EMOTIONAL EMPOWERMENT OF HUMAN CAPITAL THROUGH ADULT LEARNING PATHWAYS

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ABSTRACT: *The Sustainable Development Goals Program was adopted by the United Nations in September 2015 and is an evolution of the Millennium Development Goals Program (2000-2015). Its main axes are economy, society and the environment, with an emphasis on education and training for professionals, which are considered to be fundamental foundations of economic and social development. UNESCO is called upon to play an important role in implementing the Agenda, as it has both the right experience and extensive diplomatic networks. To this end, it has drafted official texts on the achievement of the Agenda 2030 objectives. Its recent text, "Third World Report on Adult Learning and Adult Education" (GRALE III), presents the results of an international research involving 139 UNESCO member countries on the impact of Learning and Adult Education on Health, Prosperity, Employment and the Labour Market, Social, Political and Community Life. Adults need to redefine their work profile and strengthen it with the right skills that will let them respond to the mental, physical and emotional demands of the new labour market. Which are though the right skills? Since specialized skills seem not to be adequate, emphasis has been lately put on emotional competence, which may contribute to the creation of a healthy working environment (Goleman, 1998). This study, through the qualitative analysis of the above-mentioned text, tries to capture and investigate whether there are references to skills related to the field of emotional intelligence in its content. The analysis of the text shows that references are made to the categories of interpersonal relations management, self-management, self –awareness and self-confidence. In particular, there is a strong need for policy makers of adult education to help learners develop communication, cooperation and tolerance, face difficulties, improve this lives, connect emotionally with others, join in community, sustain social connections.*

KEYWORDS: UNESCO, Empowerment, Adult Learning, Education, Emotional Intelligence, Skills.

INTRODUCTION

At a time of intense demographic and environmental changes, with an ever-increasing crisis of values and principles, with particular social and economic characteristics, with high rates of unemployment and persistent levels of braindrain, education is called upon to play a particularly important role. A multidimensional role, with specific features as these are dictated by local, national and international working conditions.

The empowerment of human capital can be achieved through appropriate training, which can be provided through formal, non-formal or informal education. Education can act as a luxury ancillary factor as it can directly relieve the citizens from the unfavourable conditions under which they live (World Bank, 2016). In addition, it can act as a producer of appropriately equipped professionals and applied knowledge as well as a development mechanism.

The link between education and empowerment of human resources is also strongly reflected in the United Nations Agenda 2030 - Sustainable Development (2015-2030). This text highlights the contribution of adult education to the achievement of the agenda's objectives: "All people, irrespective of sex, age, race, ethnicity, and persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples, children and youth, especially those in vulnerable situations, should have access to lifelong learning opportunities that help them acquire the knowledge and skills needed to exploit opportunities and to participate fully in society (United Nations, 2015, Paragraph 25).

With the right skills, people are equipped for good-quality jobs and can fulfil their potential as confident, active citizens (European Commission, 2016). This should be taken seriously into account given that, according to the OECD Survey (2013) of employability skills, roughly one third of workers are over or under qualified for their job, while one sixth report a mismatch between their existing skills and those qualified for their job. Consequently, skills development is considered to be a wise and vital investment, since not only can it reduce unemployment, inequality and poverty, but also promote economic growth (UNESCO, 2012).

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

Adult Education and Empowerment

The idea of adult education was developed in the 19th century in Western Europe alongside the development of technology and industry, as capitalism overturned traditional productive relations, dissolved the trade unions and created huge needs for a skilled workforce. The first term "*adult education denotes the entire body of organized educational processes, whatever the content, level and method, whether formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges and universities as well as in apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as adult by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction and bring about changes in their attitudes or behavior in twofold perspective of full personal development and participation in balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development, adult education, however, must not be considered as .an entity in itself, it is a sub-division, and an integral part of, a global scheme for life-long education and learning*" (UNESCO, 1976: Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education adopted by the General Conference at its nineteenth session).The new Recommendation provides a more detailed definition of adult learning and education (ALE), distinguishing three core areas of skills and learning: to equip adults with literacy and basic skills, to provide continuing training and professional development, and to promote active citizenship through what is variously known as community, popular or liberal education. It also refers directly to the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and highlights that the "*aim of adult learning and education is to equip people with the necessary capabilities to exercise and realize their rights and take control of their destinies. It promotes personal and professional development, thereby supporting more active engagement by adults with their societies, communities and environments. It fosters sustainable and inclusive economic growth and decent work prospects of individuals. It is therefore a crucial tool in alleviating poverty, improving health and well-being and contributing to sustainable learning societies*" (UNESCO Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education, 2015).

