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## Professional andragogical competence of teaching staff for the adult education system

Kompetencje profesjonalno-andragogiczne kadry pedagogicznej dla systemu kształcenia dorosłych

**Słowa kluczowe:** andragog, kompetencje andragogiczne, edukacja dorosłych, kadra pedagogiczna.

**Streszczenie.** Analizie poddano istotę kompetencji andragogicznych kadry pedagogicznej dla systemu edukacji dorosłych. Uzasadnia się trafność badanego problemu, celowość jego badania w kontekście specyfiki pracy z dorosłym odbiorcą, specyfiki potrzeb edukacyjnych, zainteresowań i doświadczeń osoby dorosłej.

Istota kompetencji kluczowych analizowana jest z punktu widzenia kontekstu andragogicznego. Opisano trzy komponenty Modelu Kompetencji Kluczowych Kadry Pedagogicznej do Pracy z Dorosłymi: sfera działania (opisuje 13 sfer działania); kontekst działania (określa kontekst działania); kompetencje niezbędne do prowadzenia działalności (12 kompetencji podzielonych na dwie grupy). Zaprezentowano autorską wizję struktury kompetencji zawodowych andragogicznych: specjalne (ogólne) kompetencje zawodowe andragogiczne jako składnik kompetencji zawodowych specjalistów pracujących z dorosłymi oraz specyficzne kompetencje zawodowe andragogiczne jako wiodący składnik kompetencji zawodowych nauczyciela andragoga.

**Key words:** andragogue, andragogical competence, adult education, teaching staff.

**Abstract.** The essence of andragogical competence of teaching staff for the adult education system is analyzed. The relevance of the studied problem as well as the appropriateness of its examination in the context of the specific characteristics of working with an adult audience and the unique educational needs, interests and experiences of adults, are substantiated.

The essence of key competencies from the andragogical perspective is analyzed. Three components of the Model of Key Competencies for teaching staff working with adults are described, i.e.: the field of activity (describes 13 areas of activity); the context of activity (specifies the context of the activity) and the competencies necessary for performing the activity (12 competencies grouped into two categories). The author's vision of the structure of professional andragogical competence is presented: special (common) professional andragogical competence as a component of the professional competence of specialists working with

adults, and specific professional andragogical competence as the leading component of the professional competence of an andragogue educator.

## Introduction

It becomes evident that lifelong learning is undergoing qualitative changes with a significant increase in the number of participants in the educational process: the enrichment of value orientations, greater diversity in the age characteristics of adult learners and heightened demands on the organizational and methodological components of adult education. The above factors determine a significant expansion in the range of professional roles and functions of the andragogue specialist, driven by civilizational challenges that necessitate the active development of adult education as a system, i.e., a social institution that facilitates society's adaptation to modern living conditions.

Preliminary analysis has shown that educating adults is much more complex than educating children and youth. This process requires the teaching staff not only to have a high level of professional-subject competence but also to possess specific design skills, as well as the ability to organize and implement educational interaction with adult learners, based on the principles of the andragogical model. For instance, Polish researchers note in job descriptions that an andragogue is engaged in multifaceted educational activities with adults (informing, instructing, advising, counseling, enlightening, etc.) aimed at helping them to understand their life situation, and at summarizing and explaining possible life goals and competencies (Informacja o zawodzie – Andragog 235101, 2018).

Researchers (M. Knowles, M. Marchuk, Ya. Tomilo, N. Bidiuk, O. Zhyzhko, I. Lytovchenko, O. Ohienko, O. Samoilenko, L. Tymchuk, and others) emphasize that the need to consider the specificities of working with an adult audience, as well as the unique educational needs, interests and experiences of adults, requires specially developed professional andragogical competence among teaching staff working with adults. It should also be noted that the growing relevance of this issue is determined by the increasing demands of both science and practice, as well as the public-social significance of lifelong learning. At the same time, the problem of developing the andragogical competence of teaching staff in adult education should be considered in the context of the professionalization of both adult education as a whole and the professionalization of teaching and scientific-pedagogical staff (Anishchenko, Banit & Kaliuzhna, 2021, 65).

