

Institute for Pedagogy and Andragogy,  
Faculty of Philosophy,  
University of Belgrade  
University of Wurzburg  
Dublin City University

# CONTRIBUTION OF RESEARCH TO IMPROVEMENT OF ADULT EDUCATION QUALITY

Aleksandra Pejatović, Regina Egetenmeyer, Maria Slowey (Eds.)

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## EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

The origins of this collection of papers *The Contribution of Research to the Improvement of Adult Education Quality* lie in many years of cooperation across a large number of associations, universities, faculties, scientific-research centres and other organizations which, in various ways, work in the field of adult education and learning. The cooperation has been considerably strengthened under the auspices of the EU project *European Studies and Research in Adult Learning and Education – ESRALÉ*.

Most of papers in this collection are based on presentations made at an international conference 'Empirical Research in Adult Learning and Education – Conceptual and Methodological Problems', hosted by the University of Belgrade, 15 September, 2015, in the context of an ESRALÉ Summer Academy. Other papers were received in response to an invitation to a broader circle of associates working on relevant topics. In total, the collection contains 23 papers, by 38 authors- short biographies of whom are included at the end of the publication.

The overall aim of the papers in this volume is to discuss the role of research in adult education, with a view to expanding the evidence base for the improvement of quality in the field of adult education and learning, policy and practice. Some of the major themes to emerge include: the theoretical-methodological basis of adult learning and education; adult education policies; adult illiteracy; elementary education of adults; vocational adult education; higher education; human resource development; career guidance; on line learning and research; prison education; and the education of vulnerable populations.

Challenges identified include: conceptual and methodological problems in studying adult learning and education; the concept of lifelong learning; aging process and learning; working memory and learning in adulthood; educational needs of adults; adult educational programs; career development; (adult) education and employability; learning in a community; learning cities; organizational learning; co-operative learning; professionalization in adult education; teachers' role in adult education; the role of schools in adult education; educational opportunities for vulnerable populations...

Some of the theoretical issues and empirical research projects are located with a national environment, while others adopt a comparative perspective.

Overall, it is evident that scientific research has much to contribute to the improvement in policy and practice of adult education and adult learning. The papers in this collection clearly demonstrate the readiness of researchers

to contribute, improvement of various aspects of adult education and learning through the topics which they address and the connection they seek to make with policymakers and practitioners.

We hope that this collection, with its papers covering a wide range of practical and conceptual issues, represents an opportunity for exchange between authors, and between authors and readers, with the aim of coming to new understandings, deepening existing collaborations and, in the end, further improving the quality of adult education and learning opportunities.

Editors

# SEARCH FOR DIFFERENCES IN LEARNING AND EDUCATION DURING THE AGING PROCESS<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

Within the andragogical researches, scientists differently relate to the issue of aging and old age and specifics in the process of learning and education during the aging process. In this paper, we analyze approaches to age issues in student's final research papers, defended at the Chair of Andragogy, Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade. The aim of our research was to determine how the aging process is treated and explored in student's final papers, as well as which differences are being sought in the researches of various phenomena of learning and education during the aging process. We followed whether, where and how problems of aging appear, starting from theoretical research approaches to the research problem, through subject, objectives, tasks, hypothesis, variables, sample, the research instruments, to statistical processing of the research results and analysis of those results (10 units of analysis). Special attention is paid to the analysis of the research results obtained in student's final papers and the possible implications of these results to improvement of various aspects and elements of quality of education of elderly.

**Key words:** student's research, gerontagogy, aging

## 1. Introduction

The fact that a person begins both to learn and to get old from the moment he/she is born, could present such a defined theme, on one hand as unspecified, and on the other, to give everyone the right to place the expectations from the

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1 This paper is a part of research project undergoing realization at The Institute of Pedagogy and Andragogy, Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, "Models of assessment and strategies for improvement of quality of education" (179060), supported by Ministry of education, science and technological development RS.

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theme in its own reference frame defined by the vision and understanding of aging and old age and differences in learning and education which occur in that process. The aim of this paper is to deal with the outlined problem in a very specific way – how is the aging process as a social construct treated and examined in the final papers of students of Andragogy. Researching different phenomena and problems from different andragogical disciplines, student's research attention, directly or indirectly, always involves a problem of aging. The question is why students in their research works open the issue of aging and its effects in the phenomena they research in so many different ways. They also give different significance and meaning to the relationship between aging, learning and education. Possible answers are different and the key reason is certainly still fluid border between the different age groups of adults and the elderly and the importance of differences among these groups within the phenomenon being studied in andragogy.

