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UNIVERSITY TEACHING AND LEARNING IN EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES

The Case of Andragogy in the Czech Republic

ABSTRACT

The de-ideologisation of Czech higher education was accompanied by many other changes after 1990 in the Czech Republic. In the context of local and global educational policy, this paper presents three periods of development of the educational sciences including andragogy in Czech higher education after 1990, showing how changes influenced university teaching quality. In the research part, the study concentrates on changes made by the actors – notably professors/associate professors – involved in the development of the educational sciences in the Czech Republic since the 1990s. The analysis of the semi-structured interviews shows that the change in educational sciences was framed by limited access to foreign literature and significant personnel changes, including the return of qualified academics. The promotion of andragogy in the Czech Republic demanded the development of methodology and a critical approach to adult learning. For individual academics, the new focus privileged research over teaching, though interaction with students remains central for the interviewees.

Keywords: *de-ideologisation, teaching, university, andragogy, leaders of educational sciences*

UNIVERZITETNO POUČEVANJE IN UČENJE V IZOBRAŽEVALNIH VEDAH: PRIMER ANDRAGOGIKE V ČEŠKI REPUBLIKI – POVZETEK

V Češki republiki je po letu 1990 deideologizacijo visokega šolstva spremljalo tudi veliko drugih sprememb. Članek v kontekstu tako lokalne kot globalne izobraževalne politike predstavi tri razvojna obdobja izobraževalnih ved, vključno z andragogiko, v češkem visokem šolstvu po letu 1990 in pokaže, kako so spremembe vplivale na kakovost univerzitetnega poučevanja. V raziskovalnem delu se osredotoča na spremembe, ki so jih dosegli akterji, predvsem profesorji in docenti, povezani z razvojem izobraževalnih ved v Češki republiki, po omenjenem letu. Analiza polstrukturiranih intervjujev je pokazala, da so na spremembe v izobraževalnih vedah vplivali omejen dostop do tuje literature in velike kadrovske spremembe, tudi vračanje kvalificiranih akademikov. V Češki republiki je spodbujanje andragogike zahtevalo razvoj metodologije in kritičnega pristopa do učenja odraslih. Posamezni akademiki so zaradi novega poudarka dali prednost raziskovanju pred poučevanjem, kljub temu pa so udeleženci raziskave poudarili osrednji pomen dela s študenti.

Ključne besede: *deideologizacija, poučevanje, univerza, andragogika, voditelji v izobraževalnih vedah*

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INTRODUCTION

Knowledge in higher education can be divided into academic disciplines or “academic tribes and territories” (Becher & Trowler, 2001, p. 41). The teaching of a discipline is then an important part of its existence as the discipline is communicated and developed by current and future professionals, academics, and researchers at least as much as it is done through the implementation of research, scientific, and research publications (Wallerstein, 1996). Among all the sciences, the educational sciences hold a unique position as they involve specific knowledge, but they can also function as a specific platform through which the knowledge of other sciences is shared. The notion of disciplinary essentialism, assuming that academic disciplines are always the same and unchangeable under all circumstances, has declined in influence (Kreber, 2009; Trowler, 2005). There is today in higher education a clearer interdependence of disciplinary and institutional contexts. Changes in higher education institutions, changes to the structures and goals of a university, affect the meaning of the quality of academics’ work, not excluding their teaching. Academics at universities hold different roles, both visible (researchers, managers, members of departments/faculties with different administrative tasks, university teachers) and invisible ones (teaching in particular). This study focuses on a characterisation of changes to the field of andragogy effected by the main actors in the field: professors/associate professors involved in the development of the higher education environment in the Czech Republic since the 1990s and how the changes they brought about have influenced teaching.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANDRAGOGY WITHIN CZECH HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education in the Czech Republic builds on its tradition starting in the 14th century. The concept of higher education has been a priori a global idea as Burke remarks (2000), and it has gradually approached ever more closely the ideal of the university (Humboldt, 1982). However, in certain periods of their development (as was the case of Czech universities belonging to the socialist area for more than 40 years), universities were purely ideological (Connelly, 2000). The de-ideologisation of Czech higher education took place after 1990 (Dopita, 2013), and the period of deconstruction (removing Marxist-Leninist ideology; replacement of individual academics, etc.) gradually continued with a period of partial stabilisation and later with the reconstruction of the new system. The reconstruction was focused on achieving ‘the state of the art’ through the foreign contacts of individuals and the return of émigré teachers (for example, Jindra Kulich, Vancouver University of British Columbia; Gerlinda Smaus, Saarland University, Saarbrücken, etc.) until 1998. In the next ten years, standardisation processes influenced the concept of how the university was to function, thus also influencing academics’ work. University teaching started to approach European and American standards (Frank & Gabler, 2006) in all educational sciences. The Bologna process brought some changes; nevertheless, its main consequences, e.g. structuring study programmes, resulted in an increase of the number of students and the massification of higher education. Students and graduates were primarily seen as

