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THE CONSTITUTION OF ANDRAGOGY IN THE CZECH CONTEXT

ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on the evolution of attempts to integrate adult education in the Czech academia from approximately the mid-20th century onwards as well as on the various approaches to the concept of andragogy in that period. It applies the historic method mixed with elements of theoretical and comparative research. The paper starts by describing extended time periods in which the term andragogy was not yet in use. Then it sheds light on attempts to establish andragogy as an independent scientific discipline that seeks to cultivate adult individuals by means of (not exclusively) learning and education. The subsequent section pays attention to the recent period in which Czech andragogy lost some of its previous ambitions. Thus, the paper shows the main shifts in approaches to andragogy as well as the differences between the dominant approaches in the Czech and Western (European) contexts. A delayed mirroring of European trends is characteristic of the Czech development.

Keywords: *adult education, popular education, andragogy, integral andragogy, Czech Republic*

VZPOSTAVLJANJE ANDRAGOGIKE NA ČEŠKEM – POVZETEK

Članek se osredotoča na evolucijo poskusov integracije izobraževanja odraslih v visokošolsko izobraževanje na Češkem od približno sredine 20. stoletja naprej in na pristope k andragogiki v tem obdobju. Uporabljena je zgodovinska metoda z elementi teoretične in primerjalne raziskave. Članek na začetku obravnava daljša časovna obdobja, ko izraz andragogika še ni bil v rabi. Nato osvetljuje poskuse, da bi se andragogika vzpostavila kot neodvisna znanstvena disciplina, ki prek (ne zgolj) učenja in izobraževanja spodbuja razvoj odraslih ljudi. V nadaljevanju se osredotoča na nedavno zgodovino, ko je češka andragogika opustila nekaj svojih preteklih ambicij. Članek tako pokaže razvoj pristopov k andragogiki kot tudi razlike med pomembnejšimi pristopi znotraj češkega in zahodnega (evropskega) okvira. Za razvoj andragogike na Češkem je značilno zrcaljenje evropskih trendov s časovnim zamikom.

Ključne besede: *izobraževanje odraslih, ljudsko izobraževanje, andragogika, integralna andragogika, Češka*

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INTRODUCTION

Adult education and the study thereof are often said to be strongly determined by unique social and cultural contexts. In other words, whether in Europe or beyond, there is no single story of adult education (research) – there is a multitude of stories. The paper examines the Czech case over a time period from the end of WWII to the present. In addition to the broader social (and political) context, it captures especially the nature of the attempts at a scientific approach to adult education. The history of Czech society was relatively discontinuous over the time period studied, and the same applies to those attempts.

We primarily take a historical approach (e.g., Németh & Pöggeler, 2002), observing phenomena that are often idiographic but not isolated in the national territory. The international context of adult education was always at play, at least through links between adult education and societal change or through interactions in the domain of social sciences. The purpose of the paper is to describe the stages of the development of Czech academic approaches to conceptualising adult education. It focuses primarily on different ways of relating to the term andragogy while juxtaposing those to the European situation. It distinguishes between the following stages: the interwar period, the period between the end of WWII and the late 1960s, the two decades of the 1970s and 1980s, and finally the stage from 1990 to the present. The latter period receives the most attention. The paper describes and interprets transformations of the broader society, of adult education practice, and of academic conceptualisations of adult education.

AN OUTLINE OF EARLY HISTORY

Adult education as a practical field has a rich tradition in the Czech lands. The development of popular education efforts is characteristic of the modern society that started emerging in the early 19th century at the latest. Such efforts were not only a tool in the hands of emancipatory movements (national, working class, women's, etc.) but also the integral condition of their success. Thanks to government support, the era of popular education (or *Volksbildung*)¹ reached its peak during the first Czechoslovak Republic (1918–1938), and some segments continued to develop after the Second World War.