Since andragogy explores problems of learning and adult education, the issue of aging and old age is always implicitly or explicitly contained in the problem of its research. Chronological age, i.e. age of people when their learning and education starts to be the subject of andragogical researches is in some way dividing line between andragogy and pedagogy. Equal interest of pedagogist and andragogist to research problems of learning and education of student population, for so-called "higher education didactics", shows that the beginning of adulthood is a formal question with chronological and sociological nature. Pedagogists are researching education of this chronological age as the completion of formal education process and as a final product of the educational system. Andragogists – as initial vocational education or education level achievable through a lifelong learning process. But, whenever andragogy "begins", lifespan, lifecycle to which it relates lasts for the next 60–70 years. Therefore, it is difficult to consider group of people living along this continuum as homogeneous when it comes to their learning and education. When we speak about learning and education, the differences between the youngest and oldest group of adults can be far greater than the differences in learning between age categories studied by pedagogy, on the one hand, and andragogy, on the other.

Such complexity brought more implicit approaches in the limitation of the research area rather than explicit theories about the differences in learning and education in different age groups. That implicit solutions can be identified, for example, in developmental psychology which stops somewhere near attained status of a child (Medić, 1993), pedagogy – somewhere in the school age and issues, adult education – somewhere on the threshold of old age, moving close to retirement. Such a child, such a student and such an adult person form groups that are considered as homogeneous within these sciences from the developmental, educational and learning point of view. Of course there are planned researches with the aim to deal precisely with the differences within or between specified groups.

But such approaches are specifically looking for differences that the usual images do not contain. The problem of andragogy as a science is, as has already been said, long life continuum that andragogy explores and which carries a variety of diversities.

Within the andragogical researches, scientists differently relate to the issue of aging and old age and these specifics in the process of learning and education. The largest number of andragogical scientific papers stops its attention somewhere close to the formal completion of adulthood and the transition to old age. Certain number of scientific papers covers the entire life continuum as a group of adults. A large number of scientific papers are dealing particularly with learning and education of people in the third age, after retirement. So, the term adulthood or old age is not treated uniformly in andragogy, which is reflected in the status and structure of andragogy and its disciplines. At least three constructs about andragogy and its disciplines reflect this issue: andragogy as a science that explores the learning and education of all adults – elderly are included (Savićević, 1991); andragogy as a science that explores learning and adult education, and which has a special discipline that deals with education and learning of elderly in its structure (Bulatović, 1985, 2001, Savićević, 2004) and the third approach in which in addition to pedagogy and andragogy there is a third field of study – gerontogogy which deals with learning and education of elderly and it is in the same horizontal scientific line with pedagogy and adult andragogy (Pastuović, 1999).

Since the beginning of the organization of undergraduate, master and doctoral andragogical studies at the Faculty of Philosophy at University of Belgrade in 1979, there was a controversy about the status of education of older people in andragogical science and its disciplines and subjects in the study program (Bulatović, 1985, 2001; EALG, Level 2, 2008; Medić, 1990, 1998, 2010, 2012; Pastuović, 1999; Savićević, 1991, 2004). Study program, through different subjects and courses, accepts equally all mentioned andragogical approaches to learning and education during the aging process and gives full freedom to students to choose approach to old age that best reveals the “truth” about the researched phenomenon. Thus, the research papers of students are focused on complex consideration of the age of 18 up to 85 and over; some of them stop their research attention at the time continuum when transition from adulthood to old age and the transition from work to retirement begins; and the third are interested for the problems of learning and education in old age by focusing on the old age with different beginning time.

In their thesis, students from 1979 to 2010 were guided by this approach. This approach to the problem of education and learning of elderly was retained in the first accredited program developed in 2006 by the Bologna standards and principles. This program, among other major changes, introduced the final papers instead of thesis that exists since 1979. In the final papers, phenomena are

investigated on a less complex way than in the thesis; final paper has smaller volume graduate theses. According to this Program of basic academic studies of andragogy from 2006, the number of subjects in which it is possible to do 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 out under this program and 72 final papers were defended. In the study program which is the subject of our analysis, from 2006 to 2010, learning in the old age is not earmarked as a special course. Within the Social Andragogy education of elderly people was represented as a special research area, within the research of risk and marginalized social group's education including the elderly as one of the most important.

