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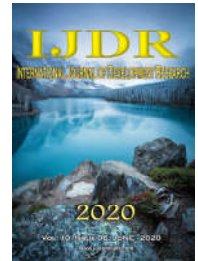
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PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF ADULT EDUCATION

Dr. Loukas Moustakas and Tsouloufa Foteini

Dr. Lectures at University of the Aegean, Kremasti, 85104, Rhodes – Greece

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*Corresponding author: Dr. Loukas Moustakas

ABSTRACT

The field of special education has always been an integral part of the educational process. At the current stage of claiming equal opportunities for education, parallel educational support and equal participation of people with special needs in society, the existence of diverse pedagogical problems and the appropriate formulation of emerging concerns in the ever-changing pedagogical reality strengthen the need for an interdisciplinary effort and cooperation in order to prevent and address learning difficulties and behavioral problems. Based on the objectives of Special Education in children, adolescents and more specifically in adults, the purpose of this paper is to investigate the views and attitudes of educators and learners in adult educational units for people with special needs in Chios. The ultimate goal is for the study's findings to be used in training programs and to assist in the effort to claim equal education and training opportunities for this category of adults. The results of the research show that all the trained instructors stated that there is no specific educational material, according to which a common educational course can be followed to educate learners. Each teacher instructs based on their own personal notes, which of course are in line with the general curriculum of each educational unit and cover the largest percentage of educational needs.

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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, interdisciplinary and intersectoral practices are imperative as scientific, social and cultural desiderata with the main purpose of interpreting a complex network of relationships, correlations, balances and contrasts. Through the process of interdisciplinarity, skills are developed in the individual, which are necessary in modern society. An important element in this mechanism is experiential learning, which stimulates the interest and creativity of the individual. The education sector is a key component of a sustainable society. In general, education is based not only on children undergoing education but also on adults, as long as we live in an environment in which adaptation and adjustment is a necessity. An important aspect of the education sector, which is also the subject of study in this paper, is the education of adults requires Special Education. The choice of the topic stemmed from intense reflection on the state of this form of education as well as the ways in which the educational processes are conducted. In particular, this paper focuses on the various aspects of the concept of adult education, the characteristics of this sector, as well as the learning motivations and barriers that may arise. It then focuses mainly on Adult Education for people with special needs, in order to explore supportive technology in their education. Then, the paper refers to the research methodology. An extensive reference is made to its importance, with an analysis of its objectives and purpose and a description of the research tool and the research questions which were used, as well as the limitations and commitments, the sample and the way in which

research is conducted. Following that, there is an analysis of the data of the interviews per question and the individual conclusions that emerge for each of them. At the end of the paper, the general conclusions from the analysis of the theoretical and the research part are mentioned.

The characteristics of adult learners: The group of learners differs from the group of students in that they have specific expectations and requirements, but also in that they face barriers both in the undertaking of their effort and in the process. Finally, they participate in the learning process driven by specific and conscious motivations. Learners, in the context of adult education, are not and should not be treated as students. The former do not undergo the social selection process, as adult education is offered to all individuals and all interested parties. Also, courses in adult education are not compulsory and attendance is optional.

However, they feel that as citizens they have an obligation to participate in the public sphere and therefore need the necessary conditions, which can be covered by adult education, but often their participation is indeed required by the prevailing conditions. This means that the conditions they experience in their daily personal and professional lives force them to participate in programs that will help them to develop professionally or to be informed on issues that concern them (Moustakas and Fokiali, 2019; Moustakas and Karagianni, 2018). The goal of a group of learners is to meet their personal needs. They want to develop as personalities, expand their interests, get in touch with new areas of knowledge, listen to new information or go deeper into what

interests them, gain self-affirmation and improve their self-image. Others seek to gain recognition from their environment through their education. In other words, participation in a program is a matter of prestige and promotion for them. In addition, adults are not mere recipients of knowledge nor possibly passive listeners to what each teacher says. Thus, they react negatively to any change and to the application of innovative teaching methods. In general, however, adults, as self-identified and autonomous individuals, want to be actively involved in the learning process, to be able to express themselves freely and to critique the program and the applied teaching methods. Also, each learner has their own learning pace, which they observe and follow. The trainer must and respond to this pace (Digaletou and Moustakas, 2019; Vergidis, 2003).

