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PROFESSIONALISATION OF ANDRAGOGICAL STAFF THROUGH A UNIVERSITY STUDY PROGRAMME IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

ABSTRACT

Despite a rich tradition of institutional adult education and relatively continuous development of andragogical theory and practice, the Republic of Croatia has only adopted strategic and legal frameworks that have created the conditions for the professionalisation of adult education staff in the last twenty years. This paper aims to present the andragogical thought, legislative framework, and andragogy study programme in Croatia. The need for the university education of andragogues stems from research results that indicate many employers prefer highly educated staff in this field. To respond to current needs, the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Rijeka is going to implement a University Part-Time Graduate Study in Andragogy programme designed in accordance with ten years of positive experience in adult education in the Republic of Croatia, modern achievements in andragogical theory and practice, and based on the Croatian Qualification Frame.

Keywords: *andragogy, study programme, andragogy in Croatia, professionalisation of andragogical staff*

PROFESIONALIZACIJA ANDRAGOŠKEGA KADRA PREK NOVEGA ŠTUDIJSKEGA PROGRAMA V REPUBLICI HRVAŠKI – POVZETEK

Kljub bogati tradiciji institucionalnega izobraževanja odraslih in relativno neprekinjenega razvoja andragoške teorije in prakse je Hrvaška šele v zadnjih 20 letih vzpostavila strateško in zakonsko ogrodje, ki je ustvarilo pogoje za profesionalizacijo zaposlenih v izobraževanju odraslih. Članek predstavlja andragoško misel, zakonodajno ogrodje in študijski program andragogike. Potrebo po univerzitetni izobrazbi andragogov so pokazali rezultati raziskav, da številni delodajalci dajejo prednost visoko izobraženemu kadru na tem področju. V odgovor na sodobne potrebe bodo na Filozofski fakulteti na Reki izvajali program izrednega diplomskega študija andragogike, oblikovan v skladu z desetletjem pozitivnih izkušenj dela na področju izobraževanja odraslih v Republiki Hrvaški, s sodobnimi pristopi k andragoški teoriji in praksi, ter na podlagi Hrvaškega ogrodja kvalifikacij.

Ključne besede: *andragogika, študijski program, andragogika na Hrvaškem, profesionalizacija andragoškega kadra*

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INTRODUCTION: DEVELOPMENT OF ANDRAGOGICAL THOUGHT IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

The development of andragogical activities in the Republic of Croatia dates back to the beginnings of the “national enlightenment movement” in the 19th century, which established the assumptions and basic ideas of adult education. The greatest obstacles to the development of andragogical activities in this period can be seen in the semi- and complete illiteracy of citizens (Klapan & Živčić, 2011). Nevertheless, the establishment of Matica ilirska, a literary and cultural society, and the Croatian Pedagogical Literary Council, a professional association of teachers, pedagogues and educational workers, during this period increased the importance of adult education, especially in the form of school improvement.

The interwar period brought various contradictions in these areas due to the action of various socio-political (and ideological) movements that shaped andragogical teaching to a large extent. The restructuring and partial unification of the ideas (which did not exist then in the sense we know them today) of the adult education system focused on teacher training.

As the founders of andragogical thought in the Croatian territories in 1907, Bazala and Štampar can be highlighted. Despite their activities and influence in this field, the importance of distinguishing adult education from pedagogical sciences directed at children and adolescents was first clearly emphasised by Pastuović (1985), who, together with his colleagues, published the university textbook *Andragogy* in the mid-1980s, in which he conceptualised andragogy as a poly-discipline that makes it possible to combine the findings of the main educational sciences on adult education (psychology, sociology, and economics of education) and the development of andragogy into an interdiscipline. The publication of *Andragogy* coincided with the first edition of the *International Encyclopaedia of Education*, which stated that multidisciplinaryity is a fundamental feature of the science of adult education (Husén & Postlethwaite, 1985).