## 2. Method

Student's research papers are the subject of content analysis in our research. Since the aim of our research is to determine how the aging process is treated and explored in student's final papers, as well as which differences are being sought in the researches of various phenomena of learning and education during the aging process, all final papers from 2010 to 2015, defended at Department of Andragogy represent a sample of our survey – 72 papers. We applied the descriptive method in this research, within which we applied the technique of content analysis in the process of data collection (in this research we have applied the same methodology as in our study about gender issue in students' research papers).

We followed whether, where and how problems of aging appear, starting from theoretical research approaches to the research problem, through subject, objectives, tasks, hypothesis, variables, sample, the research instruments, to statistical processing of the research results and analysis of those results (10 units of analysis). Representation of the problems of aging and its treatment was monitored in these units of analysis. It was registered whether the issue of aging is represented or not represented, and how it was treated in these different contexts. Special attention is paid to the analysis of the research results obtained in student's final papers and the possible implications of these results to improvement of various aspects and elements of quality of education of elderly. For data collection we used the Protocol for content analysis made for the purposes of this research.

## 3. Research analysis

As the consequence of the first accredited program of andragogical studies from 2006 to 2010, in which education of elderly is not singled out as an elective or as a compulsory course, resulted in the fact that from 72 final works, only

one is directly related to the field and the problem of elderly education (Savić, 2015). This work is in the field of Social Andragogy, which explores adult education in specific and critical situations. Usefulness and impact of educational programs for older people were estimated in this paper. The subject of our further analysis is not 72 student research papers any more but 49 papers, since in 23 research papers aging was not taken into account in any way during the research of different andragogical phenomena. The subject of our further analysis are 49 works belonging to different andragogical disciplines: Andragogical didactics, Andragogy of Work, Adult Learning, Organization of Adult Education, Vocational Adult Education, Social Andragogy, Family Andragogy, Management in Education, Human Resource Development, Andragogy of Leisure, Andragogy of Communications and Media. In these papers the problem of old age and aging is in some of the 10 defined units of analysis. But, it is not consistently and continuously defined in all units of analysis, and the consequence of that is that aging and old age in some research papers appear only in certain units of analysis, as it is shown in Table 1.

Following will be analyzed: A) The **methodological concept of the research**, which refers to the first 8 units of analysis, and B) The **results of student's research papers**, referring to the last 2 units of analysis.

#### *A) Access to the problem of aging and old age in methodological concepts of research*

The methodological concept in the student's research papers consists of 8 units of analysis: theoretical approach to the research problem, subject, objective, tasks, hypotheses, variables, samples and research instruments (Table 1).

Table 1. *Access to the problem of aging and old age in methodological concepts of research*

|      | <b>Elements of the methodological concept of research</b> | <b>Represented</b> | <b>Not represented</b> |
|------|---|--------------------|------------------------|
| 1.   | Theoretical approach to research problem                  | 14                 | 35                     |
| 2.   | Research subject  | 1                  | 48                     |
| 3.   | Research objective  | 2                  | 47                     |
| 4.   | Research tasks  | 29                 | 20                     |
| 5.   | Research hypotheses                                       | 24                 | 25                     |
| 5.1. | – General hypotheses                                      | 9                  | 40                     |
| 5.2. | – Special hypotheses                                      | 22                 | 27                     |
| 6.   | Research variables  | 42                 | 7                      |
| 6.1. | – Independent variable                                    | 24                 | 25                     |
| 6.2. | – Control variable  | 18                 | 31                     |
|      | <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>49</b>          |                        |

Phenomena that students are interested in the field of andragogy contained in these research papers cover all scientific fields in andragogy, starting from General Andragogy, History of Andragogy and Comparative Andragogy, to the Management in Adult Education, Andragogy of Work, Andragogy of Leisure, etc. In the first unit of our analysis – **theoretical consideration** of these various andragogical phenomena, the problem of aging is treated in 14 works. In the remaining 35 works aging is not in a theoretical consideration of the problem, but it occurs in some of the later units of analysis (in tasks, hypotheses, variables, sample...). When the connection between aging and old age is considered in the theoretical analysis of key research problem, connecting age with the studied phenomena is mainly affirmative. Advantages of old age and experience in relation to the problem of research are most commonly observed.