Nevertheless, the theoretical study of adult education as well as the efforts to professionalise the field underwent a divergent and much more complicated development. Although it was already in the late 19th century that academic scholars such as Otakar Hostinský, Tomáš Masaryk, or Gustav A. Lindner paid attention to the subject matter, most of the era's popular education or *Volksbildung* activities were characterised by spontaneity and lack of professionalism. The interwar period's increased government interest in and continuing institutionalisation of *Volksbildung* sparked debates about the educators'

1 The German term is used here because it is close to the Czech notion *lidovýchova*. *Lidovýchova* (*Volksbildung*) is a more specific term than *adult education* as it underlines the collective (social and cultural) aspects of education.

qualifications and the possible establishment of independent academic departments of *Volksbildung*. Moreover, in 1919, Czechoslovakia became one of the founding members of The World Association for Adult Education, and the head of state Tomáš Masaryk served as the Association's first president until 1927 (Trnka, 1970, p. 261). Yet it was still teachers and volunteers who continued to drive the *Volksbildung* practice.

Thus, in spite of the rich local tradition of popular education that dated back to the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and culminated in the context of the democratic Czechoslovak Republic, research efforts failed to match the field's actual development. Although a few quality scholarly works attempting to reflect the realities of *Volksbildung* were published in the interwar period (e.g., Bláha, 1927; Trnka, 1934), the field can be characterised as merely a discursive practice until the mid-20th century. Despite some notable previous efforts (which were nevertheless determined by their temporal political contexts), it is only in the 1960s that attempts to establish a scientific discipline studying diverse aspects of adult education can be observed (also given the relative short-lived existence of *Volksbildung* as an independent academic discipline).

THE ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE OF VOLKSBILDUNG

A new impetus for research on the realities of adult education came in the context of the post-WWII political development. Faced with the need to adequately respond to the current political problems in the temporary absence of a functioning legislature, the country's political parties agreed to authorise the President to rule by decree. Edvard Beneš, one of the founding fathers of independent Czechoslovakia and Masaryk's presidential successor, adopted a series of norms.

President Beneš also signed Decree No. 130/1945, *On Government Policy of Popular Education*. In addition to a general framework for providing popular education, the decree formulated the country's first set of specific binding educational and training requirements for popular educators. The instruction was to be organised by the Technical Schools of Popular Education and by the newly established academic departments of *Volksbildung* and health care. Following this provision, the newly established Faculty of Education at Charles University in Prague opened its *Volksbildung* Department in the 1947/48 academic year.

The department was led by philosopher and leading *Volksbildung* theoretician Tomáš Trnka, who was named the first Czech full professor in the discipline. Its four-year academic programme was built on broad scientific and philosophical foundations. As one of the country's first scholars, Trnka justified the specifics and differences of adult education as opposed to adolescent education. The underlying thesis was that *Volksbildung* should cover the cultivation of individuals in all contexts, including mental and physical aspects, based on the fundamental condition of the free will of the person to be educated (Trnka, 1970, p. 3). He also put together the first college textbook on adult education in the history of the Czech lands.

This concept contradicted the ascending ideology of the Communist Party. After a coup d'état in February 1948, the party assumed power in Czechoslovakia and Trnka was dismissed. The programme was gradually reduced in coverage and reoriented towards political and cultural propaganda. Moreover, following the dismissal of certain teachers, the department became unable to secure adequate instructional quality. It was shut down by the end of the 1949/50 academic year, which marked the demise of the entire discipline for decades to come (Gallo & Škoda, 1986, p. 240).

Despite its short lifespan, the department provided a strong impulse for the future development of adult education research. For example, members of the department launched a discussion on establishing a new discipline, so-called *adult pedagogy*.² Yet for decades, its evolution was affected by the era's "Marxist" perspective on pedagogy that reduced its target groups to children and adolescents.

Even in the absence of formal academic institutions studying the principles and conditions of adult education, there were alternative means available to conduct at least limited research in the field, namely in specific educational fields such as higher education pedagogy and military education.