Education motives and emerging barriers: Motivation is the key to effective learning. Adults learn because they want to learn, since attending training programs is optional. There is usually a distinction between external and internal motivations. The former refers to an activity caused by external factors like the environment (degree, praise or punishment, gifts, etc.). On the contrary, the latter refers to an activity which is caused by the inner world and the needs of the individuals themselves. Of course the instructor must maintain and promote the given internal motivations and turn the external ones into internal motivations. In other words, the result of the instructors' efforts in both cases should be the activation and improvement of internal motivations (Moustakas and Fokiali, 2019; Moustakas, 2018). The adult educator must take into account internal motivations, but not underestimate external motivations. If they find that there are no internal motivations, then they should activate external motivations, which, however, should not restrict the freedom and autonomy of their learners. Regardless of whether external or internal learning motivations work, adults are autonomous and self-identifying individuals who participate in a program with typically specific expectations. According to the now classic hierarchy of needs by the A. Maslow, human needs are classified into seven levels. Satisfying the needs of the next level presupposes the satisfaction of the needs of the previous level. The lowest level is the satisfaction of physiological, biological needs. Of course, physiological motives, the biological needs of the individual, operate on a universal scale (food, water, weather protection, etc.). After the normal (physiological) needs, the need for safety follows. This refers to job security, protection of physical integrity, stability in life without stress and fears. Social needs follow. The individual has the need for love, friendship and communication with others. Then there is the need for self-recognition, i.e. need for success, gaining power and prestige. Then follow the needs for knowledge of the world, satisfaction of curiosity, satisfaction of what is happening in the world. In the last stages are the aesthetic needs, i.e. the enjoyment of the beauty of the world and life, of what is aesthetically beautiful, and the need for self-actualization, i.e. the utilization of all the abilities a person possessed, the feeling that they did what they could do. This of course presupposes that the individuals have a clear picture of their potential and do not overestimate their strengths (Moustakas and Fokiali, 2019; Vergidis, 2003). Moreover, in the context of meeting the needs of adults and achieve their involvement in the educational process, specific conditions must be met and measures must be taken (Kokkos, 2005):

- Causing queries and curiosity
- Providing questions to the learners themselves
- Cultivation of exploratory mood
- Understanding of content
- Positive expectations
- Success as a motivation to learn

- Feeling of purpose during learning
- Feedback

In this section, the theoretical background which frames the field of adult education was analyzed with commentary and reference to many theoretical approaches to the subject. The paper then presents the issue of adult education for people with special needs.

The conceptual approach of education in people with special needs: One of the main and initial efforts to define Special Education (SE) was made by Rosa Imbriotti (1939), who defines this field as "the Science which has as its goal the education, teaching and welfare of all children whose physical and mental development is constantly hindered by individual and social factors". Special Education is a dynamically evolving interdisciplinary sector in the field of education sciences that has as its object of research the physical and mental health, the general education, the special and vocational education and the social integration of children with special needs. Thus, the term "people with special personal needs" is a term attributed to people who have difficulties, weaknesses or dysfunctions regarding their mental abilities, their sensory and perceptual functions, their physical health and mobility, their emotional world and their broader social behavior. It is natural, then, that any difficulty affects the general development of these individuals, their schooling and general education, their professional choices and their social life, conditions which create special needs in their general living and education (Kroustalakis, 1998). On this basis, "people with special needs" are those people who exhibit functional impairments, disabilities, weaknesses or a combination of these. In the context of sensory, visual, cognitive, developmental and / or neuropsychiatric disorders, the process of learning and social adjustment is affected and these individuals exhibit special needs both during their school and their social integration.

Special education and adult education: Adult groups with mental or developmental disabilities are a very important category of the population, which is often faced with the problems of social exclusion both socially and professionally, as well as unequal treatment by the social environment due to prejudices. Adult groups with special needs are interested in and choose activities in their own way. There is a possibility that they will use some objects in a repetitive way for a long time or have very limited mental interests, without showing much interest in different materials or subjects, such as other adults. Their education in the field of understanding what is happening in the environment in which they live is also of great importance (Moustakas and Moustaka, 2019). Due to the fast pace of life, they need to learn to adapt as best they can so that they are not marginalized and so as to better enjoy the rights and freedoms they are entitled to. Their acquisition of the skills that are necessary for their daily life is an extremely important tool and a necessity, as this will greatly facilitate them in their social life. According to Kartasidou (2007), in order for an adult with a disability to be trained in autonomous living, which is the ultimate goal of all adult education programs for the mentally disabled and other developmental disabilities, it is essential for the educational process to succeed in achieving a standard of living and a smooth transition from adolescence to adulthood. All of the above are forms of self-determination. Self-determination must be present in all of the above in order for them to be considered successful and lasting. Therefore, the concepts of self-determination, quality of life, transition and autonomous living are interrelated and cannot be separated and isolated (Soulis, Fotiadou and Christodoulou, 2014).

