
PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF ADULT EDUCATION MANAGEMENT

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Abstract : Today it is impossible to speak about and to apply a single science of management and a single type of management. It is even less acceptable and harmful to some extent to mechanically transfer the management of one sphere to another, especially from the sphere of corporate governance to the sphere of education, science and culture.

Adult education generally encompasses *all educational activities, forms and types of education accessible to people, designated under a country's adult law*. This “vast amount” of opportunities for adults to study at different institutions offering educational services for adult learners or through self-learning has been the crucial reason for the development of another specific type of management – adult education management. One more reason has been the practical implementation of the current trends and strategies for lifelong learning and lifewide learning. The differentiation of educational management as a separate type of educational management would greatly facilitate the policy and practice of managing education and educational services for adults.

Based on methods of theoretical analysis (PEST analysis, SWOT analysis, etc.), the authors outline different dimensions of adult education management in the context of the variety of tasks and activities faced by managers in this sector: international, national, political, social, economic, technological, and andragogical. A special emphasis is placed on the psychological dimension, which makes it possible to see management as a psychological process and to look through its prism at some of the other dimensions.

Keywords: educational management, adult education management, dimensions of adult education management.

The differentiation of adult education as an autonomous system, the expansion of the market for educational services for adult learners, the awareness of the shortage of knowledge about the management of the system and the institutions for adult education, the increase in the opportunities for offering and including in international educational programs and projects, as well as the differences in the approaches to teaching children and adults which have been proven over the years, have logically lead to the establishment of adult education management as a specific theory and practice. Studying it has become part of the syllabus of a number of master’s programs. By using methods of theoretical analysis (PEST-analysis, SWOT-analysis, comparative method), different dimensions of adult education management can be outlined in the context of the variety of tasks and activities facing managers in this sector [2]:

- *The international dimension* – It is reflected in the decisions of the international forums on adult education, among which the UNESCO conferences known as CONFINTEA¹ have a leading place. Since 1949 (when the first such conference was held in Denmark), to date, they have played a crucial role in coordinating the efforts in the adult education sector at international level for a period of 12-13 years, by pursuing a coherent policy of harmonizing common goals and priorities in adult education [2, pars. 2; 7]. For European countries, the European aspect of the international dimension of adult education is of particular importance. It is related to the European education area and the European policy of turning lifelong learning from a trend and a philosophy into practice, with the key competences needed by the citizen of the 21st century, including those for participation in the various forms of lifelong learning, with the European Qualifications Framework and the subsequent national frameworks [2, par. 2].

- *The national dimension* – It manifests itself in the trends of development, the policy and the governance of the adult education sector in individual countries, and its establishment as comparable to the formal education sector, considering its key role in the qualification and improvement of the workforce and the personal development of the 21st century citizens.

- *The political dimension* – It includes various policies related to adult education at all levels – at international level (e.g., the European policies), at national level (the policies on organizing and managing the adult education system in individual countries); at the level of “the training institution” (the policies of the administration of

¹ CONFINTEA¹ (**C**onference **I**nternational de l’**E**ducation des **A**dultes).

these institutions concerning the provision of educational services), at the level of the process of adult training (policies concerning adults' access to education and the organization of a high-quality and effective training process). And all this is directly related to the development and modernization of the legislative framework of the sector [2, par. 3].

- *The social dimension* – It manifests itself in the different levels of social influence of adult education management, and in particular in the so-called "social responsibility" to adult education, which is expressed as ensured access to education and educational services for legal adults, facilities for the socially weak (people with low-income) and the disadvantaged (people with disabilities and people from marginalized communities) during their training, social guarantees for realization (employment) for those completing different programs (specialties and courses), especially from socially disadvantaged groups. This social responsibility is a matter of managerial decisions at all levels [2, par. 4]

- *The economic dimension* – It is "materialized" in the funds earmarked by governments to finance adult education and to support financially adults without sufficient income to study as a condition for access to high-quality educational services, and in the economic results from the qualification of the workforce ("the human capital"). In a broader perspective, the economic dimension of adult education management is related to the economic challenges of the 21st century – competition, globalization, development of a knowledge-based economy, and flexibility of the labour market. On personal level, the economic dimension of management means that people (workers/employees, employers, and/or managers) are accepted as a resource, with specific qualities, abilities and limitations [2, par. 5].

