

The Postmodern Practice of Adult Education in the Developing World

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The purpose of this research is to illuminate the need for resources and efforts to be directed toward the education of adults in Lithuania as it transitions into the National Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The objectives of the research are the following:

- 1) to analyze the speed of change in information technology in the 21st Century and the relationship to the citizens of Lithuania;
- 2) to stress the importance of the education of adults in order to fully serve all citizens of Lithuania in accessing services in the future;
- 3) to offer suggestions of strategies in adult education that might provide educators and governmental officials a roadmap of change.

The method of the research is comparative analysis.

Introduction

1. On November 23, 2002, President George Bush visited Lithuania to welcome them into the family of nations that comprise the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). That day many Lithuanians celebrated in the old town of Vilnius, and other

parts of Lithuania, the validation of their independence from the decades of occupation and oppression. Lithuania, the cultural and intellectual jewel of the Baltics, was vindicated and rewarded in their struggle to become free. The acknowledgment of Lithuania's struggle and achievements by NATO can have an intoxicating affect on a society-especially for one whose journey has been fraught with a determination to corrupt their cultural identity, the pilfering of its intellectual capital, and whose citizens have endured decades of unimaginable human rights violations. However, just like the indulgence of an intoxicant-there is the morning after. For better or for worse, the "morning after" for Lithuania is the realization that acceptance into NATO rockets them in the 21st Century. This journey that Lithuania takes into the 21st Century presents a number of challenges to governmental officials, educators, and every citizen. With this statement, it is not the intent to present this situation in a pejorative light-it is a truly exciting time for every Lithuanian as they contemplate the future.

The Speed of Change

Forecasting the future in terms of technologies, and the applications thereof, has become a sophisticated field that many Fortune 500 companies make use of in strategic planning, and there are a number of professional publications dedicated to the field. One of these futurists, William Knoke (1996), founder and president of the Harvard Group, an investment banking firm that specializes in mergers and acquisitions in the field of cutting edge technologies, postulates that, "Taken one at a time, these incremental technologies seem innocent. They enhance our quality of life and entertain us. But collectively they have a much more powerful effect as vehicles that will carry us unwittingly to a changed world order. They are eroding the primacy of place, which in the end will lead to one of the greatest social upheavals the world has ever known." (p. 9). The "primacy of place" that Knoke refers to is the notion that, "All traditional economic, political, and social structures are built with place being the primary determinant" (p. 8). If these traditional economic, political, and social structures are to become placeless, what is the implication for Lithuania?

In order to focus this discussion we must first agree upon an operational definition of adult education. For purposes of this discussion, adult education is the proposition that learning is a lifelong process. The pedagogical methodology and experiences of primary and secondary learning remain with an individual as long as an individual has the physiological ability. That is to say, we remember our experiences in primary and secondary schools unless there is an incident that causes one to lose the capability. This can happen through violent trauma to the brain or through the insidious pathology of Alzheimer's disease or another similar but equally devastating disease.

However, for most individuals these early memories take us to our youth wherein our experience was shaped by the pedagogical model of education, (i.e. we all sat in neat rows of chairs and were tutored in all subjects by an individual teacher who exercised total and complete control). For purposes of this discussion, we must accept the proposition that our experiences in the pedagogical model are neither good nor bad – it is just the way it is and has been for essentially 500 years – however, things change. According to futurists like Knoke all of our humanly experiences, to include our educational experiences, which have traditional economic, political, and social aspects – will change. In the ten years since Lithuania's independence from the former Soviet Union to the recent invitation to join NATO, the geopolitical and economic landscape of our global village has changed.

Until this past year, Lithuania has conducted the most trade with Russia, and has been slowly rebounding from the 1998 Russian financial crisis. High unemployment, at 12,5% in 2001, and weak consumption have held back recovery. Part of this recovery can be attributed to the fact that trade has been increasingly oriented toward the West. Lithuania has gained membership in the World Trade Organization, and has moved ahead with plans to join the EU. Privatization of the large, state-owned utilities, particularly in the energy sector, is underway. (CIA World Factbook, 2002) However, it cannot be overstated that Lithuania is entering the 21st Century at hyper speed. The world will not be unemployed but rather redeployed, and there will be jobs for those offering needed talents and possessing extraordinary skill. Lithuania must prepare its citizenry for redeployment rather than unemployment. The pedagogical model, which tends to be controlling and lacks the conveyance of

respect that adult learners need, may not be the best model for retraining, reeducating, and preparing the Lithuanian work force for the 21st Century. The global economy makes this fact universal now; raw labor is no longer a limiting factor in the creation of wealth. (Knoke, p. 73).