In the second unit of analysis, defined **subject** of the research, aging does not appear as a problem in any research, except in the aforementioned one work which is directly aimed at exploring the issues of learning and education in old age. Only in the two final papers, the students included the issues of aging and old age in the **research goals**, which are the third unit of our analysis.

Even though the largest number of papers does not clearly define the problem of aging and old age in the objectives of the researches its importance is recognized in the fourth unit of analysis, research **tasks**. A significant number (29) of research papers associate aging and old age with the subject of research. There is insufficient consistency between the tasks defined and formulated **hypothesis** (that are the fifth unit of analysis). Out of the 29 papers in which the old age is in research tasks, 24 of them consistently methodically define hypothesis outlining expectations in relation to old age. The weakness in the hypotheses is mostly that direction of the relationship between researched phenomena and aging is not defined. It happens that in some research papers old age is not included in tasks, but it appears in the research hypotheses. Also, in some research papers the problem of aging occurs in research tasks, but not in the research hypotheses. This discrepancy between tasks and hypotheses in relation to old age and aging as a problem that is being followed in connection with the major research problem is sometimes the result of selected research methodology, and sometimes unjustified inconsistencies in the implementation of methodological procedures.

In the sixth unit of our analysis which treats the problem of **variables**, position of old age is very variable. In a significant number of research papers, old age as a problem appears for the first time in this unit of analysis. Taking into account all research papers together, old age and aging occur as an independent or control variables in 42 research papers. Out of these 42 papers, old age figures as the independent variable in 24 papers. In none of these papers where it occurs as an independent variable, old age is not treated independently. In researches, there is a construct which includes a set of other important characteristics, usually called bio-socio-demographic-work characteristics in all researched papers.

Out of 49 analyzed research papers, aging appears in 18 as a control variable. And, as a control variable old age is always appearing in the previously mentioned research construct of bio-socio-demographic-work characteristics. This position of old age defined in independent and a control variable is mostly the reason of absence of old age in the above-mentioned hypotheses, tasks, as well as the theoretical approach to the research problem. On the other hand, the forthcoming analysis of research results will reveal that importance given to the old age most often depends on the proportion of variance that old age carries within all the above characteristics.

There is a problem of **sample** in research works – a sampling is problem. To create the sample, which is the seventh unit of our analysis, simpler techniques and methods are chosen and selection of sample usually depends on the variety of available technical and material possibilities for the realization of researches for the purposes of the final papers of students. There are few quota samples which provide needed structure or other types of samples that allow a significant generalization of the findings that were obtained for different age groups. Most of the researches were actually realized on so-called convenience samples which are actually the reason why, primarily, control variable cannot be treated in the proper and necessary statistical meaning. Convenience samples are mostly the reason why some element of bio-socio-demographic-work characteristics is excluded from the analysis and is left as a hypothesis for further research. Also, the sample size is determined in a manner that meets the minimum statistical requirements, so that variations of the sample, which would enable more significant research of bio-socio-demographic-work characteristics, are not possible in the work of this scope and depth.

Research papers mostly belong to the type of **quantitative research**, and have the **empirical character**. Most of the research papers in which old age is not included as a research variable, deal with historical, comparative research and case studies. Most of those works in which old age appears as a research variable belong to empirical research and are quantitative. In the analyzed student's final papers two **techniques** were used in order to realize research: survey and scaling. Among other techniques content analysis and interviews were used, but in a much smaller number of papers. In the eighth unit of our analysis, research **instruments**, 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 variable, 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 and combined questions. The scales are commonly used for meas-

uring relationships, values and attitudes. Within the analyzed group of works descriptive scale dominates – especially Likert scale. Most of the instruments students 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.

