

PECULIARITIES OF CONTINUING STUDIES OF EMPLOYABLE AGE PERSONS

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ABSTRACT

The essential peculiarities of learning activities of a modern man have been analyzed in this article. The analysis has been based on the research data with 1013 employable age people living in different areas in Lithuania. Appealing to the research results, it has been demonstrated that employable age people do not learn enough; their studies are often restricted by their age. As often as not the process is interfered with persons' inability to organize their activities in a proper way, lack of funds or determination. The responsibility for such situation should be put both on the adults and Lithuanian government.

KEY WORDS

Continuing education, learning difficulties in adulthood, lifelong learning.

INTRODUCTION

In *The memorandum of lifelong learning* (2001), in concordance with European Council's Lisbon meeting in 2000, it is indicated, that Europe stepped into the age of Knowledge, in which people have to learn to live under the complicated circumstances of a cultural, ethnic and language diversity. It means that economy and society relying on knowledge should be established in this part of the world. In other words, the economic background of the society in Europe should become creation and exchange of not material goods and services, but of the highest quality knowledge and skills. Seeking the ideal of such society, the provision of lifelong learning should be implemented. This is one of the primary points in state and international politics' programs. Specifically, this provision is fixed in the strategy of Lithuanian education.

The importance of learning all life is disclosed in the works, which discuss the issues of adult education, expansion of human resources and manpower. The most principal arguments of man's activities are presented here. They are best crystallized out in K. Illeris' works. According to him, there are three arguments for lifelong learning. One of them is economic, which states that learning all life is a decisive factor in increasing the economic growth of an individual, company and the whole country. In addition, learning all life influences social integration. Though, the main thing is that this activity ensures higher self-esteem and better possibilities to run one's life. Consequently, after researching if individuals learn all life it is possible to determine whether the people of our country are able to create their life, if they are determined to secure their social integration in the future, if they will be able to compete with people from other countries in the market.

A very similar attitude is developing in Lithuania. As R Alisauskas refers, the motivation for lifelong learning should increase, because we should learn to live in a rapidly changing reality, but not only enjoys stable, steady natural laws, math theorems or English grammar. It is obvious, that the idea of lifelong learning is relevant both to Europe, an organization and a definite person. Regrettably, the research of continuing studies is scanty in Lithuania. Especially scanty is the research revealing the

condition of continuing learning. Without summing up the situation, it is not possible to control, forecast or influence it purposefully.

The Aims of the Research: 1) to investigate the manifestations of continuing studies and socio pedagogical factors influencing them; 2) to detect the factors limiting of continuing education.

Research Methods: analysis of documents and psychological literature; questionnaire for the subjects of the investigation, correlation and graphic evaluation of the data.

The sample. 1013 men and women of employable age from various parts of the country, living both in rural or urban areas were questioned during the research. Because according to the demographic index the distribution of the subjects of the study does not reflect the existing situation, it was decided not to analyze the received data in these aspects. Analyzing the data reflecting the record of service, age and education level it has been found that these factors correspond to general tendencies in Lithuania. This is the reason to analyze the received data in these aspects.

The level of education of the research levy is diverse: 377 people have higher education, 303 are graduates of further educational institutions, a big part of the subjects of the research have acquired special higher education (135) or general high education (179), 4 people have not finished general high school, 15 respondents have not pointed out the level of their education.

Having analyzed the age distribution of the subjects of the research, it has been found that the majority of them (409) are 25-35 years old. Fewer respondents (261) are between 18-25 years old. Even fewer people under the research are in the group of 36-45 (190) and from 45-55 years old (111). The smallest group of the polled is over 55 years old (38). The reason for this group being so small is that the main interest was the attitude of employable people.

While analyzing the respondents' record of service it has been noticed: the majority of people (325) have little work experience (up to 5 years). A bit smaller parts of people have the record of service from 6 to 10years (259) and people who work from 11 to 20 years (237). Even fewer respondents were in the group of those having record of service of 21-30 years (111), and the least group of those under the research who work more than 30years (53).

RESULTS

As demonstrated by the analysis of educational and psychological sources, the expression of continuing learning activities is very diverse. Thus, all the system of indicators should be taken into consideration seeking its evaluation. Determining the quality of the respondents continuing education activities, special interest was paid how systematic and independent the process is, if they allocate enough time to their independent studies, if the people share their knowledge with colleagues, if they ever take councils with colleagues or scholars, if they perfect their qualification.

Having performed efficiency analysis of the data, it turned out that taking councils with lecturers is not so popular; it was decided not to consider this form of activity to be an important indicator.