a skilled workforce and not the bearers of the ideals of science (Trow, 2006; Pabian, Šima, & Kynčilová, 2011), which changed into a request for lectures rather than for teachers. The pressure on research and publication outcomes has increased as well as the interconnection of teaching and research in the sense of Humboldt's university ideals. Due to neoliberal influences in the last decade, the quality of academics' work has increasingly been connected with the scientific performance of workplaces. Neoliberalism has reconfigured universities to 'produce' highly individualised, responsabilised graduates who have become entrepreneurial actors across all dimensions of their lives (Brown, 2005). Besides, the system of accreditation of study programmes has been undergoing change, and soon it will be universities that will bear the responsibility for accreditations (Dopita, 2013).

It is possible to identify three periods in the development of andragogy in Czech higher education after 1990. The first ten years dealt with the legitimisation of andragogy as a field of science and study. This was related to removing the ideological burden of the field of adult education formed before 1990, and this was also the reason for choosing the umbrella term andragogy instead of adult education (Šimek, 1998). The concept was developed at three Czech universities: in Prague, where it was based on pedagogy and the philosophy of education and focused mainly on adult education and personnel management (Beneš & Kopecký, 2004); in Olomouc, where the concept of andragogy was based on educational sciences and sociology, focusing on andragogy for professional development and andragogy integrating knowledge from other social sciences in order to respond to social challenges through education, learning, and counselling (Šimek, 2004; Dočekal, 2015); and in Brno, where andragogy focused on the issues of life-long learning and education, and on interconnecting generations by means of learning (Rabušicová & Rabušic, 2006). This period concentrated on curricula and updating the state of knowledge from western countries. The academics who worked in the field abroad helped transform andragogy into an independent science in the Czech Republic as visiting (Jindra Kulich of the University of British Columbia, Vancouver) or returning professors (Milan Beneš of the Freie Universität Berlin).

The second period starting in 2008 can be characterised by the massification of higher education (Brennan, 2004, p. 23; Trow, 2006, p. 244; Pabian et al., 2011). At the turn of the millennium, the concept of andragogy as represented by the Masaryk University in Brno (Rabušicová & Rabušic, 2006) dominated the scene. It focused on the issue of lifelong learning and education, linking the learning of one generation to the learning of other generations. This is a period of orientation towards the structuring of studies and students. One unintended consequence of the gradual establishment of higher education was the emergence of a large number of private higher education institutions and more students enrolled in universities (Brennan, 2004; Trow, 2006). The increase in the number of universities and study programmes led to the disintegration of the staff in departments, as many academics had several jobs at various universities. The position of guarantors of study programmes has since been regulated: the position of guarantor can be held only by an associate professor or professor whose working hours do not exceed 60 hours a

week. During this period, andragogy also began to be developed at the private Jan Amos Komenský University in Prague. Adult education as another social science has been confirmed as a productive force, as one of the outputs of applied education science, as stated by Frank and Gabler (2006, p. 49). An orientation towards the production of a 'labour' force (OECD, 2017, p. 51) during the setting up of Czech educational policy (Kopecký, & Šerák, 2015) was typical not only in the field of adult education.

In the last period, the focus on research has started to dominate the disciplines at universities. Regulatory measures implemented on the national level and aimed at the realisation of research and the publication of research results in reviewed indexed journals as a precondition for the possibility of accreditation of master's and doctoral degrees supported the further growth of e-learning courses and the minimisation of quality monographs. The space for teaching has gradually been disappearing mainly due to the developments of e-learning, as it emphasises learning and its outcomes. Learning became the central concept in higher education, and the space for teaching is diminishing. The shift from teaching to learning has been confirmed (Kopecký, 2012; Finnegan, 2016).

