

Maja Maksimović, Joanna Ostrouch-Kamińska,
Katarina Popović, Aleksandar Bulajić (Eds.)

Contemporary Issues and Perspectives on Gender Research in Adult Education



Institute for Pedagogy and Andragogy, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade
ESREA - European Society for Research on the Education of Adults
Adult Education Society

Contemporary Issues and Perspectives on Gender Research in Adult Education

Edited by

Maja Maksimović
University of Belgrade, Serbia

Joanna Ostrouch-Kamińska
University of Warmia and Mazury, Poland

Katarina Popović
University of Belgrade, Serbia

Aleksandar Bulajić
University of Belgrade, Serbia

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Reviewers

Sanja Đerasimović, University of Exeter

Shirley Walters, University of the Western Cape

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The woman is infinitely other in itself, as Hélène Cixous (1981) says, “Je suis là où ça parle” (I am there where it/id/the female unconscious speaks). The project “One Man Show” is a research focused on the question of women’s experience, it’s personal, sexual and socio-cultural identity. From the idea of the politics of the body, where explores gender instability, I rely on the deconstructive use of metaphors and visual bias as ironic provocation strategy of patriarchal identities. This work is one of the possibilities to present other body shapes and symbolic signs, concerning the dichotomy between femininity and masculinity, by creating a fragmented and hybrid pictorial universe.

Mariana Mendes Delgado

Table of Contents

MAJA MAKSIMOVIĆ, JOANNA OSTROUCH-KAMIŃSKA,
KATARINA POPOVIĆ, ALEKSANDAR BULAJIĆ

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION:

Philosophy, History, Practice, and

Gender Research in Adult Education

9

PHILOSOPHY, HISTORY AND GENDER

AGNIESZKA ZEMBRZUSKA

PHILOSOPHY AND GENDER IN ADULT EDUCATION
DISCOURSE IN POLAND

23

NATAŠA VUJISIĆ ŽIVKOVIĆ, KATARINA POPOVIĆ

POLICIES ON THE EDUCATION OF GIRLS IN 19TH
CENTURY SERBIA

33

METHODOLOGIZING GENDER

MAJA MAKSIMOVIĆ, ALEKSANDAR BULAJIĆ

MULTISENSORY RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

An Exploration of the Process of Becoming a Woman

49

ZORICA MILOŠEVIĆ, SNEŽANA MEDIĆ

GENDER APPROACH ISSUE IN
STUDENTS' RESEARCH PAPERS

67

GENDER, ACADEMIA AND POWER

- CRISTINA C. VIEIRA, MARIA JORGE FERRO
CONCEPTIONS OF FEMINISM, MACHISMO AND
SEXISM IN FINAL YEAR GRADUATION STUDENTS OF
THREE DIFFERENT COURSES OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
A Portuguese Exploratory Study 85
- MARIE-PIERRE MOREAU
GENDERING STUDENT PARENTS IN
HIGHER EDUCATION 99
- ALEKSANDRA PEJATOVIĆ, VIOLETA ORLOVIĆ LOVREN
WHO IS WHO IN FACULTY MANAGEMENT IN SERBIA?
A Concise Gender Analysis 115
- JELENA ĐERMANOV, MARIJANA KOSANOVIĆ, JELENA VUKIČEVIĆ
GENDER RELATED OBSTACLES IN
HIGHER EDUCATION 131
- NATAŠA SIMIĆ, VESNA ĐORĐEVIĆ
WORK SATISFACTION AND CHALLENGES IN
SCIENTIFIC CAREER – WOMEN’S PERSPECTIVE 147

EXPLORING MASCULINITIES

- JOANNA OSTROUCH-KAMIŃSKA, IWONA CHMURA-RUTKOWSKA
MASCULINITY, INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONS IN
A FAMILY AND CARE
Men learning care in adulthood 163
- BARRY GOLDING
CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE ROLE OF
THE MEN’S SHED MOVEMENT IN CHANGING
PERCEPTIONS ABOUT LEARNING BY
OLDER MEN IN COMMUNITY SETTINGS 173

CHRISTINE BUCHWALD	
WHAT MEN DO NOT SPEAK ABOUT	
<i>Sexualized Violence During War and its Consequences</i>	187