Human knowledge now doubles every 10 years, the lessons learned from this knowledge explosion by the Western World arrive transparent at the doorstep of Lithuania as this knowledge is applied, changing the traditional economic, political, and social aspects of Lithuanian culture. To be “at work” or “at the office” will no longer describe the location but an activity. Where a person is located will no longer matter, as long as the work gets done. (Knoke, p. 181). What are the implications that Lithuania can expect, and what are strategies that Lithuania can use for efficient and effective use of these resources?

The Postmodern Practice of Adult Education

Postmodernism is a complicated term, or set of ideas, one that has only emerged as an area of academic study since the mid-1980s. Postmodernism is hard to define, because it is a concept that appears in a wide variety of disciplines or areas of study, including art, architecture, music, film, literature, sociology, communications, fashion, and technology. It's hard to locate it temporally or historically, because it's not clear exactly when postmodernism begins. (Klages, 2003). The idea that adult education has reached the postmodern stage is in no way a rejection of any of the previous work of adult education by the early pioneers in the field. What the phrase “the postmodern practice of adult education” suggests is that within the field of adult

education there is no stagnant growth in the practices. Precisely defined, the postmodern practice of adult education is the continuing education of adults through governmental and nongovernmental means commensurate with the level of technology and information they will need to exist as a fully productive member of society. For instance, Knowles' seminal work, *The Modern Practice of Adult Education*, gave adult education practitioners a road map to apply the practice of educating adults. The postmodern practice of adult education takes the work of Knowles and makes it applicable to the world today. Indeed, the postmodern practice of adult education builds upon the work of Knowles (1980) who stated, “The basic premise underlying this line of thought is that in a world of accelerated change learning must be a lifelong process” (p. 19). It is hard to believe that Malcolm Knowles would have anticipated the rapid growth in technology and our world's dependence on the commodity of information. However, Knowles did have some insight to leave his theory open ended with the statement, “We know that in the world of the future we must define the mission of education as to produce competent people-people who are able to apply their knowledge under changing conditions; and we know that the foundational competence all people must have is the competence to engage in lifelong self-directed learning.” (Knowles, 1980, p. 18–19). Indeed, the overall intelligence quotient of the world has increased with the emergence and dissemination of technology. President George Bush stated that no child would be left behind, and in the egalitarian pedagogical model that is a worthy goal. However, the postmodern practice of adult education suggests that no adult should be left behind no matter how technologically evolved we become as a global community. In the case of Lithuania, the

distinguished Head of the Department of Education for Vilnius University, Dr. Rimantas Želvys states, “We must admit that during the years of communist rule, education was a special focus of attention. As a result, the general level of education in Lithuania increased, and it was strictly observed that all children of school age should attend educational institutions....On the other hand, the reason for that was mainly ideological. Education was considered to be an extremely important means of political control and was oriented towards development of a ‘communist personality,’ loyal to the existing regime” (p. 57).

As organizations become more reliant on technology to deliver services and goods, adults must be able to access services through efforts aimed at educating adults of all ages. So, then this begs the question, what is the purpose of adult education? Beresnevičienė (1999) adds to the confusion by the suggestion, “All of this also implies that the so-called boundaries between pedagogy as ‘science of the education of the child’ and ‘andragogy’ as ‘science of the education of adults’ have become blurred” (p. 77). With the development of technologies comes an increased intellectual awareness, the fundamental purpose of adult education is to bring adults to a minimum level so as to access goods and services needed to sustain their way of life and capitalize on potentials. Beresnevičienė (1999) suggests that, “The function of (sic) democratic society depends on the understanding and the cooperation of the majority of the people, it is public responsibility to care for adult learning facilities everywhere and for everybody, in spite of his (or her) age, knowledge, level of education, state of health, etc.” (p. 83).