It was not until the early 1960s that a new political situation allowed for the rehabilitation of adult education. The ideas of Comenius were used to successfully redefine pedagogy as a general theory of education. Throughout the Soviet bloc, a new perspective took root that communist education is a lifelong process and its target group includes people of all ages (Skalka, 1978a, p. 13). This led to the recognition of adult education as one of pedagogy's subdisciplines.

In contrast, attempts to legitimise andragogy were mostly rejected. Marxist pedagogy viewed the so-called andragogical concept as incorrect and outdated (Skalka, 1978b, pp. 73–75). Andragogy, especially with regard to its religious-ideological inspirations drawn from the works of Hanselmann and Pöggeler (the former often refers to Protestantism and the latter explicitly relies on Catholicism; both view education as a way of constantly perfecting people in order to bring them closer to God, who already is perfect), was labelled as a bourgeois idealist theory, one with "extremely alien philosophical and ideological foundations", and Marxist pedagogues were to take "a highly critical position to it and work to uncover its harmful ideas" (Gallo & Škoda, 1986, p. 228).

THE EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES OF ADULT EDUCATION AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Discussions about the quality and effectiveness of further education policy were sparked by factors such as economic problems, labour force restructuring, a new emphasis on developing the skills of the working class, technological development, and changing

² *Adult pedagogy* is a literal translation of the Czech *pedagogika dospělých*. The official translation from these times was more general – *adult education*.

political contexts. The entire period after the coup of 1948 was marked by the need to quickly generate a sufficient number of qualified and ideologically screened workers to assume management positions, as well as to expand the manufacturing workforce.

The educational system responded to that need by launching special educational programmes targeted at employees as early as in the 1948/49 academic year. As a result, Czechoslovakia's adult education system consisted of three segments: school-based, non-formal, and work-based adult education. The educational practice developed mainly in quantitative terms, with consistently stagnating educational quality, as pointed out by later scholars. This situation was caused by an inadequate learning environment, by the lack of research on the principles and methods of adult pedagogy, and by the educators' weak professional backgrounds (Šerák, 2016, pp. 62–63).

In 1961, these pitfalls motivated the policy makers to include adult education in the *Government Plan of Science and Research Activities*. The centrally coordinated subsidy scheme determined the research areas eligible for government funding, with 5-year plans setting various thematic priorities (Váňa, 1961, pp. 1–2). For adult education, the *Plan* declared it necessary to study new forms and methods, develop the professional skills of adult educators, generate a theoretical framework for the emerging discipline of adult pedagogy, and build a foundation for further applied research in the different areas (Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy [FF UK], 1974, p. 4). Initially, most attention was paid to the basic theoretical background (the subject matter of adult pedagogy and its relation to general pedagogy) and to comparative studies (international and historical). Subsequently, the *Plan* tackled specific issues of adult education such as ways to modernise the educational process, adult education didactics, educational effectiveness, adult education psychology, etc.

Whereas non-formal adult education was the primary research focus in 1961–66, later five-year plans also reflected on school- and work-based education while increasingly integrating theoretical and methodological topics (Skalka, 1978b, p. 81). For the first time, the topics for basic research covered comprehensive theoretical work on the education of older adults and the elderly, thus laying the foundation for the future development of Czechoslovak gerontagogy (Šerák, 2016, p. 66).

The coordination of the research effort was entrusted to psychologist and educator František Hyhlík, head of the Pedagogy and Psychology Department of the newly established Institute of Popular Education and Journalism at Charles University. The effective implementation of the research effort had been hampered by the previous absence of an umbrella research institution with an exclusive focus on adult education. In spite of that, research implementation was consistently one of the *Government Plan's* best organised and coordinated priority areas. As stated in the peer review of a priority area implementation report in 1974, “in our country these days, adult pedagogy is radically more successful than traditional pedagogy” (Kozel, 1974, pp. 139–140).

The outputs of the above priority areas include, for example: a set of studies gradually published by the Faculty of Arts, Charles University; the bulletin *Výchova a vzdělávání*

dospělých (*Adult Education*) presenting work-in-progress on an encyclopaedia of adult pedagogy or special comparative studies on adult pedagogy abroad; and above all, a series of synthetic works including some pioneering college textbooks and journal articles (FF UK, 1974, p. 101).

