Development of Social Competence in the Preparation and Continuing Training of Adult Educators

Genutė Gedvilienė[1], Egidijus Stancikas[2]

Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania[1,2]

Abstract

Study aims o reveal the manifestation and development of social competence of students and adult educators in Lithuania by highlighting subjects' communication and co-operation in the learning process.

Research involves combination of theoretical and empirical research methods.

Literature review and content analysis of documents helped to highlight the communication and cooperation as fundamental phenomena of the social competence. Empirical study by surveying 240 undergraduate and postgraduate students of adult education study programmes and 320 adult educators disclosed their confidence in the development of communication and cooperation capabilities that constitute social competence.

Keywords: *adult education, adult educators, social competence, communication, cooperation.*

1. Introduction

Problem Statement. In the full diversity of life, a person is directly associated with others from the first days of his birth to leaving his life. Although people are different in nature, their personal qualities, intellectual abilities, emotional expressions, willpower and etc vary, however, everyone has a need for social competence. People's interaction with each other requires full disclosure, full sociality. Although social competence makes important part of curricula in higher education, their role in adult education and it's implications for the activities of adult educators and their competence requirements require more research and data from emprircal studies (Lithuanian Republic Law on Education, 2011).

The aim of this study is to reveal the manifestation and development of social competence of students and adult educators by highlighting subjects' communication and co-operation in the learning process.

Methods of research. Theoretical and empirical research methods were combined. For the analysis the following methods were applied:

1) Literature review and content analysis of documents helped to highlight the communication and cooperation as fundamental phenomena of the social competence.

2) Empirical study is based on questionnaire survey method. There were surveyed 240 undergraduate and postgraduate students of adult education study programmes and 320 adult educators from Lithuania.

The themes of survey questionnaire were defined on the basis of findings of the literature review and included the following: 1) opinions of the respondents on the role and place of a social competence in the learning process; 2) opinions of the respondents about communication and cooperation in learning together.

2. Theoretical framework

Learning involves thinking and feelings of learners. The circulation of knowledge and skills takes place at the level of the individual and the group, so learning to act together gives learners more power to solve the problems that have arisen. Design and implementation of the succesful life projects and active involvement in the development of societies require from people to develop and to mobilize many different competencies. Development and application of the social and communication competence also present important challenge for citizens, civil society, stakeholders and state institutions. Development of key competencies in the systems fo education makes increasingly important part in the national and EU agendas and policies of education (Key competencies for lifelong learning, European Reference Framework, 2007). The European Commission has identified eight key competencies: native and foreign language communication, mathematical literacy and core competences in science and technology, digital literacy, learning to learn, social and civic competences, entrepreneurship and cultural awareness. Competences are a common basis for all national and European educational change initiatives and are aimed at all those who contribute to the development of education - learners, employers, education providers and educators, politicians. Lifelong learning competences are considered to be particularly important in the knowledge society, as

they provide more flexibility in the labor market, as well as adaptability to constant change(Key Competences for lifelong learning. Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council, 2006). Personal competence also increases the learner's motivation, attitude to learning and its uniqueness. According to the European Parliament and the Council (2018), every citizen needs to improve his / her skills and knowledge constantly, actively pursuing social life and successfully working in a changing world of work.
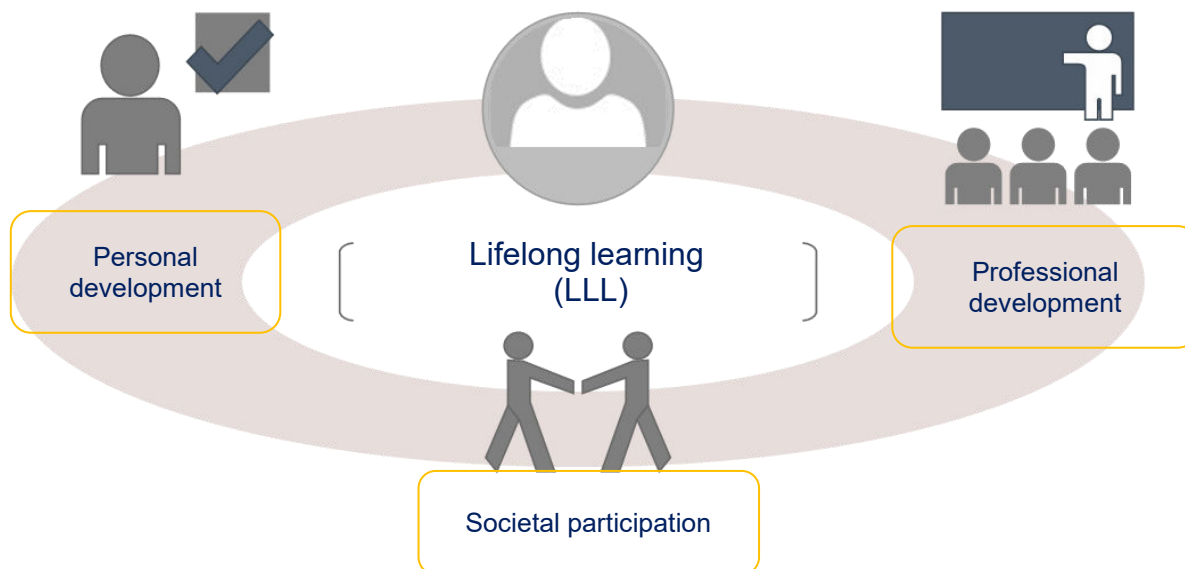