## The Essential Aspect of Andragogical Competence of Adult Education Specialists

Without delving deeply into the essence of the concept of "competence", it is accepted that competence characterizes the extent to which a specialist is engaged in active work, demonstrating the ability to solve specific problems effectively by mobilizing knowledge, skills, experience, behavioral attitudes and values. It is an integral personal characteristic that reflects a person's readiness and ability to perform professional fun-

ctions in accordance with accepted norms and standards. Within the framework of the professional stratification of society, professional competence is viewed as a professional vocation and duty, formed in the unity of lifestyle, profession and education.

The leading category, in our opinion, is the "ability to act", which is the skill of applying knowledge in practical activities. Competence is a key, "nodal" concept because it combines intellectual and skill-based components and is oriented toward the outcomes.

Researchers typically operate with the concepts of "competence" and "groups of competencies". Thus, it seems appropriate to introduce the concept of "key competencies", which reflect generalized indicators of certain components and highlight their multifunctionality, cross-disciplinary nature, and interdisciplinarity.

The concept of key competencies is used to distinguish the competencies necessary for the successful activity of a specialist in a rapidly changing modern environment (OECD, 2002, pp. 7–8). At the same time, key competencies are dynamic and depend on the priorities of society and the tasks imposed on education. We will briefly focus on the category of key competencies to determine the content of the professional-andragogical competence of an andragogue specialist.

According to the decision of the Department of Education, Culture, and Sports of the Council of Europe, the structure of key competencies should include competencies in certain areas of activity, i.e.: cognitive (based on the acquisition of knowledge from various information sources); civic-social (fulfilling the role of a citizen, voter, consumer); social-labor (ability to analyze the labor market, assess one's own professional capabilities, navigate the norms of work ethics and self-organization skills); domestic (aspects of personal health, family life, etc.); cultural-leisure (choices in how to use free time and for personal enrichment).

Summarizing the essence of the concept of competence and the approaches to understanding the content of key competencies groups prompts their interpretation from the andragogical context and allows for the following conclusions.

*Firstly*, the competence of an andragogue specialist is an integral quality of the individual, which is the key to successful interaction in the field of educational activities with different categories of adults. Its characteristic features are:

1. Readiness and desire to realize one's potential for professional activity (motivational aspect);
2. Proven ability to apply knowledge, skills and experience in practice for successful and creative professional activity (cognitive and behavioral aspects);
3. Awareness of social significance and personal responsibility for the results of one's activities, along with the desire for continuous improvement (value-meaning aspect).

*Secondly*, all key competencies of an andragogue share common characteristics:

- multifunctionality (necessary for achieving important goals and solving complex tasks in various situations);

- interdisciplinarity (applied in different situations including domestic, professional, political and civic spheres);
- multidimensionality (encompassing various processes and intellectual abilities: analytical, critical, communicative, "know-how" and common sense);
- intellectual significance (abstract thinking, self-reflection, defining personal position, self-assessment).

The main distinction is that all of these competencies enable the andragogue-specialist to perform different types of actions – autonomous and reflective; use various learning tools interactively; successfully integrate and function within the different socially heterogeneous groups.

### Model of Key Competencies for Teaching Staff Working with Adults

In the final report "Key Competencies for Adult Learning Professionals" (Buiskool, Broek, van Lakerveld, Zarifis, & Osborne, 2010), it is emphasized that staff who teach adults plays a key role in the implementation of lifelong learning. It is these professionals who work with adults to help them develop their knowledge, skills and competencies, making their work one of the most vital activities for enhancing the quality of learning at all levels.

The abovementioned report presents a Model of Key Competencies for Teaching Staff Working with Adults, which consists of three elements (components):

- I. Field of Activity (describes 13 areas of activity)
- II. Context of Activity (specifies the context of the activity)
- III. Competencies Necessary for Performing the Activity (12 competencies grouped into two categories).

The structure of the model is visualized in Figure 1.