Adult education is a rapidly growing field thus extended to many countries and presented in various forms (training, education in social, political, cultural essays) (Kokkos, 2008). In addition, it is considered as one of the main means of assimilating global socio-economic and cultural changes, and it contributes substantially to the specialization and upgrading of human resources. Its benefits include ensuring a decent standard of living, increasing opportunities for finding, preserving or changing work, improving self-confidence, changing attitudes and perceptions, strengthening social cohesion and involving citizens in social and political life, and in general the development and empowerment of the individual (UNESCO, 2016).

Growth is a process of economic and social transformation, a widening of human choices and concerns the ability to influence the processes that shape man's lives, to read, analyze and solve problems (Escrigas, 2008). " Learning areas", "learning towns" and "learning communities" are the foundation of growth and empowerment, as they contribute to the enrichment of human potential, promote lifelong personal development and social well-being (Noguchi et al., 2015; Kearns, 2015; Longworth, 2012).

In the literature there are different views of empowerment. The first is proposed by Robbins (2005), who defines the concept of empowerment as a participative management, delegation and the granting of power to lower level employees to make and enforce decisions. The second is provided by Brymar (1991), who regards it as a process of decentralizing decision-making in an organization, whereby managers give more autonomy to the front line employees. In addition, Ghosh (2013:95) defines empowerment as "*the process of shifting authority and responsibility to employees at a lower level in the organizational hierarchy*", while Armache (2013:19) describes it as "*a strategy and philosophy that enables employees to make decisions about their job*".

Thomas and Velthouse (1990), Carlzon (1987) define empowerment in terms of a cognitive motivational concept and they also refer to psychological empowerment. They perceive empowerment as a motivational construct: employees through empowerment get free from rigorous control by instructions, policies, and orders, and take responsibility for their own ideas, decisions and actions.

Emotional Intelligence: Concept, Dimensions and Models

The intelligence index has been a key element in both the academic and professional path of the individual since the mid-20th century. However, in recent years, emphasis has also been put on the concept of emotional intelligence, as emotion is considered to be a basic source of information, especially when a person is working in a group. Emotional intelligence describes those abilities that differ from cognitive, on the one hand, and complement it on the other. The roots of this distinction lie on the psychologist Thorndike (1920), who spoke of "social intelligence". Gardner (1983) then proposed a multi-intelligence model, emphasizing two types of intelligence: knowledge one's inner world and social adaptability. Bar-on, in 2000, distinguishes five dimensions of emotional intelligence: intrapersonal skill, interpersonal skill, adaptability, stress management and general mood (as cited in Brinia, 2008). According to Goleman (1998), emotional intelligence is the ability to know what one feels, to control their emotions, to be able to motivate themselves, to be creative and to understand what others feel. Orioli sees it as a kind of smart tactics, such as the ability to stay calm under pressure and create a climate of confidence. Sparow defines it as a practice of observing emotions, remembering them and editing them (as cited in Brinia, 2008). The most well-known model of emotional intelligence is Goleman's (1998), who initially considered that its basic characteristics are the

following skills: self-awareness, emotional management, self motivation, empathy, relationships, communication, personal style. Later, he developed a model that mainly focused on business and included the following skills: self - awareness, self - regulation, motivation, empathy, social skills. In collaboration with Boyatzis and Rhee, the theory of performance has been formulated, comprising four skills: self-awareness, self-regulation, social skills and relationships.

Self-perception, self-control and motivation are personal abilities, while empathy is a social capacity. In particular, self-perception refers to the person's ability to recognize their feelings and the effects that they carry. Its dimensions are consciousness, self-esteem and self-confidence. Self-control refers to the ability of an individual to manage their internal situation and its dimensions are reliability, conscientiousness, adaptability and innovation. Incitement concerns the emotional trends to achieve and to express commitment, initiative and optimism. Empathy concerns the person's ability to understand others, and the basic dimensions of it are the orientation to service, the development of others, the correct handling of diversity, the political perception, the recognition of the needs of a group and the strengthening of relationships. Finally, social skills relate to one's ability to influence, communicate, lead, influence, establish and manage change, resolve disagreements, cultivate bonds, work together and contribute to team cohesion.