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study aims to explore concepts of university teaching by leaders, i.e. by reputable academics who have significantly contributed to the development of educational sciences since 1990. Based on citation analyses, eight leaders of educational sciences with experience connected to the three main universities and six different faculties in the Czech Republic and with Ph.D. studies in educational sciences, representing pedagogy and andragogy, were interviewed. The average number of the interviewees' teaching experience was 31 years.

The research design was based on narratives, with the leaders focusing on their everyday life and university teaching in educational sciences after 1990, since narratives can capture the development of conceptions in a complex and dynamic way (Kelchtermans & Vandenberghe, 1993). For this reason, the text utilises what Mills (1959) calls 'the sociological imagination'. This is a mode of analysing a topic which enables an understanding of "the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals" (Mills, 1959, p. 5). The sociological imagination is about "grasp[ing] history and biography and the relations between the two in society" (ibid., p. 6). The study therefore seeks to put the sociological imagination to work in this chapter to draw out what Mills calls 'points of intersections' between individual concerns about the meaning of teaching and other activities resulting from higher education policy. A cycle of semi-structured interviews was carried out. The interviews aimed at stimulating academics to reflect on their experiences, focusing on the following questions.

- What did lessons look like at Czech universities after 1989? What surprised you, what changed?
- What was demanded from academics' lessons, and what is the situation like today?
- Why do you work at university? What were the reasons before and what are they now?

The research procedure was cumulative since different steps in data collection including validation procedures building on each other were applied. The gained qualitative data was analysed using content analysis in two ways: vertical analysis showing the chain of milestones in changing the individual concept of teaching, and horizontal analysis looking for commonalities in all of the academics' stories (Kelchtermans & Vandenberghe, 1993). The interview transcripts are coded in this paper as A1 (Academic 1), A2, etc., and in the rest of the paper they will be used to support the results of the analysis.

POSTSOCIALIST CHANGE IN EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES

Changes in both andragogy and pedagogy were, according to the interviews, related to personnel changes in university departments, and the educational sciences found themselves in a very challenging situation, as shown by the following interview statement: "The fact is, the faculty changed a lot, about 30% of the people left" (A6). *Access to the literature of foreign countries emerged as an important issue*, since after the revolution it was possible to use the full range of authors, which previously was not allowed. The problem was the lack of translations of foreign books and their limited availability in smaller libraries, as well as the insufficient language skills of teachers, but also of students. The translation of foreign books into the national language was therefore essential (e.g. Tonucci, 1991).

A second thematised issue was the return of qualified academics as those who were unable to work at universities in the 1970s and 1980s returned to the Czech Republic from abroad. A new generation of academics began to appear, or academics started to return from foreign universities. The arrival of experienced academics at universities from abroad can be documented by Jochmann who started to work again at the Palacký University in Olomouc and focused on the re-constitution of andragogy under the influence of the social sciences. The impulse from abroad can also be seen when teaching methods and study programme design are compared to those in Germany, thanks to the return of teachers from abroad.

[I]n the Czech Republic the idea has caught on that there is a study plan covering the full range of the discipline and that if this or that was missing then the person would be imperfect, so this and that must be included [...] the idea that there is a curriculum covering all [teachers], y'know [...] So first, this is an illusion, and second, everybody knows that also both non-formal and informal education provide more and more competencies, knowledge. (A2)

Andragogy was promoted as the interdisciplinary subject in the 1990s. "It is the distinct autonomous discipline with its specific subject and specific methods." (A1) Jochmann, inspired by the work of German educationalist Carl Weiss, who broke down education into care, socialisation and education in the sense of learning/teaching, helped to create an action field of andragogy interconnected with the environment of its operation. It

covered care, intentional and functional socialisation, and education providing a profile for andragogy that covered social work, personnel development, cultural work, and adult learning. However, there were some contradictions in the meanings of andragogy, as the concept developed at one university was not followed by other academics in the country. In the case of Masaryk University, the major was gradually constituted through new academics who approached it inductively through empirical research data.