One of the most problematic issues is that Croatian andragogues with a pedagogical background have not even accepted the concept of the andragogical cycle as an essential determinant that distinguishes andragogy from pedagogy, which was first propagated in Croatia by Mihajlo Ogrizović in 1963. According to Ogrizović (1963), the andragogical cycle consists of four phases: the study of educational needs, programme development, programme implementation, and the evaluation of educational outcomes.

The Homeland War (1991–1995) period led to renewed stagnation in the development of andragogical practice and activity in the Republic of Croatia, which resulted in a decrease in the number of institutions and consequently adult education programmes (Ministry of Science, Education and Sport, 2013). Nevertheless, adult education and some of the institutions implementing it managed to overcome the crisis period and the adult education system began to develop again at the beginning of the 21st century. In addition to the existing institutions, private initiatives emerged and private institutions

were established to provide new programmes in formal, non-formal, and informal adult education, all of the forms prescribed in the Adult Education Strategy (Ministry of Science, Education and Sport, 2004). The Strategy itself calls for a legislative framework, statistical monitoring, and financing of adult education in the Republic of Croatia, and includes key information on many different factors such as teachers, evaluation, cooperation, and research.

The period between 1997 and 2007 also saw changes in the institutional framework of adult education. The biggest changes occurred in connection with the development of an education policy based on lifelong learning as part of a knowledge-based society. First and foremost is the establishment of the Agency for Adult Education in 2006, which was merged with the Agency for Vocational Education and Training in 2010 to form a joint agency called the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (hereafter Agency). The Agency is responsible for analysis, development, research, guidance, evaluation, self-evaluation, external evaluation, preparation of standard proposals, professional support, and other tasks in the field of adult education and vocational training (Act on the Agency for Vocational Education and Adult Education, 2010).

Nowadays, the concept of adult education continues to develop and function as a very important component of lifelong learning in the European Union and thus also in Croatia as a member state. The importance of developing quality adult education is evident, for example, in the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia until 2030 (2021), which states that one of the main goals is to “improve the quality and relevance of adult education programmes in order to increase the participation of the adult population in lifelong learning processes”. For more than ten years, Croatia has been hosting the Lifelong Learning Week, organised by the Agency, which takes place all over the country. During this week, many adult education institutions offer free courses and non-formal programmes to create an atmosphere where learning is respected and promoted as a lifelong process.

The aim of this paper is to present the andragogical thought, legislative framework, and study programme in andragogy. Following these aims, this paper covers topics dealing with the legislative framework of adult education and the Croatian Qualification Framework, describes the University Part-Time Graduate Study in Andragogy at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Rijeka, and discusses the necessity of formal education of staff working in adult education.

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK OF ADULT EDUCATION AND THE CROATIAN QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK

At the level of the Republic of Croatia, the system of adult education is determined by the Adult Education Act (2021). The first article of the Adult Education Act defines adult education by formal and non-formal forms of education, while adult education itself is defined as:

the activity of formal adult education carried out by an authorised legal person according to approved programmes in order to acquire and improve competences for personal, social and professional needs and the needs of the labour market, evidenced by a public document issued by a legal person authorised to carry out formal adult education. (Adult Education Act, 2021, Article 1)

In this sense, formal adult education in the Republic of Croatia, according to Article 1, includes “educational programmes conducted in accordance with this Act and other regulations under the competence of other state administrative bodies regulating compulsory education for access to the labour market for a specific profession” (para. 3), while non-formal education includes the:

implementation of non-formal education programmes financed through vouchers from the European Structural and Investment Funds and mechanisms for recovery and resilience that are in line with the occupational standard or set of competences and the qualification standard or set of learning outcomes from the register of the Croatian Qualifications Framework. (Adult Education Act, 2021, Article 1, para. 4)

In the Republic of Croatia, the term adult education refers to all forms of education for persons over 15 years of age. In order to ensure the quality of education, all adult education on the territory of the Republic of Croatia should be based on the principles of ensuring the conditions for quality education and learning in accordance with the needs of personal, social, and economic development, social inclusion, the needs of the labour market, and the elimination of all forms of discrimination against students and applicants, the acquisition of key competences for lifelong learning, education based on learning outcomes, and the responsibility of all stakeholders in the adult education system.

