (a) to learn how to learn and (b) to learn what to do when they do not know what to do.

Around the key skills above we can organize all adult education programmes, which have to be continuous and systemic, since the knowledge and skills that a person needs keeps being updated, modernized and continuously growing. Any programme in adult education should be based on three axes: (i) the renewal of knowledge, (ii) the renewal of skills and (iii) the modernization of communication tools and capacity.

Before describing the role of adult education in contemporary society, there must be first an agreement on the description and definition of the phrase "contemporary society". If 100 people are asked to define contemporary society, they will give many different definitions. But the result is that all the different definitions are probably correct because in a contemporary society, the opinion of each individual, in terms of how s/he sees and imagines a modern world and the environment in which s/he lives must be respected and accepted. This will serve as an incentive for him/her to modernize and transform. In short our starting point is the respect to the human adult.

So, an individual can define as "contemporary society" the one that satisfies various factors and select those that the individual can recognize himself/herself as contemporary. The factors are many but I will focus on five that in my opinion are the most basic and common, since through discussions in adult education courses in the last ten years, these five are the most prevalent for the society we live in today:

1. Respect for the adult (recognition and respect of his/her rights).
2. Concern for the adult (cares about his/her well-being, health and development).
3. Benefits to the adult (provides opportunities, challenges and support for his/her development).
4. Update of the adult (give him/her the opportunity to acquire capabilities through knowledge,

skills and communication).

5. Transformation of adults on the basis of developments in the environment in which they live or they are expected to live in the future.

Adult education plays the key role in supporting the factors above, which in sequence they will contribute to the well-being and development of adults in contemporary society. The first four factors are relatively easily understood and easily defined by any adult.

Obviously, the factor (5), is the most important for survival in a contemporary society and more specifically the preservation of contemporary society.

The adult must be able to be transformable, to be modernized, to renew his/her knowledge continuously, abilities and skills, habits, behavior and his/her communication. It is obvious that in order for an adult to be transformable the first four factors as mentioned above should apply, that is the right to a proper and continuous education, providing opportunities and satisfactory information.

To succeed we need to have transformable adults and transformable trainers providing training to the adults. So having transformable trainers can support the creation of the transformed adult in society and so we can have continuous transforming contemporary society.

The last term I mentioned was "transformable contemporary society", a term that interprets what was said above, implies and supports the need, importance and role of adult education in contemporary society. The transformable society entails a contemporary society and a transformable society implies the existence of transformable trainers and transformable adults who will be updated continuously and will all participate in modernized and continuously updated educational and training programmes.

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