Supportive technology in adult education: According to Cook (2007), the concept of disability has developed socially in recent years. This provides a very serious aspect of Supportive

Technology, which is being developed to support the functionality of people with disabilities so that their relationship with the environment is not characterized as "disabled". According to Edyburn (2001), it follows from the above that the term Supportive Technology is divided into:

- a) Supportive Technological devices
- b) Supportive Technological services

Specifically, Supportive Technology includes any device or equipment that is used to increase or improve the operational capabilities of people with disabilities. While, in Supportive Technological services, the following are included:

- Evaluation of the potential and difficulties of the person with a disability, as well as the way they function in the society.
- Preparations for the acquisition, purchase, rent, etc. of the appropriate Supportive Technological devices.
- Design and creation of effective infrastructure for the adaptation of Supportive Technological devices to the personal needs of their holder, as well as maintenance, repair and replacement of devices in case of failure.
- Determining the use of the devices and the treatments or training methods in which they can be used, to achieve maximum results
- Training of the family of the disabled person, or the people who work with the disabled person, regarding the correct use and full utilization of the respective Supportive Technological devices (Soulis, 2013).

The main categories of Supportive Technology are

- Daily functions aids
- Aids for improved communication
- Movement aids
- Hearing aids
- Entertainment aids
- Vision aids
- Body position and placement aids
- Learning aids

Also, according to Scherer (2004) and Hasselbring and Glasser (2000), the rapid development of computers has introduced a new window between the education of people with disabilities and the IT sector. The introduction of computers has contributed in three basic educational goals (Soulis, 2013):

1. General pedagogical goals

- Learning and teaching processes are carried out more effectively.
- Reinforcement of learning and performance motivations is carried out.
- New knowledge and skills are provided.
- Beneficial results from the submission of alternative proposals and perceptions are achieved.

2. Special pedagogical goals

- It is possible to prevent certain effects due to disability.
- Finding alternative ways of communicating to replace existing malfunctions.
- Improving the characteristics associated with learning and performance, as well as the personality of the individual in general.
- Improving specific functions that are hindered by disability through interaction.

3. Objectives related to daily living and vocational training skills

- Continuous improvement of the capabilities of people with disabilities in matters related to information technology.
- Use of new IT and telecommunications technologies in the daily lives of people with disabilities.
- Utilization of the computer during the training and vocational rehabilitation of people with disabilities.

Finally, according to Kimball and Smith (2007), the application of new technologies to students with disabilities is very effective, which is a well-known fact in many countries. Students with learning difficulties and students whose reception of stimuli is weakened due to sensory problems are now able to receive the information they need when they need to process it and gain knowledge on any subject that concerns them. Also, the formation of a healthy psychology and emotions such as pride and joy is vital. According to Chou and Liu (2005), it is not possible for Supportive Technology to help by providing strict guidelines to everyone. It is the duty of teachers who rely on Supportive Technology to use it taking into account the specificity of each disability by testing the relevant applications (Soulis, 2013). Specifically, depending on the type of disability, the following examples of Supportive Technology are listed:

- **Students with mobility impairments**
These children have difficulty moving their limbs to the point where they often cannot hold a book, so they must use customized aids, such as joysticks, paddles, and light pens, mouse as well as special switches that allow the child to send signals to the computer, utilizing each movement.
- **Students with speech disorders**
There is a portion of children who, although they understand the language spoken by the people around them, are unable to be understood by others when they speak it. The Bliss symbolic communication system consists of about 1400 symbols, each of which covers a specific concept. The symbols can be combined on special sheets so that the disabled person can communicate. These allow the people to select symbols from the Bliss system and finally, on the computer screen, a complete message is displayed that expresses the person's thoughts. In this way the student is encouraged to work more independently and produce larger texts using this symbolic language 'Bliss'.
- **Students with visual impairments**
Braille enables these children to learn. This is achieved by transcribing, through a properly equipped computer, a Braille text. Nowadays, a blind student can place a common book on the "input" of their computer and have it on the output, whether the full text is read with the mechanical pronunciation of the voice composer or written in Braille.
- **Students with hearing impairments**
Children with hearing impairments can be helped if their language skills are developed. In other words, efforts can be made to find other ways to help improve children's communication and to facilitate their education. An example is a program that displays a graphic representation of words. That is, the teacher speaks into the microphone and their speech is "transformed" into a graph on the computer screen. The child with hearing impairments, speaking on a microphone after their teacher, tries to produce, as much as possible, the same curve on the screen as the curve of their teachers (Soulis, 2013).