As adult education is inextricably linked to andragogy as a profession, it is important to address the training of andragogues and to determine whether it is of sufficient quality to equip andragogues with the necessary competencies to work in adult education. The problem of training adult education professionals in accordance with the needs of modern society arises in formal or non-formal adult education. Therefore, it is necessary to provide andragogues with andragogical competencies that are specific compared to pedagogical competencies because adult education differs in many areas from children’s education (Kušić et al., 2016).

Until recently, the most that was achieved in the context of trying to profile andragogy while creating a clear distinction from pedagogy was the introduction of a course on adult education as part of the pedagogy degree. In this case, due to the description of pedagogy as a comprehensive theory of education, which also includes adult education, andragogy continues to be understood as part of pedagogy.

Nevertheless, the development of the competence framework for andragogy at the European (Buiskool et al., 2010; Godding et al., 2011) and the national level (Živčić et al., 2013) provided the opportunity to create adequate and effective programmes for training andragogues and thus a clear demarcation between pedagogy and andragogy. In this context, the development of the Croatian Qualifications Framework (hereafter CROQF) played the biggest role. This is a document that regulates the qualification system in the Republic of Croatia at all levels using qualification standards. The standards are based on learning outcomes and are aligned with the needs of the labour market, individuals, and society. The CROQF focuses on learning outcomes rather than the processes by which outcomes are achieved, but nevertheless, it provides the basis for developing an assessment of prior learning.

The educational programmes to acquire a specific qualification should be aligned with the Qualification Standards, following the principles of strengthening competencies for lifelong learning and building a system for the recognition and assessment of non-formal and informal learning (CROQF, n.d.).

The standardisation of qualifications enables the regulation of market demand in the education sector. The CROQF is based on 3 types of qualification use: Qualifications for the labour market, Qualifications for further education, and finally, Qualifications for other purposes (Herceg et al., 2016).

Specifically, the following competences are listed for the occupation of andragogue (CROQF Register, 2019):

1. *Application of theoretical knowledge specific to adult education* – competences implying the implementation of andragogical and pedagogical theory in curricula, then implementation of knowledge from other fields such as psychology, methodology, and didactics in adult education.
2. *Organisation of adult education programmes considering social and economic factors* – involves analysis of educational needs in the local environment, market needs of labour, the usefulness of programme implementation in terms of the labour market, and needs of trainees.
3. *Organisation of the teaching process in adult education* – an outstanding competence that includes the importance of applying different teaching strategies, methods, forms of work and technologies in the teaching process, combining theoretical knowledge in the classroom with the practical part, adapting the programme to the needs of adult participants.
4. *Curriculum design in adult education* – a competence where it is of great importance to consider the institutional, economic and social context when designing the curriculum. The andragogue should consult relevant theories, analyse existing programmes, and finally, maintain cooperation with relevant institutions and ministries.
5. *Quality of teachers' work in adult education* – this competence of the andragogue requires both the placement and preparation of teachers for teaching, and the training of teachers to deliver courses according to the characteristics of the participants.

In addition, this competence also refers to the implementation of professional trainings and efficiency analyses of teachers.

6. *Professional competencies of the andragogue* – for this competence, knowledge, and skills (communicational, organisational, interpersonal and management) of the andragogue. The andragogue should be aware of his own role within the institution and reflect on his work to be able to improve it and thus the adult education institution.
7. *Improving the quality system in the adult education institution* – the andragogue must have developed criteria for the selection of teachers, monitoring and control mechanisms, teaching processes, critical analysis of existing adult education curricula and programmes, collection of examples of good practice, creation of tools for monitoring the quality of the system and the like.
8. *Ensuring a stimulating atmosphere and environment* in an adult education institution requires fostering a supportive environment within the institution.
9. *Administrative work in an adult education institution* – applying legal regulations in all aspects of adult education, implementing laws and other regulations related to the quality assurance system, informing the public about the work of the institution and adult education opportunities, managing andragogical and other documentation, monitoring market conditions.
10. *Conducting research and using the results obtained in professional practice* – andragogues are expected to analyse data collected through research, conduct research projects, conduct qualitative and quantitative research on how to improve the teaching process in adult education, and analyse student outcomes.