GENDER IN ADULT EDUCATION PRACTICE

TAMARA NIKOLIC MAKSIĆ, NIKOLA KORUGA	
GENDER DIFFERENCES AND ADULT PARTICIPATION IN LEISURE EDUCATION	199
ELISABETH SANDER, MARTINA ENDEPOHLS-ULPE, CLAUDIA QUAISER-POHL	
ADULT EDUCATION IN SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY ENGINEERING AND MATHEMATICS UNDER THE GENDER ASPECT	
<i>A Critical Overview of Programs and Strategies in Germany</i>	211
ALZIRA MANUEL, OLEG POPOV	
EXPLORING GENDER DIFFERENCES IN PARTICIPANTS' MOTIVATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS IN NON-FORMAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES IN MOZAMBIQUE	225
MARIA IVANOVA, ANETA DIMITROVA	
DO OLD WOMEN STUDY IN BULGARIA?	
<i>Preferred Methods of Training for Men and Women Aged 65+</i>	239
ANTONIETA ROCHA, TERESA CARDOSO	
THE ADULT EDUCATION AND TRAINING COURSES IN THE PORTUGUESE SOCIETY	
<i>A Look at the Female Presence</i>	259

GENDER APPROACH ISSUE IN STUDENTS' RESEARCH PAPERS³

Abstract

The issue of gender is a challenging one for researchers working in different scientific fields. In this paper, we analyzed approaches to gender issues in research papers in the field of Andragogy. The paper presents the results of the analysis of students' final research papers – defended at the Chair of Andragogy, Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade. The aim of the analysis was to determine whether, how and in what context these papers open and treat gender issues. The study included the following tasks: 1. To identify how many of the analyzed students' research papers are directly focused on the exploration of gender issues; 2. To identify courses in andragogy curriculum to which these papers belong; 3. To identify the way in which gender issues are tackled when the topic belongs to other and different subject of the research; 4. To identify how the methodological procedure addresses the issue of gender; 5. To identify how the analysis of research results and recommendations of the research approaches the problem of gender. The subject of analysis of our paper were not final papers of students who particularly deal with gender in their research; only six of the 72 papers could be classified as belonging to that category. 52 papers which presented research of different phenomena in adult education introduce the problem of sex and set up the research problem in the context of gender with more or less success. The purpose of this paper was to detect weaknesses in the treatment of gender issues, to consider the possible causes and recommend ways for intervention to prevent adult education from being a generator of gender stereotypes.

Key words

gender, andragogy, students' research papers

¹ University of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia, zmilosev@f.bg.ac.rs

² University of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia, smedic@f.bg.ac.rs

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INTRODUCTION

The field of adult education is greatly sensitive to gender issues. On the one hand, variety of prejudices and social discrimination of women are reflected in various aspects of accessibility of education to women, and on the other hand – adult education itself serves as an instrument that generates the differences between men and women.

Many data sources, ranging from various statistics about differences between men and women in the field of education, to scientific research papers searching for reasons, causes and consequences of this situation serves as a proof. The situation of “women’s issues” in the field of education can be recognized in a series of points on a continuum whose negative end is the “sickness of society”, while the positive are “forces, health and durability of women” (about another types of possible continuum, see: Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1989, cited in Maksimović, 2012). Various women’s emancipation movements shift the focus to the issue of women in education to “health and strength” of women and its authentic powers that education can and should support. Research has sufficiently shown how the problem of women in education (what women *cannot*) is the result of a “social disease”, but there is not enough research on the “health, strength and power” of women and how to use these in education for the benefit of the feminine. At the same time, an equal threat to the quest for authentic answers about “women’s power” is carried by both – concepts that see it with the exclusion of gender differences (as a repressive strategy that preserves social inequality), and those who are prone to glorification of gender difference (more about glorification of gender difference, see: Milivojević, 2004).

The delicacy and social actuality of gender issues requires special commitment to this issue in the field of social sciences and humanities (Ostrouch-Kamińska, Fontanini & Gaynard, 2012; Vieira Coimbra, 2012). One of the proofs that the gender issue has not reached the required priority or not in a way that deserves, are academic studies at universities in Serbia that rarely directly include the gender issue in their curricula. Some small attention is given to gender issues in certain special courses at BA, MA and PhD level (e.g. elective courses: Gender Studies in Sociology and Religion and Gender, or Men’s Studies - Anthropology of Masculinity in Ethnology and Anthropology, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade). The only master’s program in gender studies exists at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Belgrade.