Therefore, the traditional liberal education may not be practical in this day in age as a model for educational delivery. Originally, the mantra for the pioneers of adult education was

for humanistic reasons: social justice and change. However, the primary reason for the nation state to invest time and resources in the field of adult education, in the postmodern context, is due to economic and social reasons. These economic and social reasons stem from the fact that human knowledge now doubles every 10 years, and that more scientific knowledge has been created in past decade than in all human history. In fact, computers, the primary source of global communication, are progressing at an unprecedented rate. As of 2002, we know that computer power is doubling every 18 months, and the power, availability, and capability of the internet is doubling every year (Borouh, 2002). Up to now, how many organizations, governmental and private, who need these adults as consumers and employees are taking the time to invest in them? If there is no substantial effort to recognize the disparity of education commensurate with the increase of technology needed to access services and goods, we will find ourselves in a very similar position in which pioneers of adult education started their inquiries.

Perhaps the most important factor in adapting to rapid change is the ability to embrace change and the new paradigms created by technology. This rapid adaptation is not achieved in a vacuum, but by anticipating and preparing for the impact of change. One might suggest that this adaptation to change is achieved by planning carefully and specifically for the future. Perhaps it is best summed up by Beresnevičienė (1999) who offers the following reconciling factor to this dilemma, “We hope, that only adult education can help for the country in transition to overcome these changing values to the more positive ones, to the trust for the future in the democratic, educated ‘lifelong learning’ society” (p. 81).

Strategies for Change

Any strategy for change must include social, political, and governmental support. The change for this strategy is simply to reassess, reeducate, and reemploy the citizenry of Lithuania, and provide a paradigm change for the 21st Century for those currently attending primary and secondary school. In my estimation, in terms of change strategies, the task for pedagogical educators is easier than for adult education practitioners. With regard to change strategies preparing Lithuania's youth for the 21st Century, the primary focus for the pedagogical practitioner involves the redesigning and development of curriculum focused towards technologies and those skill sets needed to access those technologies in the 21st Century.

With regard to reassessment, initially there must be some evaluation of what the future knowledge, skills, and abilities (skill sets) of the various new jobs that will be created due to a change in technology. Any evaluation must be spearheaded by educational experts, training experts, and human resources managers. Once the key skill sets are determined, educational experts must form an assessment tool to measure essential skills in workplace settings. In Canada, there is an assessment currently underway that is a test of workplace essential skills or TOWES. The purpose of TOWES is to assess the individual ability in the areas of textual reading, document use, and quantitative literacy. According to TOWES project administrators, these three key dimensions to literacy have been found to be closely linked to success in the workplace. The assessment tool resulting from the TOWES project is significantly different from other tests of literacy skills. It has sufficient items to discriminate across the full range of skill levels demanded by jobs in Canadian work-places. The test content is based on work-place do-

cuments and item responses mimic workplace tasks. The implementation of a similar project to TOWES by Lithuanian educators may provide the necessary answers as to reassess the skill sets necessary for the 21st Century.

With regard to reeducation and reemployment, harnessing and applying technology will assist Lithuania's transition into the 21st Century. For instance, distance education is bringing new meaning to the term exchange student, as the Internet allows students to take courses from foreign institutions without a passport or a costly plane ticket. Students can now attend institutions for traditional curricula or to retrain for specific skill sets required for reemployment in 21st Century Lithuania. According to Schank (2000), "Software is going to replace classes as we know them." (p. 1) As the director of the Institute for Learning Sciences at Northwestern University, Schank suggests that such courses will render traditional classes – and many professors – obsolete. Another suggestion from Schank is that the idea of one professor for one class is ancient in relation to the developments in technology, and in fact this new technology is going to give every student access to the best professors in the world. Of course in terms of secondary education, this presumes that none of the traditional subjects will be omitted and that those portions of those traditional subjects will be amended to allow for the new curriculum. Previously mentioned was an assumption that implementation of change strategies would be easier for the pedagogical practitioner than the adult education practitioner. While similar educational delivery challenges exist between adults and children, children present the educator with no preconceived notions of how the world exists. The pedagogical practitioner relays those natural, social, and political laws to primary and secondary students, and they are absorbed by the students as universal truths

building the paradigm in which they view the world. Any effort designed to reeducate or retrain the citizenry of Lithuania must consider the learner's motivation as a key component in any strategy or policy for development and/or implementation of adult education programs. According to the World Bank Adult Outreach Education (2000), "...the experience from programs such as adult literacy and non formal education programs in various countries suggests that a learner's motivation is key to a successful program, both in terms of the benefits for the learner and the overall impact on the program as a whole" (p. 2).