[T]his empirical approach [...] as opposed to this normativity that was prevailing at our department for many years, in fact up to the present. If I am to extend it beyond our department, I'd say that I think that we penetrated the field of influencing pedagogy a lot; because I think we were among the first ones [...] and I think that through focusing on research we have been creating a certain platform others could gradually join. (A5)

A few years later, the closure of the J. A. Comenius Institute of Education of the Academy of Science caused a situation that represented a disadvantage to educational sciences not only in the Czech Academy of Sciences but also had a divisive effect on the meaning of andragogy as well as pedagogy that continues until the present day. The institute has not been re-opened so far, which influences the position of educational sciences in both the national and global development of sciences to a large extent.

The people who were there were of very good quality; they scattered, spread out to various institutions [...] And what happened there was that the weak side of the pedagogy, that it was perceived through the optics of ideological articles on how to bring up our youth, mainly in the communist ideals, so this in fact impacted this institute too, and nobody considered the amount of incredibly high quality research, y'know, teams etc. And this is how the J. A. Comenius Institute became one of the first ones, maybe the very first one that was cancelled when the pressure for reduction appeared. And I believe that we still bear the consequences because in fact [...] we are still facing it. (A6)

UNIVERSITY TEACHING AND LEARNING: MAJOR AND METHOD

The nature of educational sciences (pedagogy and andragogy) gradually abandoned normative, philosophical traditions as its primary teaching sources and focused on empirical research-based knowledge. In the case of the respondents' reports, the discipline "was based on the methodology of social sciences, sociology, and developed after the 1990s" (A1); "if you have a look at our study plans, you see a great accent on methodology [...] [,] we really try to have empirical theses. [...] [I]t can't be speculative [...] but it has to be based on some evidence." (A5) One of the main challenges was to *complement the research methodology with a qualitative methodology*, as from the early 1990s, the only methodology that was used in the Czech Republic was quantitative methodology: "I tried

to combine theoretical teaching with appropriate research methodology, and it was difficult at first. [...] Only in the last ten years, the methodology has ceased to be simply associated with statistics” (A4).

The change process started, still coming up against some (in)visible barriers, for instance, in the mind-set of actors, and of students in particular: “Even today, when I finish a lecture, embarrassment often prevails when students are trying to critically reflect the ideas of the ‘authority’ [...] students were and still are not accustomed to pluralism of opinions based on different theories and approaches” (A3). *The need for practising the critical approach both in theory and in practice is evident.* “Self-criticism is still understood rather as an attack on someone, not as part of a discussion so that [...] it develops somehow [...] So the discipline, I don’t want to say that it’s losing its contours but its continuous growth or its borders are less and less clear.” (A2)

DEVELOPMENT OF ANDRAGOGY

The perspective on education changed in the 1990s. Functionalist views of the importance of education for society were complemented by critical theories of conflict that had earlier been lacking.

I would say that the conflictologist approaches from the sociology of education were a revolutionary turn; it turned out that education did not have any other character than a discriminatory one, that education doesn’t unite, that it’s not a tool of social democratisation but a tool of social stratification. I think this is significant. In a way, pedagogy has made the same progress in the last twenty years [...] different methodology, and pedagogy is not an ideology but it has become a real humanities or social science. (A1)

The progress in andragogy is perceived in its departure from the primarily functional concept of education to education related to adding more perspectives. What is identified is a slow generational change in university departments that is related to the rather gradually developing concept of the discipline. The restructuring of studies into the bachelor and master’s degrees in accordance with the Bologna process occupied a lot of academics’ attention during the process. “However, some shifts in the discipline do not give the impression of progress, namely the early specialisation of study programmes, e.g. at the level of bachelor.” (A4) There was still the question of the concept of study programmes, their degree of specialisation from the level of bachelor’s degree on. Questions about the form structuration should take as well as the degree of general education in the major and its specialisation remained unclear.