In accordance with Croatian law (Act on Higher Education and Scientific Activity, 2017) and legislation, as well as based on the qualification and occupational standard, the study programme Andragogy has been established at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Rijeka. Strong support for the design and development of the study programme has been provided by the main national documents (Adult Education Strategies; Ministry of Science, Education and Sport, 2007, 2014; Ministry of Science and Education, 2021) and European Union documents (Adult Education: It is never too late to learn, It is always a good time to learn; Commission of the European Communities, 2006, 2007), which indicate that the effectiveness of adult education is based on the professional competences and moral responsibility of andragogical staff and that the quality of staff is a crucial quality factor, which implies the need for their systematic training at the university level.

The study programme has been designed in accordance with the many years of positive experience in adult education in the Republic of Croatia, modern achievements in andragogical theory and practice (Koludrović & Brčić Kuljiš, 2016) and, above all, in accordance with the Occupational Standard for Andragogue (CROQF Register, 2019) and the Qualification Standard for Master of Andragogy (CROQF Register, 2020), which reflect the needs of institutions and organisations for education and adult education, i.e., the needs of the labour market for knowledge, skills, and andragogical competences in the Republic of Croatia.

UNIVERSITY PART-TIME GRADUATE STUDY IN ANDRAGOGY AT THE FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES IN RIJEKA

University Part-Time Graduate Study in Andragogy is a programme at level 7.1 of the CROQF and is based on the Occupational standard 2359.13.7 Andragogue (CROQF Register, 2020) and qualification standard Master of Andragogy (CROQF Register, 2019). The study programme is conducted as part-time study and has 120 European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) credits. The main argument for constructing the programme as part-time is that many potential students may already be working in the field of adult education. In this context, a part-time programme provides the opportunity to work and participate in higher education simultaneously. Upon completion of the programme, the applicant is awarded the title Master of Andragogy.

The main learning outcomes of the programme include (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Rijeka, 2021):

1. Determine the theoretical and methodological foundations of andragogy and its connection to other sciences.
2. Identify different concepts of andragogy and European adult education practice.
3. Apply knowledge about the psychological development of adults.
4. Categorise different theories and concepts relevant to understanding adult learning development and its functioning in different fields.
5. Assess the knowledge and skill needs of different categories of adults and the needs of the labour market.
6. Develop adult education plans and programmes in different contexts and fields.
7. Manage the organisation of education and the process of teaching and learning of adults.
8. Evaluate the teaching process and models in adult education.
9. Apply theoretical knowledge in different real adult education settings.
10. Apply the acquired theoretical knowledge in promoting adult education as an integral part of lifelong learning.

The study programme is based on 15 mandatory (Table 1) and 22 optional sets (Table 2) of learning outcomes, modified to correspond to the seventh level of learning outcomes according to the CROQF. Similarly, certain learning outcomes are integrated into some other courses, while maintaining the content dimension.

Table 1*Contents in compulsory learning outcomes*

CONTENTS IN COMPULSORY LEARNING OUTCOMES	
1. History of andragogy	10. Personal and professional development of andragogues
2. Andragogy	11. Professional guidance of teachers and students
3. Management of adult education	12. Administrative tasks in an institution for adult education
4. Developmental psychology of adulthood	13. Internship in an institution for adult education
5. Adult learning	14. Scientific research work in the field of andragogy
6. Andragogical didactics	15. Teaching process in adult education
7. Development of curriculum in adult education	
8. Teaching atmosphere and environment in adult education	
9. Evaluation in adult education	

Note. Adapted from the Curriculum of the Part-Time Graduate Study in Andragogy, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Rijeka, 2021.