Fig.1. Dimensions of social competence

Green (2013) emphasizes the importance of key skills by highlighting their meaning and meaning in the lifelong learning process of a citizen in the world. According to the author, competencies must be dynamic and changing, depending on the evolving environment and changing needs. At the same time, this feature raises the idea that there are no combinations or units of finite and unchanging competences, and their acquisition and application require constant attention from individuals and society. Social competence usually makes integral part of key competencies, as the demonstration of any competence takes place through social expression as communication. Therefore, the scope of meaningfulness and application of key competencies are socially defined and shaped. Socially meaningful and useful or applicable abilities and skills can only be developed in specific social contexts and only through the efforts of the individual to express themselves in society. Development of skills and competencies also require pro-active attitude and approach to learning. One of the most controversial questions on the development of key competencies is related with the ratio and relationship between the development of vocational or professional competencies and key competencies. In this regard, social competence is important both for the personal, professional and civic development of person. A person develops professionally through interaction and relationships with others. Occupational activity requires from the persons to adjust and apply social competencies in the specific contexts and conditions of activity, what brings some specific skills requirements of communication and sociality in the different work situations. For this reason, development of social competence should also be integrated in the curricula of initial and continuing vocational education and training. The dimension of citizenship and citizens' education also require specific adaptations and adjustment of the social competence by focusing on it's application for the needs of civil society (Fig. 1). Development and application of social competence in the different contexts become increasingly complex, especially when we consider cross-cutting application of this competence in the personal, professional and civil society contexts.

Equally important is the relationship between social competence and the process of education. Education in the context of lifelong leraning requires a wide range of skills of communication and cooperation, such as learner facilitation for interaction and effective educative interventions to achieve learning goals. Creation of learner-friendly environment also requires different social competencies. Therefore development of social competence should be understood as an integral part of the curriculum and adult education and learning process that helps learners to interact and learn

successfully. It would require to apply and to develop group learning methods and to foster the collective dimension of learning.

3. Research findings. Survey of students in adult education and adult educators on the development of social competencies

Data analysis disclosed different of ways and modalities of the deployment of social competence. Social competence is important for the students and adult educators not only as the auxiliary capability for the communication and transfer of information, but also as the outcome of collective learning that leads to the development of new capabilities applied by the learners in the learning process, their professional field of adult education and their social life. Equally so, social competence is necessary for the effective adult education activities not only as an auxiliary capability applied in the teaching process, but also as a potential for improvement, development and sustainability of the didactic competence and know-how in this field.

Survey disclosed that both students and adult educators are confident in their possessed capabilities of communication, especially what regards empathy, abilities to share information, discuss the things and resolve the conflicts.

Table 1. Opinion of students and adult educators on their capabilities of communication (%)