The subject of our analysis are the final research papers of students who have attended a study program of Andragogy at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade. The study program of Andragogy has no special courses on gender issue at any level of study, but gender issues are explored in the framework of various andragogical

disciplines (about the study program of Andragogy, see: Pejatović, 2010). One way of understanding approach to gender issues in adult education and methods of representation and treatment of this issue is the analysis of the final research papers of students of andragogy.

METHOD

Student's research papers are the subject of content analysis in our research. Since the aim of our research is to determine how gender is treated and explored in the student's final papers, as well as which gender differences are being sought in the research of various phenomena of learning and education, how and in what context contemporary issues and perspectives on gender research in adult education are open, all final papers represent a sample of our survey – it total 72 papers.

In 1979 the Faculty of Philosophy established BA, MA, and PhD studies of andragogy. BA studies were completed by submitting a bachelor's graduate thesis. The program of study was reformed in 2006 by introduction of Bologna standards and principles. Among other major changes, Bologna standards and principles introduced the final papers instead of graduated thesis. In the final papers, phenomena are researched in a less complex way than in the former graduate thesis; final paper has a smaller volume than graduate theses. According to this new program, the number of subjects in which it is possible to write the final paper is 26 out of total 41 at the undergraduate studies. In the period from 2010 to 2015 three generations of students graduated under this program and 72 final papers were defended. This article is an attempt to give an insight into the interest in gender issues in students' final papers, the extent to, and the way in which it is explored and treated.

We applied the descriptive method in this research, within which we applied the technique of content analysis in the process of data collection. We followed whether, where and how gender issues appear, starting from theoretical approaches to the chosen research problem, through the subject, objectives, tasks, hypothesis, variables, sample and analysis of those results (constituting 8 units of analysis). Presence of the gender issue and its treatment was monitored in all these units of analysis. We sought to register whether the issue of gender is represented or not represented, and how it was treated in these different contexts. Special attention was paid to the analysis of the research results obtained in the students' final papers and the possible implications of these results to improvement of various aspects and elements of understanding of gender issues in adult education. The instrument that we used is a protocol for content analysis which was made for the purpose of our research.

Given that there are no gender issues in the program of andragogy studies, either as an elective or as a compulsory course, it is not surprising that out of the 72 final papers, only six were directly related to the gender issues. This minimum representation of gender issues in final research papers is unevenly distributed by subjects. Problem and themes are appearing in four cases: one is working in the field of andragogy communications and media, which explores the types and content of TV shows that women consume; one in Management and Marketing in education, which explores the assessment of the quality of educational activities and content of informative material of LGBT associations; one final paper is in the field of Family Andragogy, which researches differences in the socialization of children of both sexes. Finally, Social Andragogy as an area that explores adult education in specific and difficult life situations clearly evokes interest among students on gender issues, as the remaining three papers belong to it. They are related to the understanding and experience of gender equality in the labor market, the prejudices of professionals in providing educational support to women victims of violence and to studies of adult education as support to promotion of LGBT rights.

Regarding the fact that in 20 research papers gender was not taken into account in any way during the research of different andragogical phenomena, the subject of our further analysis is not 72 student research papers but 52 papers. Those 52 papers belong to different andragogical disciplines: Andragogical Didactics, Andragogy of Work, Adult Learning, Organization of Adult Education, Vocational Adult Education, Social Andragogy, Family Andragogy, Management and Education, Human Resource Development, Andragogy of Leisure, Andragogy of Communications and Media. In all of these papers the issue of gender is not consistently and continuously treated in all units of analysis, and the consequence of that is that gender in some research papers appears only in certain units of analysis, as it is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Presence and treatment of gender issues in 8 units of analysis

	Units of analysis	Represented	Not represented
1.	Theoretical approach to research problem	14	38
2.	Research subject	6	46
3.	Research objective	6	46
4.	Research tasks	32	20
5.	Research hypotheses	25	27
5.1.	- General hypotheses	3	49
5.2.	- Special hypotheses	24	28
6.	Research variables	44	8