METHODOLOGY

Research aim

The aim of this study is to explore through content analysis of the recent UNESCO's text "Third World Report on Adult Learning and Adult Education" (GRALE III) whether in its content there are references to skills related to the field of emotional intelligence.

Research questions

- Are there any references to skills of emotional intelligence in this text?

- If so, which categories of emotional intelligence are proposed?

- In what way are they captured?

- Is their drafting in line with the spirit of other international texts on contemporary skills?

Presentation of research material

Third Global Report on Adult Learning and Education, Social and Civic Life, (GRALE III, 2016)" refers to the implementation of the framework for action of Belem, which was adopted by 144 UNESCO member states at the 6th International Conference on Adult Learning and Adult Education in Brazil in 2009. This conference agreed on country actions to improve adult education and training policy, governance, funding, participation, inclusion, equality and quality. Since 1949, UNESCO has championed global dialogue and action on adult learning and education. Since then, five major conferences have been held.

This report, like the previous two, collects the latest developments in adult learning, highlights good policies and practices, encourages governments to undertake a process of evaluation and redefinition of their efforts based on the degree to which they achieve their goals. In addition, the findings of this report relate to the efforts of the global community to achieve the goals of Agenda 2030, a UN Program for Global Sustainability and Development.

Presentation of the methodological tool

The method of qualitative content analysis was used in order to analyze the material. The summary model, in particular, which was composed by Mayring in 1980, leads to the reduction of the material which is under research, aims at finding the significant messages of the text and produces a general idea of it. It consists of 10 steps. The first one refers to the choice of the material, the second to the circumstances under which the material was written, the third one to the typical characteristics of the material, the fourth to the direction of the analysis, the fifth to the research questions, the sixth to the unit of analysis, the seventh to the categories, the eighth to the choice of the 3 examples (summary, explanation, structure), the ninth to re-examining the material (according to the theory) and the tenth to the interpretation according to the research questions (Bonidis, 2004).

Moreover, this text was chosen since it is an official text of an International Organization which sets out guidelines for the policies that all Member States should follow in order to improve employees' empowerment. Since the 1960s, thousands of analyses have provided positive impact of adult education on individual, organization, society and economy.

Following the theoretical context and the dimensions of sentimental intelligence, four categories were made:

- Self-awareness, which includes emotional awareness, accurate assessment and self-confidence.
- Self-management, which includes self-control, propensity to achieve, initiative, credibility, conscientiousness, adaptability and optimism.
- Social awareness, which includes empathy, service orientation, operational awareness and political awareness.
- Managing interpersonal relationships, including leadership, communication, conflict management, facilitating change, influencing, enhancing the development of others, building ties, teamwork and collaboration.

FINDINGS

The content analysis of the above-mentioned text reveals that there are references to skills and gains of the adult education which are related to the field of emotional intelligence.

In particular, regarding the first category, the one of self awareness there are the following references: adult education helps learners develop confidence, self-esteem, self-efficacy and a sense of accomplishment (Shuller et al, 2004). Besides, it provides learners with useful insights to address contemporary ethical dilemmas (Zhang, 2008) and moral emotions, since it helps adults contend with emotions like greed and narcissistic aggression (Nussbaum, 2010). In addition, it is referred that adults develop their moral compass in order to fulfill their corporate and social responsibility (Hartman, 2013, Nonaka and Takeuchi, 2011).

Regarding the second category, the one of the self –management, it is referred that adults learn to face life's difficulties, solve problems, improve their mental health and well-being (Jenkins, 2011; Manninen et al, 2014). In addition, adults learn to generate hope and motivation.

Regarding the third category, the one of social awareness, there are the following references: adults learn to join in community, civic life and social forums, to offer emotional support to those around (Balatti et al, 2007), to connect emotionally with other people, to develop empathy, trust, identity and social engagement. In addition, adult education plays a key role in encouraging diversity, tolerance understood as the capacity for a fair, objective, permissive attitude toward beliefs and practices that differ from one's own (Fecksi et al, 2013; Fragoso et al, 2008). Besides, adult education is associated with increased political activity. Citizens gain political information, develop a feeling of empowerment and increase their levels of political participation (Hoskins et al, 2008).