With regard to any new model of change or strategy of change Ellsworth (2000) states that, "The lessons of the classical change models are as valid today-and just as essential for the change agent to master-as they have ever been". Perhaps a single innovation, like a new technology or teaching philosophy, that is foreign to the current educational paradigm may be rejected, like an incompatible organ transplant is rejected by a living system. It appears that success depends on a coordinated "bundle" of innovations-generally affecting several groups of stakeholders-that results in a coherent system after implementation. The design, implementation, and management of a program will have a strong impact on a learner's initial and continued motivation. Therefore, a coherent system must be designed by educational practitioners before innovations are introduced in curricula, whether in the pedagogical or andragogical context. Andragogical learner's must be made aware of the benefits of education for improved quality of life.

Conclusions

While this paper only points out a few strategies to address issues of development, the fact remains that Lithuania must seek other means to determine the proper role of the state

in the intertwined issues of education, technology, development and economics. The proper role of the state with relation to the economy has been the center of political and economic debates for hundreds of years. Handlemen (2003) states, "Today, the collapse of the Soviet 'command economy' and the poor economic performance of the few remaining Communist nations (with the exception of those like China and Vietnam that have largely abandoned Marxist economics) have fairly well discredited the advocates of state-dominant economies" (p. 214). According to Handlemen, industrializing nations have generally pursued two alternative strategies for economic development: Import-Substituting Industrialization (ISI) and Export-Oriented Industrialization (EOI). Import-Substituting Industrialization helps developing countries reduce their dependency on manufactured imports by producing more of them at home. The problem with ISI is that over time it creates an absence of economic indicators that affect supply, demand, and market value. Although ISI has been pursued in many parts of the Third World, it has been most closely identified with Latin America by most economists. Additionally, while most Latin American countries now aspire to some form of EOI, that strategy is generally associated with East Asia. Ironically, another reason why East and Southeast Asian countries chose EOI is that their economic opportunities seemed more limited than Latin America's. Handlemen (2003) states, "Because of their smaller populations, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan (though not South Korea) saw ISI (which relied upon the domestic market) as less feasible for them than for larger countries like Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, and Colombia. In addition, with fewer agricultural goods or raw materials to export, East Asians turned a weakness into a strength by emphasizing manufactured exports" (p. 230).

The initial challenge is for leaders to acknowledge that there is an educational element in the transformation of Lithuania into the 21st Century. The reorganization of industries and policies after the collapse of the former Soviet Union has left Lithuania with many challenges. By harnessing technology, reforming educational practices (pedagogical and androgonogical), and determining the proper role of the state in the intertwined issues of education,

technology, development and economics, Lithuania will assume the role of a full and powerful member within the NATO alliance. Some would suggest that these challenges are somehow similar to the depressing years of occupation. However, I would suggest that these are some of the most exciting times for Lithuania as it blossoms into a sovereign democracy and respected member of the Northern Atlantic Treaty Organization.

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SUAUGUSIŲJŲ ŠVIETIMO PRAKTIKA POSTMODERNIAME PASAULYJE

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S a n t r a u k a

Straipsnyje nagrinėjama itin aktuali suaugusiųjų švietimo problema. Autorius kelia klausimus: kokia suaugusiųjų švietimo vieta šiandienėje edukologijoje ir kokią vaidmenį suaugusiųjų mokymasis visą gyvenimą atlieka postmoderniame pasaulyje. Vertinga tai, kad šiuo aspektu autorius pateikia skirtingų tyrėjų požiūrį.

Kartu panaudodamas lyginamosios analizės metodą iš dalies paliečia ir Lietuvą – jos geografinį ir socialinį-ekonominį kontekstą, turintį ryšį su dabarties ir ateities visuomene bei jos plėtros prognoze. Todėl čia pateikiamos autoriaus išvalgos gali būti naudingos plačiam skaitytojų ratui.

Gauta 2003 06 25

Priimta 2004 03 15