6.1.	- Independent variable	19	33
6.2.	- Control variable	25	27
7.	Samples	51	1
8.	Analysis of the results	37	15
	TOTAL	52	

ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

Phenomena in which students are interested in the field of Andragogy contained in these research papers cover all academic fields in Andragogy, starting from General Andragogy, History of Andragogy and Comparative Andragogy, to the Management and Adult Education, Andragogy of Work, Andragogy of Leisure, etc. These different research problems are certainly sensitive to gender issues in a different way. In the first unit of our analysis – *theoretical consideration* of these various andragogical phenomena, the question of gender is present in only 14 papers. The remaining 38 papers remained in a sample of our research because the gender issue arises in some of the later units of analysis (in tasks, hypotheses, variables, sample...). There are several reasons for such a small number of papers that show interest in the gender issue in the theoretical formulation of a research problem. The theoretical approach to the problem of research commits students to the analysis of the theory and major research findings on the key phenomenon of their research. In the theoretical approach to the research problem, sex appears as more or less significant in relation to key research problem. The interest and importance depends, on one hand, on the sensitivity of the key research subject to differences between men and women, and on the other hand, depends on the differences that are confirmed or implied by analyzed results of relevant research. However, when the theoretical approach to the problem of research raises the question of gender, there is no creativity, no in-depth qualitative analysis of the differences between the sexes. There, students perform a dual reduction in access to studying gender issues. Firstly, gender issues come down to the question of the differences between men and women and, secondly, the differences are based on stereotypes. One looks up for the differences, but they are shown in the categories of “less” or “more” rather than what is and why it is authentically different. The result is that the gender issue has a different status and importance in all further units of analysis.

It has already been noted that gender issue is *subject of research* in the six final papers. In the remaining 46 papers, subject of research (which is the second unit of analysis) refers to adult education phenomena that attract the attention of research students, such as training for human resources development, vocational training,

active labor market programs, vocational education, and barriers to participation, school management skills, communication skills, education of elderly and more. It has been noted also that key research phenomena show different levels of sensitivity to gender issue, but the latter is not in any way raised within the framework of a research problems in the remaining 46 papers. Guided by the same logic, the students did not incorporate gender issues in the *research goals*, which are the third unit of our analysis.

Only when we get to the field of *research tasks*, we are closer to operationalization of various key aspects of key research problem. It is here that one most frequently encounters the researcher's attitude to perceived complexity of the phenomenon that is explored, its key dimensions, and directions in which one will seek to look for the answers for "theoretically opened" questions. In some papers, the research tasks for the first time reveal researchers' attitudes about the meaning of gender issues in the analyzed research problem. In a significant number of papers it appears later, it is postponed, in defining the *research hypothesis*. Not infrequently, the contents of tasks and hypotheses only reveal that encounter with gender issues can be expected not before defining the *research variables*. And in research tasks, the task must be clearly defined, logical, and by itself must contain approach to gender issue. A clear conclusion about how much and in what way the researcher is interested in addressing gender issues in theoretical and empirical analysis of the main research problem can often be made when the fourth and fifth unit of our analysis (tasks and hypotheses) is seen in the light of the sixth unit of analysis (defined research variables).

There is insufficient consistency between the tasks defined and formulated hypotheses. From the already mentioned total of 52 papers in which gender appears in some unit of analysis, in 32 papers it is in the tasks of research. Out of the 32 papers in which the gender is in research tasks, 25 of them consistently methodically define the hypotheses outlining expectations in relation to gender presented in tasks. It happens that in some research papers gender is included in tasks, but it appears in the research hypotheses, and vice versa –but not in the tasks. This discrepancy between tasks and hypotheses in relation to gender as a problem that is being pursued in connection with the main research problem is sometimes the result of the chosen research methodology, and sometimes of unjustified inconsistencies in the implementation of methodological procedures. One of the weaknesses in defining the hypotheses is that the direction of the relationship between the studied phenomenon and gender is not defined. It is stated that connection exists, but there is no statement about the manner of connection. It is crucial to define the research hypothesis and for the researcher to reflect on the "background" of the defined hypothesis and expectations of connection between sex and the studied phenomenon. Researchers should ask themselves a clear question and find clear answers to the

question of why and on what basis it is assumed that there may be differences in responses between women and men. In defining of hypotheses, the factors that could lead to the existence of differences in the responses of men and women should be strictly controlled.