### *B) Status and treatment of the aging problem in the results of student's research*

The remaining two units of analysis are related to the statistical processing of the research results and analysis of the results of student's research work. In the presentation, analysis and interpretation of research results the problem of aging appears in 44 out of 49 research papers. In 5 research papers the result obtained on the connection between the problems of aging and researched phenomenon are not analyzed, although the aging process was found in some of the units of analysis: tasks, hypotheses, variables... Hence the subject of our further analyzes is 44 student's research works. In the analyzed research works, **processing of the received data** (which is the ninth unit of our analysis) different statistical methods were used. In about same number of researches, researches 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 differences 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 aging and old age, 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** obtained open further questions about problems of aging and age 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 search further for more significant research of variance or the share of age of respondents in the researched phenomenon. So, there are quite a number of papers that, beside from noting that the differences are not found

or are not relevant, remain on the fact 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 is the result considered as minor importance result or no importance result. Such treatment indicates the attitude that is already given to aging and old age in the approach to the phenomenon being studied.

Neither of the analyzed papers deals with the elderly, except the previously mentioned one paper. Out of 44 analyzed papers, 43 papers include aging as a relevant appearance for the phenomenon that is researched. The range of the age taken into consideration in the various students research papers is very different. The minimum age range is covered by the sample of 18 to 24 years, in the paper which examines students' communication via e-mail, and the largest range of age is from 18 to 65 years, that is involved in a larger number of papers. Student research papers dealing with aging in such a way as researching whether there are some noticeable differences which result from the aging process.

The results of the researches can be roughly classified into three groups. Without intention to exhaustively present the results that were obtained in the student's research papers, we will present only some examples to support our categorization of the three groups of findings. In the first and the largest group are those research papers in which aging and age are negatively reflected in relation to the studied phenomena. Among other things, it was found that:

- Resistance to the introduction of innovative changes in work and willingness to engage in education that would introduce innovations into the working process and organization grows with age.
- Dissatisfaction with the educational offer in companies grows with age.
- In assessing the possession of key competencies (Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, 2007), in relation to others, the elderly are considered themselves as the least competent in the field of communication in a foreign language. On the other hand, they show the least motivation to acquire this competence.
- Readiness for professional development declines with age.
- Awareness about cultural actualities/events in the surroundings significantly decreases with age.
- Oldest workers are mostly dissatisfied with interpersonal relationships in the organization.
- The need to develop social skills of employees in the organization is less important to older workers.
- The elderly do not see training for active job search as a measure to increase employability.

Due to the indicated inadequate attention and importance given to aging and old age in all units of analysis, it is not unexpected that data analysis on statistically significant differences in age remains on mere assertions about the results obtained and mostly stereotyped and insufficiently critical comments that explain these findings. As it can be seen from the presentation of some results, this, in most cases, small number of student's papers open a very important and interesting andragogical issues that sometimes in these papers have a greater scientific significance than the results obtained in relation to the main subject of the research. Therefore, many important things unjustifiably are out of control and scientific attention.

The second group of research works, in much smaller number, represents those papers whose results clarify the contribution, prosperity, quality or quantity increase compared to the measured phenomenon, which aging and old age brings. In these papers hypothesis did not talk about these expectations by researchers and often these results are treated as surprising. However, regardless of the positive direction of the relationship of measured phenomena and ageing and old age, treatment of results and their analysis remain the same as in the previous group of works in which the direction of the correlation is reversed. Also in this group of papers stays conclusion that gain and prosperity is again stereotypically attributed to the experience remain:

- Older respondents, respondents with more years of professional experience, participate in vocational training programs more often.
- Criticism of kitsch and trash content (reality show) increases significantly with age.
- Elderly estimate that:
  - The quality of their own work is better than of the younger ones
  - Greater rationality in approach to work (materials, time, equipment)
  - They produce less write-offs
  - They have less injuries
  - They are less absent from work
  - They refuse work tasks less
  - They have higher productivity
- Affirmative action related to age as compensation for inclusion in society, achieving better pension and training for competitiveness in the labor market is present in the strategies.
- Speaking about competences for e-communications, aging provides greater flexibility and less sense of fear in this communication (Čolaković, 2014).
- Elderly have a very positive attitude towards the use of information technology in the organization because:
  - Social relationships are developed

- It contributes to enhanced teamwork, dialogue and cooperation
- Number of stressful and difficult jobs is decreasing
- Individual responsibility is increasing
- It has impact on the individual development – requires new skills, abilities and knowledge (Nenadić, 2010).