Capabilities of communication	strongly agree %		Agree %		neither agree nor disagree %		Disagree %		Strongly disagree %	
	S	E	S	E	S	E	S	E	S	E
We can be able to stay the other shoes, to empathize with the other	5,8	26,1	43,8	45,7	36,4	28,3	11,6	0,	2,5	0,
Say to each other our opinion	19,2	26,1	52,6	50,0	25,0	19,6	2,5	4,3	0,	0,
Listen to each other	19,0	32,6	44,6	56,5	30,6	8,7	5,0	2,2	0,	0,
We are attentive to each other	14,0	32,6	43,8	52,2	35,5	13,0	6,6	2,2	0,	0,
We try to understand each other	12,4	21,7	52,9	58,7	26,4	17,4	8,3	2,2	0,	0,
Know how to enjoy success of other persons	13,2	23,9	52,1	58,7	24,8	15,2	8,3	0,	1,7	2,2
More confident when we share information with other	13,2	23,9	52,1	58,7	24,8	15,2	8,3	0,	0,	2,2
Discussing regularly	16,5	28,3	51,2	58,7	25,6	13,0	5,0	0,	0,8	0,
We communicate with each other by media	14,9	26,1	43,0	37,0	27,3	37,0	11,6	4,3	2,5	0,
We are able to resolve conflicts	14,3	30,4	58,7	56,5	19,0	13,0	4,8	0,	1,6	0,

(S- student, E - adult educator)

Both students and adult educators are also confident in their capabilities related to cooperation, especially in teamworking, cooperation in curriculum design and development, organization of educational activities (Table 2).

Table 2. Opinion of students and adult educators on their capabilities of cooperation (%)

Capabilities of cooperation	Strongly agree %		Agree %		neither agree nor disagree %		Disagree %		strongly disagree %	
	S	E	S	E	S	E	S	E	S	E
We are able to work in a team with other participants	14,9	26,1	62,0	63,0	21,5	10,9	1,7	0,	0,	0,
By working together we successfully combine the cultural differences	13,2	32,6	47,1	58,7	35,5	8,7	4,1	0,	0,	0,
Together with other we are preparing curricula and modules	21,5	50,0	54,5	47,8	21,5	2,2	1,7	0,	0,	0,
We are active in planning and organizing activity of organisation	19,0	56,5	61,1	39,1	18,2	4,3	1,7	0,	0,	0,
We are active in executing the activities of the organisation	9,5	43,5	57,1	47,8	28,6	8,7	1,6	0,	3,2	0,
We are gathering into teams with others and make assigned tasks by an organisation	11,1	34,8	46,0	63,6	36,5	6,5	3,2	0,	3,2	0,
We actively participate in meetings of the community of organisation	17,4	43,5	56,2	47,8	23,1	8,7	2,5	0,	0,8	0,
We are engaged in a debate before making decisions	19,0	26,1	44,6	63,0	33,1	10,9	2,5	0,	0,8	0,
We assume responsibility in solving operational issues	12,4	8,7	36,4	80,4	39,7	8,7	9,9	2,2	1,7	0,
Together with other participants we are preparing projects for improvement of activities of organisation	14,9	34,8	47,9	58,7	29,8	6,5	6,6	0,	0,	0,

(S- student, E - adult educator)

4. Conclusions

Social competence development makes integral and important part of adult education.Development of this competence also facilitate the learning process and create preconditions for the meaningful learning through creation and sharing of meaning and values in the learning process. Social competence also makes integral part of competence development in the professional field by supplying learners with the capacities needed to overcome the obstacles and challenges of professional activity, to solve the work conflicts, to enable effective collective learning and to contribute to the effectiveness of the collective action.

The findings of survey confirmed that students in adult education and adult educators are confident in their acquired capabilities of communication and cooperation.

References

[1]   Gedvilienė G. (2012). Social Competence of Teachers and students. The Case Study of Belgium and Lithuania. Scientific study.
file:///C:/Users/VDU/Downloads/Genut%C4%97%20Gedvilien%C4%97.%20Social%20Competence%20of%20Teachers%20and%20students.%20The%20Case%20Study%20of%20Belgium%20and%20Lithuania.%20Scientific%20study%202019-05-06%201445.pdf
[2]   Green, F. (2013). *Skills and Skilled Work– An Economic and Social Analysis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
[3]   Key Concepts in Adult Education and Training (2012). London: Routledge.
https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203434086
[4]   Key competences for lifelong learning. (2018).
https://www.euroguidance.eu/key-competences-for-lifelong-learning
[5]   Key Competences for lifelong learning. Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council. (2006). Available at:
http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:394:0010:0018:en:PDF

[6] Key competencies for lifelong learning, European Reference Framework. (2007). Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/publ/pdf/ll-learning/keycomp_en.pdf

[7] Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo įstatymas/Lithuanian Republic Law on Education. (2011). Lietuvos Respublikos šveitimo ir mokslo ministerija: Vilnius. Available at: http://www.sac.smm.lt/images/file/e_biblioteka/Lietuvos%20Respublikos%20svietimo%20istatymas.pdf