RESEARCH

Research purpose and objectives: The purpose of this research is to record and study the views of educators of adults with special needs on the prevailing educational conditions in the field, as well as the opinions of learners on the activities and the general picture of these educational units on the island of Chios. In the process of this study, the method of the interview was used, in the context of which a qualitative data analysis research will be carried out from the views of the participants. The individual objectives of the research are the recording of the views of the instructors and the learners on specific issues related to this form of education, such as the educational material, the degree of satisfaction from the units and their condition, the expertise of the instructors and the activities in which the learners engage. The research sample consists of 15 instructors of adults with special needs of various specialties as well as 15 learners up to 23 years old.

Research tool: semi-structured interview: In the present study, the semi-structured interview was used as the main research tool in order to enable potential and flexibility, depending on the progress of the process. The main goal of the interview is to gather as much information as possible about the current conditions, experiences, personal views as well as the attitudes of instructors and learners towards this form of education. The questions were designed to help us achieve the objectives of the research, while at the same time all the rules for the protection of personal data (names) were observed. As far as the research part of this study is concerned, there are not enough research results from previous reports on the island of Chios. Consequently, there is no complete and formed framework that informs about the prevailing situation on the island. With the method of the interview we will understand the views of the instructors themselves but also of the learners concerning the already existing educational units for adults with special needs on the island.

The interview is one of the main means of conducting research and is mainly used in theoretical and social sciences. It is a dominant tool and means for conducting a qualitative research, which enables the person who has undertaken the research to explore many aspects on any chosen issue. In addition, it is a tool that promotes verbal communication and interaction between the two members who participate in it. In addition, it is a unique source according to which various incidents are understood and described, such as the personal experiences, opinions, beliefs, attitudes and emotional states of the participants. In order for an interview to be as effective and as efficient as possible, the researcher must have organized the proper preparation for its structure and content. In more detail, an interview bulletin is being prepared in which the types of questions regarding the issue being investigated are classified, organized and categorized. The researcher must have an axis of questions, which has as its content the main topic being investigated, what the main research questions are and the necessary means that will be needed to provide the necessary answers to these questions (Gouvias, 2019). In his study, Bryman (2001) states that when creating and organizing an interview, a set of questions must first be structured that will be characterized by coherence and continuity. The main concern of the researchers should be to conduct a flexible and effective interview. In addition, the questions should be targeted and comprehensive and help to provide comprehensive answers. The language used should be understandable as much as possible to the respondent. Also the environment in which an interview takes place is very important. The respondent should feel comfortable and familiar so that an effective interview can take place without external distractions. The scope of interviews should be surrounded by issues such as emotions,

attitudes, ideologies, values, beliefs, relationships, social environment, family situations, biographical characteristics, etc. (Gouvias, 2019).

RESULTS

Below the results of the interviews with the instructors are presented:

Question: Did your education institution distribute educational material? If so, which one? Mention the educational material you are using.

The instructors were asked this question in order to investigate the issue of the distribution of educational material by the institution in which they work. As a whole, our instructors have stated that no specific training material is available, e.g. book in either of the two educational units (School of Special and Vocational Education and Child and Adolescent Center), in which they work and that they use their own personal notes always based on the respective curriculum. More specifically, some reported, "No specific material has been distributed. Depending on the class and level of the students in mathematics, I organize my own notes which include materials from the whole range of school years, as well as numerical procedures and operations that they will need at a professional level" (S.No5), "Depending on the level of each group of learners, I organize them in groups and after I teach the theory, they apply some case studies, which come from the social, economic and professional life."

Question : Have you been trained in the educational material you use? If so, state how satisfied you are with the training you have received?