In the sixth unit of our analysis which treats the problem of variables, position of gender is very variable. In a significant number of research papers, gender as a problem appears for the first time in this unit of analysis. Taking into account all research papers together, gender occurs as a variable in 44 research papers. Out of these 44 papers, gender figures as the independent variable and 19 papers, and as the control variable in 25 papers. In both cases, both as an independent and as a control variable, gender is not treated independently. In research, there is a construct which includes a set of other important characteristics, usually called bio-socio-demographic-work characteristics in all research papers. This position of gender defined in an independent and a control variable is partly the reason for absence of gender in the above-mentioned hypotheses, tasks, as well as the theoretical approaches to the research problem. When the gender issue appears as a control variable, most problematic is the fact that it is often considered in the set of all variables, and the same (deserved) importance is not given to each research result. When it appears "incidentally", as was the case in most of the papers, it is counterproductive because not all the methods and techniques of data analysis used for the analysis of other data in papers are used. On the other hand, the forthcoming analysis of research results will reveal that importance given to the gender most often depends on the proportion of variance that gender carries within all the above characteristics.

There is a sampling problem in research papers. To create the *sample*, which is the seventh unit of our analysis, simpler techniques and methods are chosen and selection of samples usually depends on the variety of available technical and material possibilities for the realization of research performed in the final papers of students. The construction of the sample often limits the opening of research questions because disproportion in gender, age, level of education occurs. Due to inadequate sample surveys (e.g. more women in the sample, than men) students often give up on research of gender issues. There are few quota or stratified samples which provide the necessary structure, or other types of samples that allow a significant generalization of the findings. Most of the research was actually performed on so-called convenience samples which are actually the reason why, primarily, the control variable cannot be treated with the proper and necessary statistical significance. Convenience samples are partly the reason why some elements of bio-socio-demographic-work characteristics are excluded from the analysis and left as a hypothesis for further research. Also, the sample size is determined in a manner that meets the minimum statistical requirements, so that sample variation, which would enable more signifi-

cant research of bio-socio-demographic-work characteristics, are not possible in the work of this scope and depth.

Analyzed research papers mostly belong to empirical-positivist paradigm, they are quantitative and they are deeply resting on existing traditional, patriarchal methods that do not involve the ways of perceiving the world by women (Ostrouch, 2008) and do not take into account the diversity of experiences of men and women (Harding, 1987, cited in Ostrouch, 2008). The feminist research perspective is not mentioned or accepted explicitly or implicitly in any of the analyzed papers and especially not in the definition of the research approach based on relevant gender theories. It has already been mentioned that in the first unit of our analysis - theoretical consideration, there is no theoretical discussion about the meaning of the sex for the considered crucial phenomena of the research, and there is no discussion about its meaning within the feminist concepts (or feminist frameworks). Traditional positivist methodology is also applied in the research offered by the six papers that directly deal with gender issues. These papers explore some problems related to traditional roles assigned to women (for example, mother, wife), or, the special role of women in certain social phenomena (for example, the labor market, media). Traditional positivist approach is pursued from the beginning, from setting up the problem, and all the way to the analysis and interpretation of the results. In the remaining 46 studies which are dealing with the research of various phenomena, sex is introduced as a variable with the assumption that some quantitative differences in the results between men and women will be established. Research not based on feminist paradigms and theories rests on established differences as the main findings. These findings are placed in the function of explanation and understanding of the key research phenomenon as the evidence of different perceptions, different motivations, different attitudes, different assessment of the phenomenon, different achievements between men and women. Research ambitions of students are ending here. The issue of gender for all 46 researchers is equally relevant as the age, occupation, place of living, nationality, ethnicity and other included "control variables". Objective indicators do not receive interpretation they deserve. In recent years, special attention in courses on methodology is given to qualitative research. At the MA and PhD level, qualitative research is a separate course. Lately, a significant number of students in their work applies qualitative research. Gender is more sensitive to qualitative research approaches and better encompasses assumptions that we can make and may say something not only of the existing differences, but the reasons for these differences. Qualitative research gives a chance to explain these differences and to substantiate the research hypotheses and expectations in a better way (Heiskanen, 2008). Therefore we can say that the qualitative or participatory action research is perhaps the best methodological choice for research of gender issues be-

cause through such surveys researchers can reflect their own "images" about sex and gender. None of the techniques or methods of the research, not even qualitative, can provide by itself approaches that we want. Qualitative research methods can only be a good instrument in the function of verification of the hypothesis of different theoretical concepts, among which are the feminist.