It is easy to notice, that considering the activities of continuing teaching (learning) the criterion of frequency and stability has been applied. An exception is the time of independent studies and attendance of refresher/in-service courses. The criterion of their assessment is the scope.

Table 1. Learning activities of employable age persons (%)

Stability of Activities Indicator of Study Activities	Constantly	Often	Sometimes	Almost never	Not responded
1. Study systematically	5,7	40,6	33	19,2	1,5
2. Study independently	16,2	42,9	32,8	6,5	1,5
3. Study at workplace	13,1	35,8	32,2	11,3	7,6
4. Share the knowledge with colleagues	14,1	40,5	36,2	5,7	3,5
5. Take councils with colleagues	10,9	44,5	38,8	3	2,9
6. Use IT	25,1	34,3	28,9	10,9	0,9

The research data demonstrated, that the subjects of the research most often manage to learn independently, share the knowledge with colleagues; besides, the majority of the interviewed people occasionally take councils with their colleagues. The people are least successful in studying systematically. Every fifth respondent states that he/she never studies systematically. Besides, every tenth admitted that he never uses modern technologies or does not study or is taught at workplace. Definitely, the lack of this kind of study activities interferes with personal advancement, and at the same time active participation in the processes of rapid change. It is possible to make an assumption, that Lithuanians of employable age do not study enough.

Investigating if the subjects of the research allocate enough time for their studies, they were asked how much time per week they spend studying. The obtained results are as follows (figure 1):

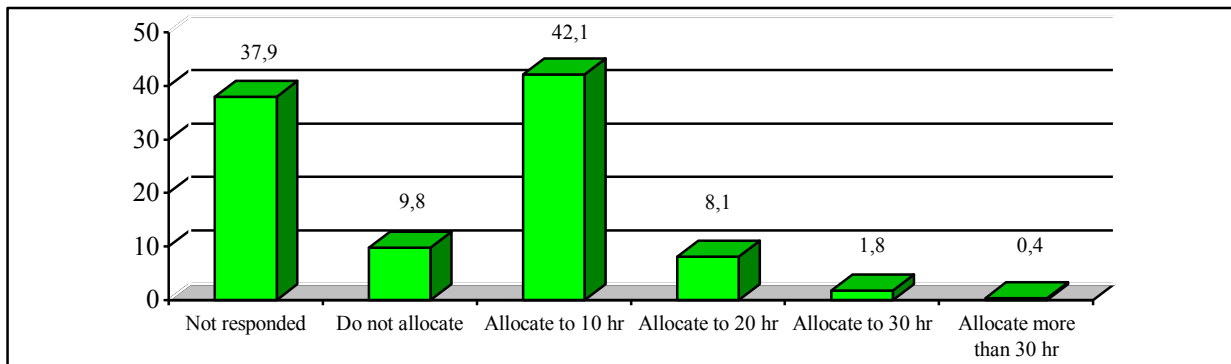


Figure 1. Time allocated for independent studies

The data presented in the illustration demonstrates, that the majority of the interviewed (42%) allocate up to 10 hours or a little more than 1 hour daily. Every twelfth person engages into independent studies up to 20 hours per week (about 3 hours daily) and only some people indicated that they study for 30 or even more hours independently. The majority of the respondents have not pointed independent studying time per week. They have only mentioned that they are not aware, have never fixed or allocate little time. As indicated by P. Jarvis and others, it could have happened that while reading newspapers, magazines or books, watching television or performing any other activities of such type people never think that they are engaged in independent studies. Incidentally, it is possible that there would have been more people who pointed the time of independent studying, if they considered the time spent in this way as their independent studies. Eventually, people of the country do not adequately use modern informational technologies, do not learn enough at workplaces, most often study sporadically, but the majority allocates much time for their independent studies, though not all the people under investigation realize it.

It was tried to ascertain during the research, if the people seek to perfect their qualifications in the selected area. The respondents were asked how many times they enhanced their qualification in the last three years. Such tendencies have been stated (figure 2).