Among the results that speak about the positive direction of the link between the researched phenomenon and aging, there are results that are completely opposite to the results of earlier researches which are dealing with elderly people. Analyzed researches in this paper do not deal with elderly people. These researches follow the aging as phenomenon, and they search for differences in learning and education related with the aging process. This explains the unusual result of the research of competencies for e-communications, which shows that older students have greater flexibility and less sense of fear in this communication. Opposite of the usual findings that elderly people have more fear and less interest in ICT, one of the analyzed paper have shown that when a working context, in which the introduction of information technologies is required, is known, the results can be reversed. Length of experience with working context has resulted among the elderly with significant perceiving of advantages and positive attitude towards the use of ICT in the organization.

Smallest number of research papers deal with the question of aging and old age and its lineage with the measured phenomena in which age is not an advantage nor a disadvantage, but only diversity. But they only claim that there are differences and leave to the reader to detect the type or kind of diversity: quality versus quantity, continuity versus discontinuity, reductionism versus formation, elements versus holism, structure versus function, structural or behavioral changes, universality versus relativity and so on (Medić, 1993). The reader is left to formulate new hypotheses that could lead to the explanation of these differences, such as for example:

- Older often choose seminars as type of professional training, read more literature, unlike younger who prefer Internet.
- Assessment of necessary managerial skills for educational institutions management differs with aging.
- Preferences of leadership style in working organization changes with age. Young prefer intellectual stimulation and older – motivation to work.

Summarizing research results in final papers of students it is certainly correct statement that they contain valuable, significant and important results which indicate that the question of age or differences among the various age groups are and should be an important andragogical question. The context in which these findings were placed and their interpretation are certainly a consequence of the lack of strong, clear and scientifically based facts on this issue in andragogical

science. The significance of the results about the differences that appear in the studied phenomena in relation to the age indicates the need to seriously locate this problem both in andragogical concepts, as well as in empirical researches which do not treat aging and age as an epiphenomenon.

#### 4. Recommendations

Research papers in the field of andragogy that introduces the question of old age and aging as an independent or control variable require detailed foundation of the problem of aging and old age in the theoretical approach to the research problem.

In andragogy, question of old age or age has a totally different meaning than in other social sciences. Andragogy, singled out as a science because of the diversity based precisely on the age, requires that inter-age differences in the extent of its research should be treated appropriately. So it is quite unreasonable to treat age together and at the same level with other bio-socio-demographic-work characteristics, which minimizes the importance of age and brings into the same level with the characteristics of different order and meaning. In andragogical research papers old age is unjustifiably included in the construct bio-socio-demographic-work characteristics, because it is not a phenomenon of the same rank nor of the same importance as the other three. Losing its importance in this construct, research papers places in the same level fundamental andragogical question and some other features of personality that have significance for the andragogical research but at completely different level.

When the issue of old age comes to focus of researchers in any way, the issue of the sample becomes critically important. Determination of the sample in relation to the key dependent variable should always contain elements that can adequately and in statistically justified way enable consideration of the share of old age in the studied phenomenon. The sample should provide the possibility of subsequent analysis depending on the initially study results.

Research instruments of certain andragogical phenomena are constructed or chosen according to the greatest possible sensitivity needed for measuring or detecting this phenomenon, but can often be a "crude measure" to detect differences due to different ages. A good research plan should include instruments equally sensitive to study all relevant issues.

Proper theoretical foundation of problems of the share of age in the studied phenomena is reliable framework for defining precise tasks and defining the correct hypothesis. Whenever old age is introduced as a new category in the study, the expectations should be explained and it should be linked to the theoretical construct about the issue of aging and old age in the field of learning and education. This would enable proper understanding of the significance of the

results obtained, whether they approve or reject the defined hypotheses. Studies in which differences were not found can have more important scientific significance than the results in which some differences were found, but it is often overlooked as a possibility.

The general impression is that the problem of old age and aging is insufficient and inadequately represented in the research papers of students. It was not treated appropriately due to the fact that the life continuum of adult and elderly is long period of life and it initiates differences, changes, improvement, decline...

In addition to the specific recommendations that could improve future research work of students, the results of student's research papers analysis indicate the conclusion and, at the same time, the recommendation that it would be better to have larger number of studies directly dealing with research of different andragogical phenomena and their link with aging, particularly old age in empirical research in adult learning and education (Milošević, Medić and Popović, 2013; Medić and Milošević, 2014). Beside the fact that it is not researched as critical variable for learning and education of the elderly in scope and importance that it deserves, even when problems of old age and aging are researched, it is still not theoretically or empirically entirely completed.

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