The proof of the absence of feminist paradigm in the research analyzed here is confirmed by selection of instruments that are used by students. In the selection of research instruments the question of the "benefits" of instruments to better express female perspective is not even raised. The most commonly used research instrument was a questionnaire, which actually represents a combination of several types of instruments – in addition to questions; they also contain a number of descriptive scales. The content of the questionnaire is related to dependent, independent and control research variables, the aforementioned bio-socio-demographic-work characteristics of respondents: sex, age, occupation, education level, family structure, etc. Although all the questionnaires included the questions of various types, there was a greater degree of structure of content in them – primarily through the dominance of closed-ended questions and combined. The scales are commonly used for measuring relationships, values and attitudes. Within the analyzed group of papers descriptive scale dominates – especially Likert scale. Most of the students' instruments are created for the purpose of their research. There are almost no papers that provide information about the procedures and the control of the metric characteristics of instruments.

In the presentation, analysis and interpretation of research results the issue of gender appears in 37 out of 52 research papers. In 15 research papers the results obtained on the connection between the gender and researched phenomenon are not analyzed, although the gender was found in some of the units of analysis: tasks, hypotheses, variables. Hence the subject of our further analysis is the 37 students' research papers. In the analyzed papers, processing of the received data, different statistical methods were used. And as for the number of research papers, those belonging to the field of descriptive statistics and those which fall within the domain of inferential statistics were represented (Matović, 2007). From the group of descriptive statistics, statistical techniques to describe the characteristics of the distribution of the collected data and those that establish connections between phenomena were used. In order to describe the characteristics of the obtained frequency distributions, measures of central tendency (most used arithmetic mean) and measures of variability (mostly standard deviation was used) were calculated. From statistical techniques that determine the relationship between phenomena, mostly contingency coefficient is calculated, and then the Pearson's linear correlation coefficient. Within inferential statistics chi-square test for determining the significance of differ-

ences between frequencies, and t-test for significance of differences between arithmetic mean were mostly used. Analysis of variance was used as more complex form of statistical analysis.

Analyzing how the problem of learning and education is connected with gender, both in theoretical approaches and analysis of andragogical phenomena which are researched, and especially in methodological designs of the empirical and qualitative research, it is not unexpected that the level and quality of the *results* (which is eight unit of our analyses) obtained opens up further questions about gender issues in learning and education, rather than giving a clear answers to the defined research tasks. Research papers remain at the level of perceived tendency and none of them further search for more significant research of variance or the share of gender in the researched phenomenon. Thus there are quite a number of papers that, aside from noting that the differences are not found or are not relevant, remain at the level of concluding that the hypotheses were rejected or have not been confirmed, without wondering about the cause of this condition. In the research papers there is a tendency that only connections for which a significant correlation is found are important, and that the absence of correlations with the research phenomena of the study as the result is considered to be a result of minor or no importance. Such treatment indicates the attitude that is already given to gender issues in the theoretical approach to the phenomenon being studied. Out of the 37 analyzed papers in 24 results related to gender issues are interpreted. The remaining 13 papers only find that there is no connection between sex and studied key phenomena. In the paper where data analysis and interpretation of the results on the connection between sex and studied phenomenon is given, it is mostly saturated with current social norms and expectations of male and female status. That is usually interpreted as there being no difference between men and women in relation to the studied phenomenon. The issue of gender is shaped by the gender issues because the results show that women evaluate phenomena, things and situations colored by what comes from their stereotypical roles in society. On the other hand, the researchers also interpret findings exactly from that position, taking into account the current framework of social expectations of male and female roles in society. Closed vicious circle of marginalization of gender issues in adult education is deepened as a product of gender insensitive researchers and a constructed stereotypical gender identity of adults. The question is – if the analysis of the research results could be independent from the other parts of the research, would it be possible, and would it be enough, to problematize gender issues in the analysis of the obtained results?