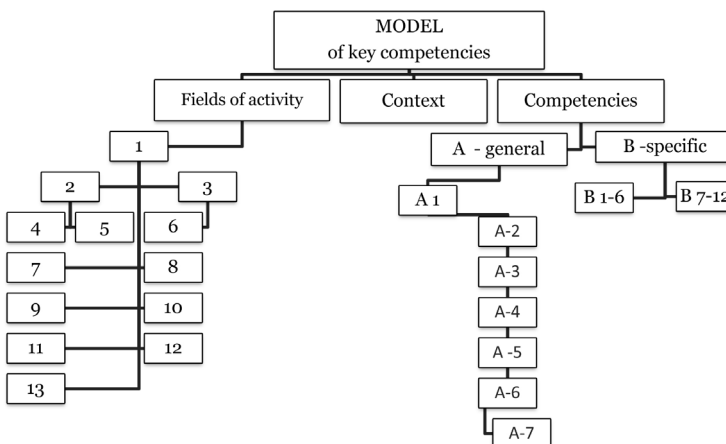


Fig. 1. The structure of the model of key competencies of pedagogical staff for work with adults

We will describe each of them in more detail.

### I. Field of activity

A total of 13 fields of activity were identified. It is emphasized that not all activities can be carried out by one professional, but can be divided among the groups of professionals (for example, managers, teachers or support staff, etc.):

1. Assessment of training needs
2. Preparation of courses
3. Facilitation of learning
4. Monitoring and evaluation
5. Consulting and guidance
6. Program development
7. Financial management
8. Personnel management
9. General management
10. Marketing and PR
11. Administrative support
12. ICT support
13. General activity

### II. Context of activity

Describes the context of the activity, which directly depends on variables such as: the target groups, the composition of the team, the content of the educational programs provided by the provider, the exact mission of the educational institution, etc. The context can be determined by answering four clusters of questions:

- 1) Teaching/learning: Who is learning? Who teaches?
- 2) Software/program development: Who developed the program?
- 3) Institutional organization/management: What is the structure of the educational institution? What are the requirements for admission, for personnel?
- 4) Leadership/continuous professional development: What is the mission of the institute? Is there any professional development policy?

In addition, the level of responsibility associated with working in this context is assessed.

### III. Competencies for activity

Describes the set of key competencies required to perform professional activities in a specific context.

This element has two clusters of competences: A and B.

A – the cluster of general competencies, covers seven competencies;

B – is a cluster of specific competencies, has two subgroups (B1-B6) and (B7-B12).

Let's reveal them:

A. *General competencies*: relevant for the implementation of all types of activities in the field of adult education. Any professional who works with adults should master them, regardless of whether they carry out educational, managerial, advisory or administrative activities.

The cluster includes seven competencies:

A1 Personal: autonomy, the ability to learn independently throughout life

A2 Interpersonal: communication skills, using Internet resources, being able to work in a team

A3 Professional: responsibility for the further development of the education of adult listeners

A4 Knowledge: expert in using own subject knowledge and available educational resources

A5 Didactic: the ability to choose and use different teaching methods, styles and methods in working with adults

A6 Motivational: the motivation of adult learning, teaching and revealing the capabilities of adult listeners

A7 Group dynamics: the ability to work in homogeneous and diversified groups of listeners.

B. *Specific competencies*. The cluster includes twelve competencies divided into two subgroups. They are not required by all professionals working in the adult learning sector, but are instead required by those responsible for a specific area of activity (e.g. learning facilitation, institute management, etc.). A distinction is made between specific competencies (upper half, B1-B6) directly related to the educational process (teaching, counseling) and special competencies (lower half, B7-B12), indirectly related to or supporting the educational process (management and administrative support).

B1 Competence in assessing the previous experience, educational needs, requirements, motivation and wishes of adult learners.

B2 Competence in planning adult education.

B3 Competence in facilitating the educational process of adults.

B4 Competence of continuous monitoring and evaluation of the educational process of adults in order to improve it on a permanent basis.

B5 Competence in counseling on issues of career, life, further development and, if necessary, providing professional assistance.

B6 Competence in planning and development of educational programs

B7 Competence in managing financial resources and assessing the social and economic benefits of provision.

B8 Competence in human resource management in adult education institutions

B9 Competence in managing and administering adult education institutions in general and managing the quality of provision.

B10 Competence in marketing and public relations.

B11 Competence in working with administrative issues involving adult listeners and andragogues.

B12 Competence in facilitating environments that are based on information and communication technologies and supporting andragogues and adult listeners in using these environments.