An important aspect of the educational process and learning for adults with special needs is the degree of training the instructors have received on issues related to the educational material they use. As reported by a previous question, there is no specific educational material distributed by the two educational institutions, thus, the instructors teach using their own scientific notes. Regarding the training they have received for the educational material, there is a plethora of answers. In particular there are positive responses in which interviewees stated that the extent to which they have been trained is sufficient, saying, "Certainly, I have been trained at a very satisfactory level" (S.No.1), "I have been trained to an excellent degree regarding the notes that I have and teach to the learners of this field", (S.No.2), "Yes, I have received training to an excellent degree", (S.No.4), "I have received training to a very satisfactory degree" . (S.No.5).

Question: How do you judge the educational material:

- a. in terms of content?
- b. in terms of ease of use?

The question is asked to investigate the degree to which the participating instructors address the level of the content and the ease of use of the educational material they use. Regarding the analysis of the question, the interviewees seemed particularly satisfied, due to the fact that the educational material consists of and is structured based on their own notes and bibliographic references in such a way as to facilitate the educational needs of the learners as well as possible. More specifically, all participants, except the instructor of Physical Education and Arts, who as mentioned did not use any educational material, said they were quite satisfied with the level of content of the material. Regarding the level of convenience of its use, they reported positive comments, "Easy and customized to the needs and cases of the

departments", (SNo2), "Satisfactory degree of difficulty with some (minimal) demanding mathematical activities ", (SNo5), "The content of the material is not very difficult and it has many examples and activities that teach theory through deeds" (SNo3).

Question: Does the educational material meet the educational needs of learners? If not, comment on the reasons.

As the educational material used to train adults with disabilities is the personal creation of instructors based on reports and books, there have been both positive and negative responses, with all interviewees stating that, so far, they meet the needs of the learners. More specifically, there were views, which were positive, "I consider my personal creation of notes to be quite responsive to educational needs. But on the whole there are no specific books that can be taught. Everyone applies their own notes based on the level of knowledge of the adults they are training", (S.No.1)," Linguistically, I consider that the educational material meet at a very satisfactory level the needs of the learners" (SNo4). However, some instructors have a different view which they express negative statements and which illustrate their dissatisfaction with the level of response to the learners' needs, "Given the high demand for this type of training, I believe that they do not meet the desired level concerning the needs of learners. There is of course a wide range, which covers the range of this training, but in practice I do not think it can be valid over the years, as it needs constant renewal, which does not happen to a large extent and especially in the field of economics, which is the subject I teach ", (S.No.3).

The results of the trainees' interview are then presented.

Question: Do you face any barriers in your participation in the courses?

The respondents' answers were encouraging, as 10 of them did not face any barriers in their participation in the lessons. Of course, the rest said, "Sometimes I face some obstacles in Mathematics" (SNO2). This answer was expressed by a learner who faces some difficulties in mathematics and may not have fully understood the content of the question. Of course, we accepted the answer and received it as a barrier to his participation. In addition, there was a learner who was experiencing some mobility problems and difficulties and who stated that "Sometimes when it rains my mom has a hard time getting me to school quickly" (S.No.3). While another reported "I go to school a few times and I'm tired" (SN4).

Question: Would you like to participate in another program but you can't?

Due to limited cognitive subjects, learners are unaware of the existence of programs other than those taught by their instructors. In particular, their Special Education instructor teaches them about the existence of races and awards. Therefore, we had only two answers to this question, as only two trainees did not answer in a negative way. The answers included, "I would like to participate in a program and travel" (S.No.2), "I would like to go to races because I like to win medals" (S.No.2).

CONCLUSION

The results of the research show that the instructors show a concern regarding the educational material, which is not uniform in all the institutions and educational units as, each instructor creates their own educational material, based on their own notes and bibliographic reports and tailored to the educational needs of the learners. The majority of instructors seem to each make their own efforts, each putting their own stone to "build" effective training in the field of adults with special needs. All instructors adapt each educational process according to the goal and purpose of the institution with the ultimate vision and mission of satisfying the educational needs of the learners. Although there are two educational units on the island of Chios (EEEEK School of Special education and Vocational Training and Child and Adolescent Center), members and participants in this educational process, either as trainers or as adult learners, seem to support them in a dynamic way by influencing and sensitizing society to push its members to claim equal learning and knowledge opportunities.

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