Where the data analysis and interpretation of the results on the connection between sex and researched phenomenon is done, it is generally burdened with stereotypical concepts, social norms and expectations related to male and female

status/role/position. The established difference between men and women is most often interpreted in this context in relation to the studied phenomenon. The general impression that emerges from the analysis of all the studies is that if the introduction of variable sex in research is not problematized in the gender context, the production of stereotypical approach to sex differences is indicated. This approach is counterproductive, because instead of deconstruction of stereotypes in research papers, such approaches to sex are further strengthening and deepening them. The issue of gender is interesting to most researchers until the results show that women and men assess phenomena, thing and situations differently. On the other hand, the researchers also interpret results exactly from that position, taking into account the current framework of social expectations of male and female roles in society. Research which does not confirm the differences between men and women treats this results as less valuable and important, does not analyze and interpret them further. These approaches deepen closed and vicious circle of marginalization of gender issues in adult education which is produced by the insufficiently gender-conscious researchers, and on the other hand, firmly constructed stereotype of gender identities of adults who participate in research.. Chart 1. presents the vicious circle with critical points responsible for generating stereotypical approach to gender issue in andragogical research.

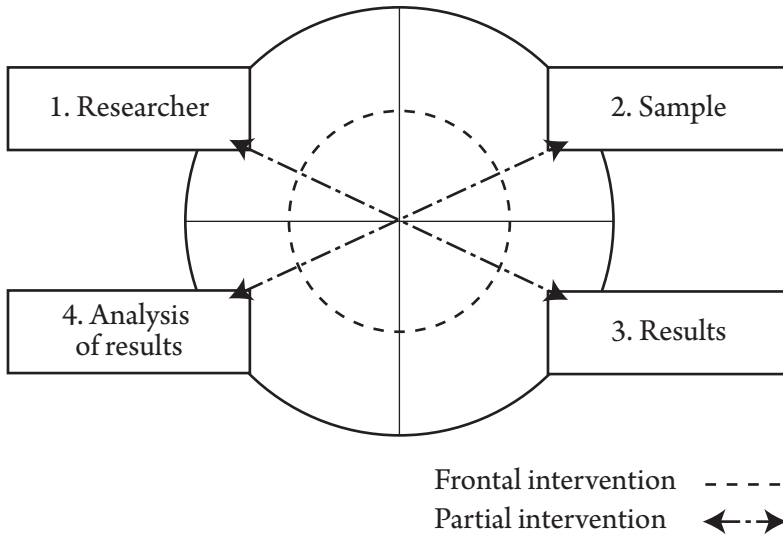


Chart 1: Points of stereotypical approach to gender issues in andragogical research and possible types of interventions

The first critical point in the research is a researcher him/herself, their theoretical approach to the main research problem and a way of how they introduce the issue of gender in their research. Theoretical analysis of key researched phenomena, in the case of our analyzed final papers, indicates that gender issues are not directly included. When in later stages of research gender was involved, it became differently relevant to our researchers depending on their attitude towards gender issues. The irrelevance is reflected in construction of unattractive research hypotheses that reduce gender issues to the question of presence of differences between males and females, initial biological differences, without a clearly explained and projected social construction about the possible meaning and consequences related to main research problem.

Further support to stereotyping in this vicious circle is provided by the research sample, in two ways. First, in the construction of a sample for research of main andragogical phenomena, the students do not provide the necessary representativeness of the sample which would encourage them to deeper venture into gender issues. On the other hand, the instruments do not contain parts or aspects which are, as planned by research, sufficiently gender sensitive. The instruments rather provide projection of a constructed stereotypical gender identity among respondents than open up the possibility of searching for the authentic characteristics in the responses of different sexes. Important here is indirect knowledge, about the presence, quantity and type of prejudices of women and men about themselves, as well as research which is derived from an analysis of all these student papers. However, what is more important is the question about why this is so, and what is to be done about that.

Presentation of research results most simply reveals the researcher's attitude on gender issues. The presentation ends just with a statements about differences or statements about lack of differences. Actually, the way of presentation of results shows that researchers are more driven by "research inertia" when they involve the problem of sex in their research than by the interest for research to provide information about gender issues.