The European Commission during the period of 2007-2009 commissioned a study to clarify the content of professional activities of professionals working in adult education (ALPINE). The study was carried out by an international research group under the leadership of the research group Research voor Beleid. Information was collected in 32 European countries (Partner in the Interim Evaluation, 2007–2009). As a result of the generalizations of the obtained information it was concluded that the personnel working with adults perform a wide range of tasks, especially teachers. It was important that the teaching staff participate in almost every aspect of the educational organization's activities.

In addition, the analysis of European practice has shown that many countries do not have a clear idea of the competences necessary to perform professional tasks in adult education due to the diversity and wide range of activities of employees. Thus, in some European countries, competency profiles and standards for staff in the field of adult education have been developed and implemented (Bechtel, 2008), although the scope of their application differs significantly at the institutional and regional levels. The conducted analysis of research (Billington, 2000; Benavot, 2002, Brookfield, 2006, etc.) shows that specialists who teach adults perform types of activities, the palette of which is quite diverse.

In general, six leading areas of activity were identified in this broad spectrum, in particular:

- 1) teaching,
- 2) management,
- 3) counseling and recommendations,
- 4) program planning,
- 5) support,
- 6) the use of mass media, which is important for the professional development of adults.

However, an interesting pattern is observed, in particular, these leading areas of activity do not always coincide with the roles and positions of personnel working in the adult education system. As the researchers point out, the organization of educational activities is still leading, but other types of activities are gaining more and more importance. In particular, the role of consulting, coaching, supervision, as well as activities in the field of financial management, project development and evaluation is being strengthened.

The problem of competence of specialists working in the field of adult education has always been in the field of view of foreign scientists.

Thus, according to German researchers (Kade, Nittel, Seitter, Krüger, & Rauschenbach, 2007), in order to achieve recognition and the ability to remain competitive, it is necessary to possess a set of competencies that form the basis of professional action, these are professional, social and methodological competencies.

Pedagogical staff working with adults must acquire a set of the following competencies:

1. Pedagogical-social: thorough general knowledge and understanding of processes in society and education policy.
2. Didactic: the ability to professionally planning, conducting and evaluating lessons.
3. Managerial (management): entrepreneurship, strategic thinking and actions that correspond to the philosophy of the enterprise and the everyday life of the institution.
4. Consulting: consulting employees, in particular in the professional and educational sphere.
5. Social: all types of communication and social interaction.
6. Personal: sensitivity, endurance, ability to be inspired, as well as professional closeness and distance to topics and personalities. It is also about a valuable attitude to interaction, communication with other people on the basis of empathy, awareness by andragogues that the practice of adult education is formed against the background of different ideas about the humanity and diversity of education, which determines the generalization of ideas about adult education, the ethical principles of its functioning (Curriculum globALE , 2015).

A somewhat different approach to defining the key competencies of an andragogue specialist can be found in the American researcher D. Pratt (Pratt, 1993). In his opinion, the leading skills are: establishing business relationships with adult students; to be aware of responsibility for the learning process; monitor training effectiveness and determine further goals; assign roles during the learning process and monitor learning.

J. Bolkan (Bolkan, 2009) considers monitoring the educational process, determining the development trajectory, assigning roles in the educational process, establishing business relationships and perceived responsibility for the educational process to be among the key competencies of an andragogue specialist (p. 131).

Focusing attention on the effective educational management of adults, the researchers prove the need to create a favorable environment, provide feedback, encourage participation in joint activities, the perfect mastery of which characterizes a successful teacher for adults, while the very content of education remains overlooked. In addition, andragogical competence is based on knowledge about the laws and peculiarities of human development, is a component of professional competence and, together with its other components (practical-special, social, psychological, communicative, informational, valeological), forms the definition of professional competence as an integral characteristic of business and personal qualities



of a specialist, reflects not only the level of knowledge, skills and experience sufficient to achieve the goals of professional activity, but also the social and moral position of the personality of the pedagogue-andragogue.

A generalized idea of the fullness of andragogical competence can be found in works of I. Esmaa (Eesmaa, 2010), who singles out three groups of competencies: general, subject, field competencies.

According to the results of his own research, O. Samoilenko (2018) emphasizes that the formation of the professional competence of a specialist in the field of adult education involves the formation of his methodical, special (andragogical), social-psychological, differential-psychological, reflective and individual-personal competencies.