Everybody who graduates from university has a sort of joint diploma, and at the same time they can specialise more in pedagogy or more in field work or something similar but not split it. I’m against this splitting. What remains,

splits? The non-profit sector of andragogy, these are things that would be good if there were a hundred million citizens and fifty schools where this is taught, then each of them can specialise. (A2)

ACADEMICS AND THEIR WORK

Changes in the work of academics have not been present so much in the character of their work, but rather in the monitoring and evaluation of the 'results' of their work in the last twenty-five years: "What is clear is the departure from not-so-easily-defined aspects to those easily measurable" (A3); "[d]uring the first ten years, professional growth was focused on publications; their reporting isn't new, scientific and pedagogic activities were reported at that time too. Still, they were not seen as the only criterion." (A3)

Freedom of choice of teaching topics and specialist sources was liberating. Specialist monographs started to disappear, the number of articles was increasing: "I wouldn't say targets were set higher [...] it's got more formalised today [...] well, we have this evaluation, all universities have it, it's quite common that the control, let's say, the reporting is stricter now." (A2) The teaching part of the academic work has, however, constantly become increasingly invisible:

Now I feel that it's not necessary to have students in order to become a professor; what is needed is an adequate number of points and vice versa. Fundamentally grant outcomes, grant research outcomes, which is a good idea too that profanes a little bit, internships and stays abroad. If someone spends nine months abroad, what will be the impact on their students? It's difficult to find a balance. (A1)

Preparation of study plans and curricula has not been a topic of discussion at universities; the attention is only paid to the vaguely defined quality of graduates. Teaching, contact with students, has been replaced by textbooks. Thus, the work of professors and associate professors is continued in thematically- and research-focused articles, sometimes scattered at first sight, and with graduates. There are textbooks on higher education pedagogy similar to those in foreign countries; however, systematic training of academics aimed at teaching is not provided. University teachers are increasingly perceived as researchers. Despite this fact, discussions with students bring about, among other things, impulses for different thinking and the re-writing of academics' ideas. The reports of the leaders of educational sciences also point out that lessons are the most important factor keeping them in their positions, because "in my field [...] I have a number of graduates who are now lecturers, thus I see the continuation of my work in a way" (A7). *The interaction is "still a live driving force"* (A8).

I have been at the university for thirty years and my graduates' spectrum is wide: personnel directors of multinational companies, business owners, public administrators, academics at universities [...] the fact that they keep in touch with me even after twenty years makes me think that I'm probably a better teacher than a researcher since no one reads articles that are 20 years old (A8).

CONCLUSIONS

Educational sciences have gone through a difficult time since the 1990s. The reason may be the fact that university pedagogy/andragogy was ideological in the socialist period of Czechoslovakia; it was mainly produced as ideological support. Overcoming this stigma is not a question of one generation. In addition, both pedagogy and andragogy were not well represented on the personnel level. Gradually, the focus on research became central, a fact which encounters the criticism of adult education (Notten, 2002; Holton, Wilson, & Bates, 2009). The correlation between research productivity and the quality of teaching is zero (Hattie & Marsh, 1996), and there is hardly any research tackling the relationship between research and learning (Verburgh & Lindblom-Ylance, 2007; Gopaul et al., 2016; Elken & Wollscheid, 2016).

This paper has presented a review of certain changes in higher education in the Czech Republic in the last 25 years. Study plans underwent de-ideologisation, restructuring, and explicitly focused on empirical research at least at one department; this is frequently criticised in the andragogy/adult education major (Notten, 2002; Holton et al., 2009). The curriculum of andragogy was enriched with research methods and the methodology of science and their application in lessons as proofs of statements based on foreign (global) experience. The teaching methods were gradually changed too, leaving behind work with textbooks and focusing on understanding primary texts on the discipline and recent research findings. However, critical reflection of the discipline is missing with regard to the range of specialist discourse. Critical approaches have been rather exceptional up to now.

Due to changes related to demographic trends and study massification at the beginning of the 21st century (Brennan, 2004, p. 23; Trow, 2006, p. 244; Pabian et al., 2011), the space for meetings of teachers and students where specialist discussion about the meaning of the scientific discipline could really take place was changing. Findings show that the standardisation of study programmes in correspondence with the practices in foreign countries after 1990 was expected. Criteria of higher education funding were linked with the publication of research results, which resulted in academics' departure from teaching to research. A shift in academics' work can be identified in publication strategies, reporting publications for universities, accreditation processes, project applications, and academics' professional growth (Stöckelová, 2016; Stöckelová & Vostal, 2017). The only stable environment remaining for meetings between teachers and students is within Ph.D. studies. However, for all the changes to the role of academics, their role as teachers should not disappear since it functions as a driving force for overcoming problems and in maintaining the profession and, at the same time, it has clearly positive impacts on students – the academics of the future.

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