Developing Instruments to Improve Learning and Development of Disadvantage Seniors in Europe: the PALADIN Project

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Abstract

In this paper we intend to present the definitive results of the process of building self-efficacy for self-direction scales for disadvantage seniors in the following five areas in several European countries: health, activity, education, citizenship and finances. This process corresponds to the development of a work package of the PALADIN European project (Promoting Active Learning and Ageing of Disadvantage Seniors), which is co-financed by the Lifelong Learning Programme from the European Commission, as a Grundtvig Multilateral Project.

PALADIN project is based on the assumptions that people who consciously become skilled learners gain in autonomy and take more responsibility for their own learning and development and that they are also more likely to develop a sense of well-being and fulfilment.

PALADIN partnership is composed of 8 institutions from 7 countries (Portugal, Spain, Bulgaria, Greece, Malta, Hungary and Swiss) from the Mediterranean region and central Europe that have some of the lowest rates of participation in lifelong learning. Once we have a long way to go before the rate of enrolment in lifelong learning activities rose to the level already achieved by some countries (e.g., 90%, Sweden), the Project intends to contribute to the empowerment of the disadvantage seniors through the development of their readiness for self-direction in learning, especially in the five fields mentioned above.

As a part of the global project, one important step towards the achievement of its main goals is to develop and test the five scales mentioned. In order to do that, the two universities involved in the project (University of Coimbra, Portugal, and Aristotle University, Greece) lead the process of scales construction, which have departed from several focus groups aiming at analyse the relevant domain of functioning in each area and to identify the forms the challenges and impediments take.

After the construction of the first draft of the scales, the items have been tested in seniors with more than 50 years old with low school level (basic compulsory education not completed), low qualification (level two not reached) and low economic level, and the definitive study for the final test of the instruments have been carried out simultaneously in the European countries mentioned. The results of this process and the construct validity indicators will be presented and discussed at the Conference.