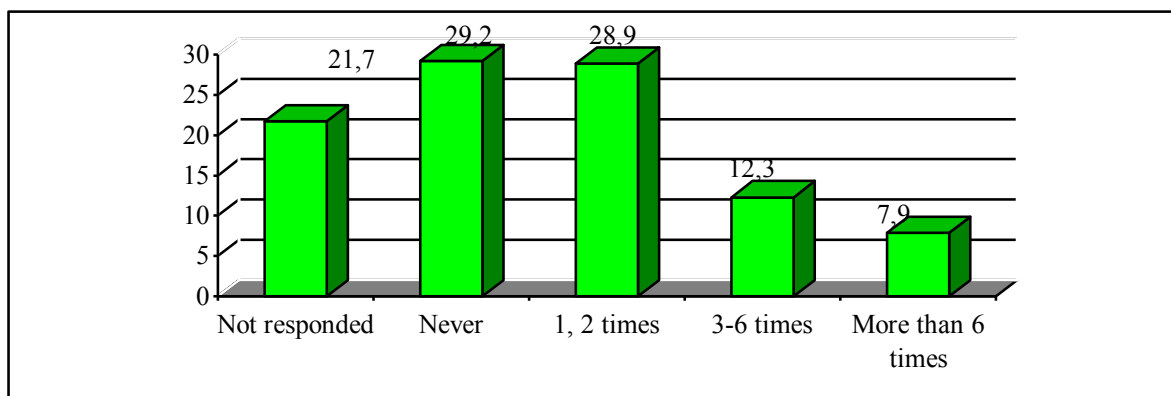


Figure 2. The number of people in qualification advancement (%)

The findings presented in the illustration show, that almost every third person raised his qualification during the last three years at least once or twice. Every ninth person attended from 3 to 7 seminars or refresher / in-service courses. And every twelfth subject of the investigation raised qualification 7 or even more times. Obvious is the fact, that almost every third subject of the investigation has never attended refresher/in-service courses or seminars and every fifth person has not responded to the submitted question. Thus, only half of the employable age people have attended refresher/in-service courses and seminars during last three years. Hence, the other half has not raised their qualification. It can be presumed, that the citizens do not care much about raising their professional advancement.

We tried to find the links between the above-mentioned teaching (learning) activities and the level of education, age and record of service (table 2).

Table 2. The influence of education level, age, record of service on the respondents' teaching (learning) activities

Demographic indicators Manifestation of learning activities	Education		Record of Service		Age	
	χ^2	p	χ^2	p	χ^2	p
1. Study systematically	67,11	0,000	35,57	0,017	45,93	0,005
2. Study independently	67,73	0,000	48,60	0,003	59,85	0,001
3. Study at workplaces	98,32	0,000	195,70	0,000	59,33	0,000
4. Share knowledge with colleagues	83,01	0,000	167,57	0,000	43,91	0,008
5. Take councils with colleagues	93,84	0,000	157,31	0,000	52,24	0,001
6. Use IT	143,83	0,000	82,54	0,000	74,81	0,000
7. Raise qualifications many times	139,82	0,000	181,14	0,000	161,43	0,000
8. Allocate much time to independent studies	-	-	143,93	0,000	-	-

The results indicate that people who are more educated, more often than others: use informational technologies, study independently and systematically, share the knowledge with colleagues and consult with them, learn at workplaces, and raise their qualification more intensively as well. For example, only 12, 7% respondents having finished secondary schools of general education use modern informational technologies constantly, and among higher school graduates 38, 2% use modern technologies every day. The data lead to realization that the people with higher level of education have to perform more

complicated activities, use more innovations. Such peculiarities of their work often make the people use informational technologies.

A similar situation is with the age aspect. Younger persons, especially the ones under 35 more often than others use informational technologies, study independently and systematically, share the knowledge with colleagues and consult with them, learn at their workplaces, and more intensively raise their qualifications ($p < 0.0000$). This tendency could be explained by the conclusions of K. Illeris research with adults, which indicate the difference of identity between the people of this age and youngsters. They have already gained some work experience, they have created families and they start learning only when their identity undergoes pressure. Because of this reason they are not flexible and finally are not able to adjust to constant alternation. At the same time for the youth learning is an inseparable part of their life.

The interviewed people having a longer record of service more seldom use informational technologies, learn independently and systematically, share the knowledge with colleagues and consult with them, learn at their workplaces, and less intensively raise their qualification. Such results allow presuming, that younger and with less work experience people already at school acquired the basics of IT usage, which later on could be improved. Computer literacy basics were started to teach at Lithuanian schools of general education some 10 years ago and nowadays it is taught at almost all schools. Besides, it is possible to presume that young people are more receptive to innovations.

Not only were the peculiarities of learning activities taken into account during the research. It was attempted to detect the reasons impeding the learning process (figure 3).