Last key point, the analysis and interpretation of results, just confirms and deepens the stereotypes instead of deconstructing them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The lesson learned from the analysis of students' research papers (whose main research is not gender issue) has several key points:

One dilemma arises – what kind of mentor intervention should be taken: whether gender issues should be partially included in various students' research

which undoubtedly leave space for these issue to be researched in other andragogical phenomena or is we should suggest specific research papers on this topic. Both approaches are possible, but as the analysis of 72 student papers showed, both of them lack with necessary fundamental education in the field of gender issues starting at the BA level. Adult education will not benefit if our students start developing the capacity and competencies to research gender issue only at the MA and PhD levels. Gender issues can hardly be subsequently integrated as new knowledge, understanding and subsequent awakening. In this sense, it is difficult to ensure that elective, optional and mandatory courses and specializations, provide "ex-post wisdom". What was in 1985 recommended by Ann Oakley about overcoming sexism in sociology - that sexism in sociology cannot be overcome just by bringing women into the various subareas of the discipline, rather the various domains of sociology need restructuring (Oakley, 1985, according to: Annandale & Clark, 1996), is still an entirely current and unresolved issue today. Moreover, at the beginning of our study, practices that exist in our faculties regarding the gender education suggested that solution that was criticized as counterproductive in 1985 was just being chosen.

Gender issues in curriculum, relevant for research in the field of education at all study levels, should be a general, initial "filter" or a prism through which from the very beginning, the contents of different andragogical and other scientific disciplines, are refracted. Gender issue is not separate knowledge, but knowledge that deconstructs prejudices and stereotypes about male and female differences and seeks for the authentic characteristics of both sexes.

Another dilemma that can be opened relates to the question of whether it is possible to make research gender sensitive by interrupting the "vicious circle" at some critical point, or whether an intervention in this uncovering should have frontal character. By analogy to the above mentioned dilemma (introducing special courses on gender or systemic approach to the curriculum in relation to gender issues), in relation to the interruption of the "vicious circle" two options, two questions, can be offered: first, whether separate intervention in certain research segments/points in the whole of the research circle is possible and sufficient or, secondly, if it is necessary for the intervention for provision of gender sensitivity to be frontal and systematically presented at various points of research.

If we are considering the option where gender interventions can be introduced into the particular points/stages/segments of the research, the main question is at which of the four critical point can the circle can be interrupted in order to ensure that gender issues will be treated in an appropriate manner? Furthermore, what is the key point of the circle and what different values different points can have? Also, the question of reversibility can be opened: what is the very last moment when gender issues can be brought into the research and the effects of the ambiguities in the

theoretical approach to the research problem could be amortized in that way? The question can be reversed: if the researcher decides to introduce the intervention in a very beginning (in the first point), in the theoretical approach to the problem, is that sufficient guarantee that the further research course “is under control”? If we choose the option of interrupting the circle, from the standpoint of gender issues it is reasonable to ask what the strongest or the weakest point in a research circle and to make (chose) a right key point for intervention is. This approach can be considered just as much reasonable as introduction of gender course in traditional curriculum.

If gender issues in research are introduced in a systematic way, this implies a frontal introduction of intervention in all research segments starting from the theoretical approach, through hypothesis to interpretation of results. Such a possibility could be provided by a curriculum which is in its complete content and outcomes gender sensitive and supplies researchers with necessary competencies.

The subject of analysis in our paper, we point out, were not final papers of students who deal with gender in their research. Only six of the 72 papers could be classified as belonging in that category, but more by the selected research problem than by the manner in which the research was conducted. Finally 52 papers which presented research of different phenomena in adult education, introduced the problem of sex. If we apply standards needed for gender research, most of these papers would remain somewhere in the middle – they would discover the differences between the sexes without gender context in which differences could be understood. On the other hand, setting of clear requirements for the inclusion of a gender approach in exploring the key student’s research subjects, would lead most of the researchers to exclude this very important question from their research designs. In order to make autonomous appropriate choices, students should be additionally supported, enlightened and encouraged about gender issues through their curriculum.

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Dybbroe, B., & Ollagnier, E. (Eds.). (2003). *Challenging gender in lifelong learning: european perspectives*. Copenhagen: Roskilde University Press.

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