Regarding the fourth category, the one of managing interpersonal relationships, there are the following references: adults develop better communication within families and communities, democratic values, peaceful coexistence and community solidarity. Workers learn to articulate their rights and collaborate, to participate in workplace decisions, learn about democratic participation and political regulation (Casey et al, 2010).

DISCUSSION

Education plays an important role in empowering employees. It is associated with development, well-being and prosperity on the condition that it provides the right skills. There is a strong demand for right skills, given that underemployment and unemployment are now affecting the lives of more and more people worldwide. Many people are either inactive or working somewhere below their level of skills and abilities. In addition, the nature of work and employment contracts are constantly changing and people feel more and more insecure and vulnerable. They need to be supported and equipped with various skills: mental, cognitive, emotional (Panagiotopoulos and Karanikola, 2017a).

According to the content analysis results of this text, there are significant references to all categories of emotional intelligence. Simultaneously, many researches supporting the great value of these skills are presented. Significant references are made on the categories of interpersonal management, self-management, self-awareness and social awareness.

The design and implementation of the framework of these skills is in line with the spirit of other official texts of other organizations, such as the European Commission. Similar study of Panagiotopoulos & karanikola (2017b) shows that there are also significant references on emotional skills in the European Commission's text "Communication: A new skills agenda for Europe". The analysis of this text shows that references are made mainly on the categories of interpersonal relations management and self-management.

IMPLICATION FOR RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

The importance of this study lies in the fact that it provides useful contemporary information on UNESCO's efforts to meet the contemporary demands of employment and employability.

These efforts can be compared to those of other international organizations, such as European Commission and UN, thus creating large databases. Data that will multiply and will be indicators of evaluation and comparison of relevant actions at a local, national or international level. However, in a future research, it would be useful to explore what will actually take place and how it will be implemented. Adult education is a way to provide the right skills, though there are still many problems to be solved. To begin with, governments and communities need to continue to care about and invest in adult education. In addition, there are many differences among countries regarding the definition of adult education and its overall aims. Besides, countries interpret international policies in a different way depending on their immediate needs, priorities, contexts, national policies and funding. According to the Belem Framework for Action, policies for adult education need to be comprehensive, inclusive, integrated within a lifelong and life-wide learning perspective. There is a strong demand for collaboration among the countries and the promotion of a dynamic adult education system. In addition the dimension of sentimental intelligence should be taken into account seriously, given that people need to learn to cooperate, to tolerate and respect each other. Emotional intelligence is learned, cultivated, taught (Buradas, 2002), so the international, national and policy areas of the workplace must emphasize the exploration, identification, evaluation and improvement of the elements of emotional intelligence.

CONCLUSION

The nature of employment contracts are constantly changing and more and more people feel insecure and vulnerable. They feel the need to be supported and equipped with the right mental, sentimental and cognitive skills. It is becoming obvious that acquiring only technical and specialized knowledge is not enough to solve problems and conflicts that inevitably emerge in a complex and multipurpose workplace. So emphasis is now put on emotion, which can lead to spectacular results, if it is appropriately recognized and exploited. International organizations put emphasis on these skills and their official texts seem to interact and complement each other. Besides, their basic target is human development and prosperity not only in the advanced countries but worldwide, since healthy employability is at risk everywhere.

Future Research

This UNESCO text highlights with research evidence the impact of adult education on individuals, on societies and on economy. Emphasis is placed on the adoption of corresponding policies, on the search for ways of financing, on the cohesion and co-operation of many actors and partners. The main axis of education is skills. Economic, cognitive, digital, social, ethical, emotional skills that will contribute to global development and sustainability. It would be useful in future other countries to be involved in surveys conducted by all international organizations. A comparative approach could then be made regarding their actions and their willingness to contribute to the implementation of the UN's seventeen goals of growth and prosperity. A comparison that will lead to the enrichment of international data and its subsequent dissemination. As policymakers look to the future, they will need to develop a deeper understanding of the interrelationships of different policy solutions, and how different mixes of policies can either exacerbate or redress skills mismatches and shortages and contribute to the development of healthy workplaces.

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