- *The technological dimension* – It can be examined from several aspects: as the influence of the technological factors of the external environment of the educational organizations on the management of the systems and the organizations for adult education; as a technical level of management; and as technology of management. The technology of adult education management can also be examined *according to the levels of adult education management: at the mega level* (e.g., the processes of making managerial decisions at international level, including on strategies and policies for the development of adult education around the world or in different regions); *at the macro level* – the processes of making managerial decisions on the national policy in the sphere of adult education; *at the institutional level* – the management of individual institutions for formal and non-formal adult education; *at the operational level* – making managerial decisions on the training process with adult learners [2, par. 6].

- *The andragogical dimension* – It is associated with applying to adult learners the andragogical approach, which attaches great importance to their experience (life, vocational, educational), places an emphasis on the process of learning (on "the making") and on the use of various learning resources. The main role of the teacher is to motivate learners for high achievements by facilitating the learning process, assisting learners in this process, including helping them to develop certain skills needed to successfully master the educational content [2, par. 7].

We can further include other dimensions of adult education management, such as the psychological dimension.

- *The psychological dimension* – It makes it possible to see management as a psychological process and to look through its prism at some of the other dimensions, e.g., the andragogical one. The psychological dimension of adult education management involves (as does the andragogical dimension) taking into account the specific characteristics of adult learners [8], but also the psychological characteristics of the teacher as a manager of the training process [2, par. 8]. In the training process and as a result of the education received, learners' self-esteem and self-determination change, and the latter influence learners' psychological status in the group and their value orientation.

On the other hand, the application of the andragogical approach is based on learners' independence from the teacher (unlike the pedagogical approach that focuses on pupils' dependence on the teacher due to their age specificity). In the training process, the learner is placed in a situation of free choice, of supporting and motivating educational environment. The learner acts as a partner of the teacher, which involves a lot of activity for learners both during the training process and in the evaluation of the quality of the educational service offered.

At the level of management of the training process, the psychological dimension of adult education management manifests itself in managing adults' motivation to learn, maintaining psychological readiness to learn, creating team spirit and a favourable psychological climate in the learning group.

Adults' choice in terms of when, where, what, and how to study is also psychological, but it is largely dependent on the adult education policy (at different levels), which also determines the market for educational services. With regard to the management process, the psychological dimension of adult education management is

reflected in the psychological aspects of decision-making at the macro, meso, and institutional levels, and also at the level of management of the training process (the andragogical process). At the level of an adult education institution, the psychological dimension manifests itself in building an adequate culture of the organization, an element of which is the creation and management of the psychological climate (the relationship between the teachers and the management, among the teachers themselves, and between them and the adult learners), maintaining staff's motivation for development and improvement, and creating a good public image of the educational organization at the market for educational services for adult learners.

The managerial decisions concerning the technical provision of the training process with modern technical means and the implementation of information and communication technologies have a definite influence on the motivation for learning as well as on the motivation for effective teaching work.

Management of the andragogical process requires special training of teachers as educational managers whose psychological characteristics play a crucial role in the effectiveness of the training process (the results that learners achieve and their satisfaction with the work and the environment) [4; 6]. This explains the emergence of models for training such managers [9; 4; 2, par. 9] as well as of special master's programs for training educational managers in different universities around the world, including in Bulgaria [2, par. 10].

The psychological dimension of adult education management is directly related to the psychology of management, but also to sciences such as andragogy (as a theory of adult education and training) [2, par. 10; 5], the general theory of management, educational management (the general theory of management of the educational sector at different levels) [3], and general psychology. As a phenomenon, it manifests itself within the intersection of these theories. As does, in fact, each of the other dimensions of adult education management [2, par. 1].

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