In general, supporting the point of view of O. Samoilenko, we offer our vision of the essence of professional andragogical competence. The study, analysis and generalization of research materials made it possible to create the structure of professional andragogical competence presented in Fig. 2. At the same time, we should clarify that in the process of further analysis, we will distinguish two types of professional andragogical competencies:

- 1) *special (general) professional andragogical competence* as a component of the professional competence of specialists who work with adults, the formation of which is important for the implementation of all types of activities in the field of adult education, regardless of the direction of activity (educational, managerial, advisory, administrative);
- 2) *specific professional andragogical competence* as a leading component of the professional competence of the teaching staff who carry out the educational process in the system of adult education (both formal and informal subsystems).

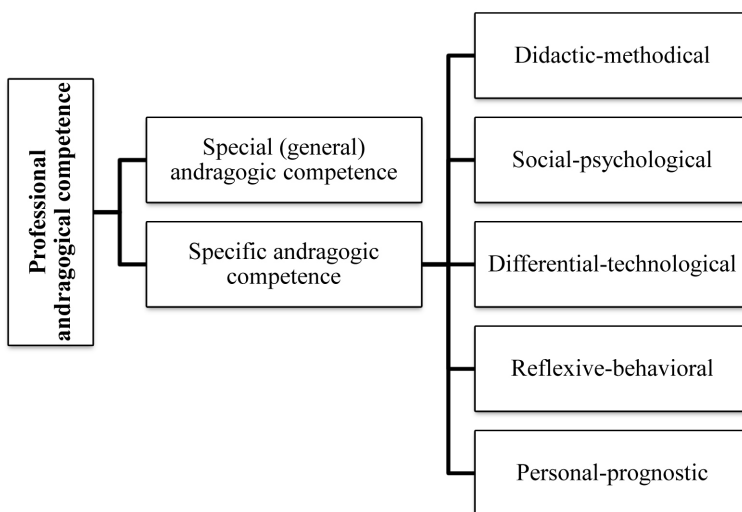


Fig. 2. The structure of professional andragogical competence

In general, professional andragogical competence is a dynamic phenomenon, since changes in its content are related to social reality and depend on the development of the actual educational and other needs of different categories of adults. Its phenomenology is based on a complex interdependent organization of interconnected components. The formation of professional andragogical competence takes place in the process of professional education and later in professional activity; it is organically included in all groups of key competencies and is adjusted under the influence of the educational needs of different categories of adults (Fig. 3).

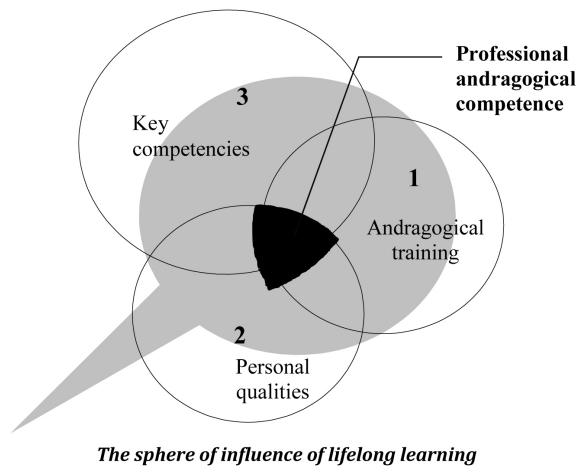


Fig. 3. The phenomenon of professional andragogical competence

## Conclusions

Education and training, as well as support, accompaniment, promotion of professional and personal development of various categories of the adult population are the main spheres of activities of an andragogue. The above-mentioned requires an andragogue specialist to have a set of competencies, information excellence and psychological culture. In addition, he must possess mechanisms for searching and evaluating the necessary information resources; educated, flexible, able to think critically, act unconventionally and choose prognostic solutions. He or she should be dialogic and ready to create direct and feedback in the system of development of subject-subject relations, pluralistic in essence, initiative during the search for alternative solutions. Andragogues should have the ability to organically incorporate new knowledge into the already formed system of knowledge. An important professional trait of his or her is the ability for continuous self-development and the ability to stimulate the educational initiative of adult students. The level of formation of his or her professional andragogical competence largely ensures the effectiveness of the educational process in institutions of formal and informal education of adults.

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