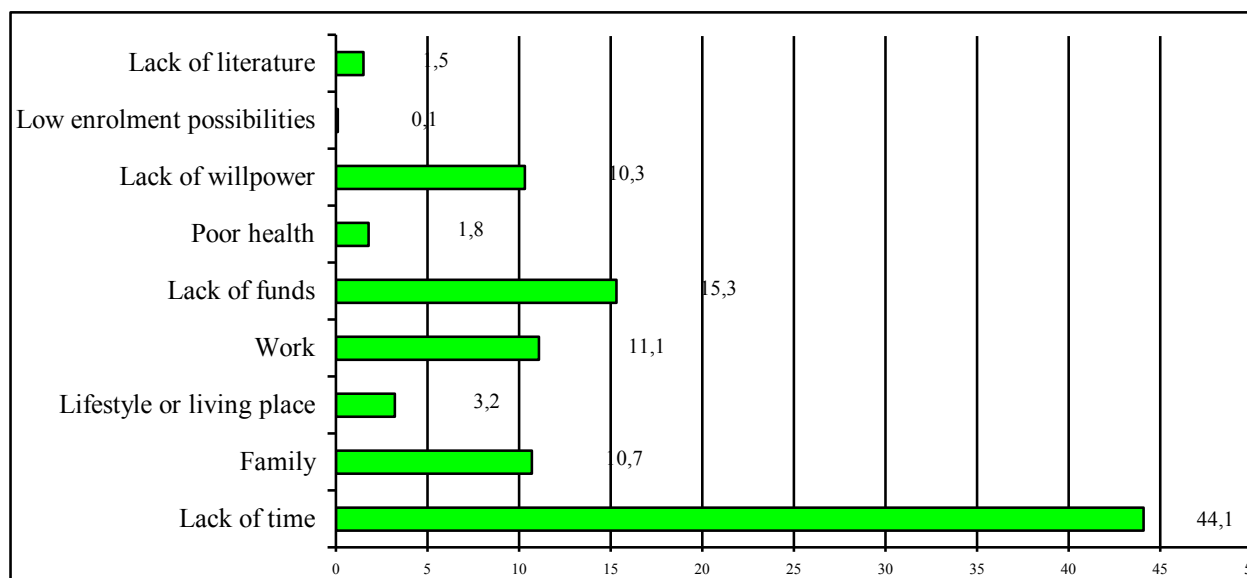


Figure 3. The reasons of not learning of employable age people (%)

It emerged that lack of time usually impedes learning. Such reason for not learning was indicated by almost half of the investigated people. Quite often the respondents pointed, that family troubles or their work prevent them from learning. Every tenth person stated such reason. Very often the respondents affirmed that they couldn't study because of the lack of funds (15%) or lack of willpower (10%). While the life style or living place, poor health, limited enrolment opportunities or shortage of literature rarely interfere with the teaching (learning) process. Only some respondents indicated such hindrances. Consequently, the lack of time and funds, and lack of willpower limit learning activity. To eliminate these reasons, people should be trained how to organize their time, to distribute their personal funds more efficiently and train their willpower. This should be taught not only at school, but also at refresher or in-service institutions.

On the other hand, these hindrances could be eliminated with the help of Lithuanian government. So far a lot of important laws, post-law acts regulating adult training have been accepted, but the programs funding adult education, stimulation and similar ones in reality have not been created yet. The development of adult learning (teaching) process is cumbered by obvious imperfection of the already accepted juridical documents. For example, because of some loopholes in laws, a part of 16-18 year old young people belonging to a socially disadvantaged group, have no conditions to study at full-time schools of general education. But adult schools enroll people only from 18 years old. After finishing main schools and have not entered technical schools youngsters often find themselves in the streets, because schools of general education, moreover, gymnasiums, select the children having academic inclinations, better basic knowledge in different areas. That is why impoverished city and especially country children, whose academic records are worse, can not continue studying at once, and later on they even loose motivation and finally become members of the socially outcast group.

CONCLUSIONS

Manifestations of continuing teaching (learning) are as follows: persons' usage of informational technologies, systematic and independent learning of the subjects of the research, their learning at workplaces, sharing the knowledge with their colleagues, consulting with colleagues, allocating time for individual independent studies and raising qualification at refresher /in-service courses or seminars.

Lithuanian people of employable age do not study enough. Especially seldom they study systematically.

Mainly, learning is avoided by lower educated, having a shorter record of service people. Besides, the learning process of the subjects of investigation is limited by their incapability to organize their activities, funds and a lack of willpower.

The results of the research have demonstrated that a big part of the investigated employable age people is not ready for continuing teaching (learning). This in the future can cumber economic growth of the country and weaken their own competitive ability, determine worse social integration and worse ability to run one's life. This situation, may be, is decided by the lack of learning motivation of the adults and absence of Lithuanian adult education policy, loopholes in the accepted laws regulating learning activity.

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