Table 2*Contents in optional learning outcomes*

CONTENTS IN OPTIONAL LEARNING OUTCOMES	
1. Educational policy in adult education	13. Comparative andragogy
2. Didactic approaches to adult education	14. Media on adult education
3. Application of statistics in andragogy	15. Information and communication technology in adult education
4. Methodology of qualitative research in andragogy	16. Reflexive practice in adult education
5. Adult education as a personal and social phenomenon	17. Ethics in adult education; type: optional
6. Lifelong learning in the context of contemporary andragogical theories	18. The role of andragogues in ensuring the quality system in adult education
7. Motivational processes in adult education	19. Methodology of quantitative research in andragogy
8. Management in adult education	20. Learning of vulnerable adult and elderly groups
9. Andragogy of work	21. Contemporary approaches to teaching adults
10. Marketing in adult education	22. Self-evaluation in adult education
11. Education of the elderly population	
12. Penological andragogy	

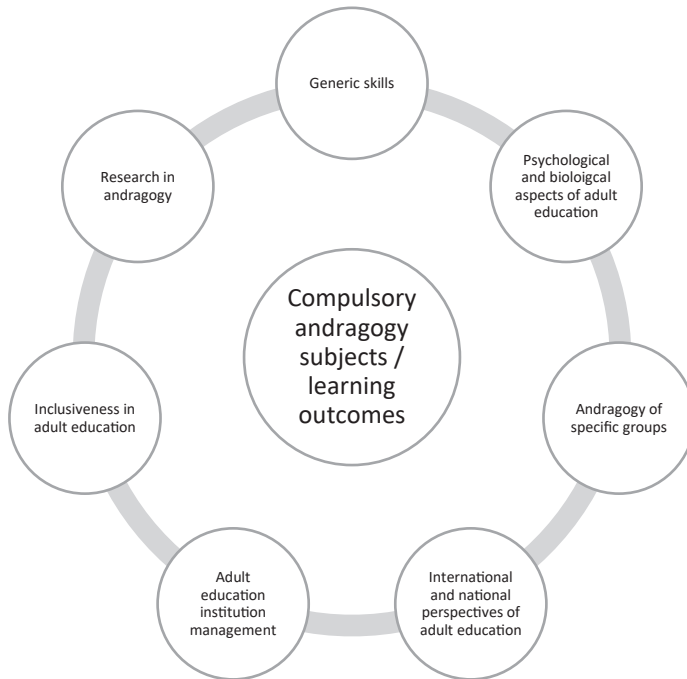
Note. Adapted from the Curriculum of the Part-Time Graduate Study in Andragogy, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Rijeka, 2021.

Structurally, the study programme consists of four groups of subjects/modules: theoretical (psychological and biological aspects of adult education, andragogy of specific groups), methodological (andragogical research), professional (inclusiveness in adult education, adult education institution management, international and national perspectives of adult education) and subjects and key competences modules (generic skills) (Figure 1). Guided

by the European Commission's idea of developing generic and specific competences (Council of the European Union, 2018), the aim of the programme is to work on the development of both types in order to create a coherent structure of knowledge and its practical application.

Figure 1

Graphic representation of compulsory and elective modules



Note. Adapted from the Curriculum of the Part-Time Graduate Study in Andragogy, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Rijeka, 2021.

These four subjects are functionally linked and ensure the understanding and exploration of the phenomenon and practice of adult education and learning, as well as the planning, organisation, delivery, and evaluation of adult education and learning. The content of each subject is in line with current practice and trends in adult education, especially if we take into account the development of the eight key competencies of lifelong learning (Council of the European Union, 2018). The sequence of delivery in each course and module is set from simpler to more complex, taking into account the specific interests and needs of the students.

Study structure

The Part-Time Graduate Study in Andragogy lasts four semesters and consists of compulsory courses and a modular structure of elective courses.

The first semester consists of 5 compulsory courses and 1 elective course with a total load of 30 ECTS credits, where the student must choose 3 ECTS credits from the group of internal electives of the Superdisciplinary Competences module. The second semester consists of 4 compulsory courses and 2 elective courses with a total load of 30 ECTS credits, in which the student must choose 8 ECTS credits from the group of internal electives (one course of which must be from the module Psychological and Biological Aspects of Adult Education, the others from the module Andragogy of Target Groups or the module International and National Perspectives of Adult Education). Internal electives also include internal elective activities in which a student can earn a maximum of 4 ECTS credits, of which each activity can bring a maximum of 2 ECTS credits (elective activities have no prescribed number of hours and are not graded, and the holder is the head of the department). After completing the first year, the third semester consists of 5 compulsory courses and 2 elective courses for a total of 30 ECTS points. The student must choose 8 ECTS credits from the group of internal electives (of which one course must be from the module Research in Andragogy and the other from the module Inclusion in Adult Education). Internal electives also include internal elective courses in which a student can earn a maximum of 4 ECTS points, with each course earning a maximum of 2 ECTS points (elective courses have no prescribed number of hours and are not graded, and the holder is the head of the department). Finally, the fourth semester consists of 3 compulsory courses and 2 elective courses with a total load of 30 ECTS credits, where the student must choose 8 ECTS credits from the group of internal electives (one of these courses must be from the Management of Institutions in Adult Education module, the others from the Andragogy of Target Groups module or the International and National Perspectives in Adult Education module). Internal electives also include internal elective activities in which a student can earn a maximum of 4 ECTS credits, of which each activity can bring a maximum of 2 ECTS credits (elective activities have no prescribed number of hours and are not graded, and the holder is the head of the department) (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Rijeka, 2021).

Teaching is realised through different methods, techniques and forms of learning (lectures, exercises, workshops, etc.) that enable active learning and the acquisition of knowledge and skills. The students' duties and workload are accompanied by up-to-date literature recommendations for exam preparation, which are aligned with the intended objectives and outcomes of each course. The programme of study also ensures the systematic preparation of students for their thesis within the framework of two courses, thesis seminar, thesis (as a course), and the continuous supervisory work, support and guidance of the teaching staff.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Since andragogical teaching has spread in Croatia since the early 20th century, it can be concluded that this process has not come to a standstill despite numerous political and social changes. Adult education in Croatia is seen more as part of lifelong learning and not only as a compulsory activity. The changes that have taken place in Croatia since

its accession to the European Union have given andragogical teaching more influence and developmental power. The main problem in this area is the adequate education and training of people involved in adult education. Fortunately, Croatian legislators, competent authorities, and professionals at universities and adult education institutions have recognised the need for well-trained staff. These measures and recognition led to an Occupational and Qualification standard for an Andragogue, which formed the basis for the creation of a study programme for future andragogues.

Research conducted by Brčić Kuljiš, Popović, Koludrović, et al. (2015) and Brčić Kuljiš, Popović, Reić Ercegovac, et al. (2016) has shown that employers and teachers prefer andragogical employees with higher education. More than two-thirds of respondents felt that andragogical workers need higher education at level 7 of the CROQF, while to a much lesser extent they expressed the need to acquire qualifications at undergraduate or post-graduate level. It has also been shown that employers and teachers in adult education have a good understanding of the specifics of adult education and the most important competences, apart from the quality of the work of the institution and the quality of the work in the teaching process, they recognised the importance of training and lifelong learning of all stakeholders in adult education, initiative and entrepreneurship, creative thinking and expression, flexibility in work, responsibility, communication and presentation skills, intrinsic motivation of teachers and knowledge of how to motivate students and many others. Andragogue training programmes can lay the foundations for the development of professional and pedagogical-didactic competences such as professional, interpersonal, didactic, motivational, competence in the application of theoretical and practical knowledge, and competence in navigating within heterogeneous groups (Buiskool et al., 2010), which is visible in the structure and planned performance of the newly created study programme.

The importance of promoting the training of andragogues is also shown by the fact that the lack of systematic and quality training of andragogical staff leads to andragogues mostly learning by imitating their more experienced colleagues or following the examples of teachers in their work through their own experiences (Pongrac, 2001) rather than acquiring competencies through education focused on their specific professional needs.

The issue of separating pedagogy and andragogy or combining their views on the educational process is not the focus of this article, but it is important to highlight the fact that only well-trained professionals can work on developing and ensuring quality in any area of education – especially adult education.

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