As a fundamental, albeit previously unintended, effect of these research activities, the concentration of scholars of diverse institutional and disciplinary backgrounds generated a synergy stimulating the development of not only adult pedagogy as a rehabilitated scientific discipline but subsequently also a new type of academic programme based on it, *Výchova a vzdělávání dospělých* (*Adult Education*; Škoda, 1996, p. 133). Members of the above research team became the core staff members of the newly established academic departments of adult education in Prague (Charles University), Olomouc (Palacký University), Bratislava (Comenius University), and Prešov (Pavol Jozef Šafárik University).

Previously, from the early 1960s, adult education issues had been tackled by programmes of popular education or higher education pedagogy at the faculties of philosophy or education of the above universities. Subsequent development went in the direction of the integrated study of various dimensions of adult education. This resulted in the gradual formation of academic programmes concerned exclusively with comprehensive aspects of adult education. However, the programmes were not labelled uniformly: depending on regional and institutional specifics, the names Popular Education, Adult Pedagogy, or Adult Education were used. It was under the latter name that the field was included on the official list of the subdisciplines of pedagogy in 1967 (Škoda, 1996, p. 134), yet it took another seven years to implement a Ministry of Education plan and develop a somewhat uniform concept of the programme.

During that time, the foundations of two competing streams of andragogical thought were laid that would fully manifest themselves in the new social context after the 1989 revolution. They were based in the different orientations of the respective academic institutions.

From 1962, the discipline's development was strongly driven by the Department of Pedagogy and Psychology, Institute of Popular Education and Journalism, Charles University in Prague (formerly Institute of Popular Education and Journalism), where one of the new adult education programmes was launched. In 1972, the department was transformed into the Department of Adult Education and transferred to the Faculty of Arts, Charles University, where it has been based ever since (now under the name Department of Adult Education and Personnel Management). From its inception, the department was characterised by a more reduced and concentrated concept of adult pedagogy/andragogy, often referred to as the education-oriented concept. Here, andragogy is viewed as a "scientific discipline and academic programme focusing on all aspects of adult education and learning" (Beneš, 2014, p. 11), i.e. studying the subject matter adult education in all its forms, contexts, and environments (Kopecký, 2013, p. 34), not only at the institutional and intentional levels but also as part of everyday life (the realms of work, citizenship, self-actualisation, etc.). While this concept is now labelled "andragogy", it is in fact closer

to the contemporary European mainstream research on adult learning and education. The latter is defined by its field as the core of its identity, but does not strive for its own methodology, among other things (see Fejes et al., 2022, p. 121). Given this foundation and its primary focus on the content and organisational/methodological aspects of adult education, the concept is somewhat related to pedagogical paradigms and partly follows the same trajectory as pedagogy did in the past on its way from philosophy to social science.

The alternative concept of adult education studies is represented by the Pedagogy Department of the Faculty of Arts, Palacký University Olomouc, and its dual-major programme of Sociology/Adult Education launched in the 1969/70 academic year (Klega, 1981, p. 9). From its very beginning, the programme accentuated sociological perspectives on adult education (focusing e.g. on the context of social change, the social functions of adult education, or sociological theory). However, it was not until the 1975/76 academic year that Palacký University stabilised its Adult Education programme, and the eponymous new department was only separated from the Pedagogy Department in 1979 (Klega, 1981, p. 9).

ADULT PEDAGOGY IN THE 1970S AND 1980S

The evolution of the theory and practice of adult education outlined above was negatively affected by the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia. Referred to as the Normalisation, the renewed ideological pressure of the following two decades resulted in the shutting down of many academic institutions and dismissals of countless professionals, who often had to find work in the manufacturing sector. Research in some areas was severely restricted or outright discontinued. Adult education programmes became fundamentally indoctrinated and deformed, a fact that almost resulted in their dissolution after the 1989 revolution (see below).

In spite of the above, the 1970s and 1980s were marked by a quantitative growth of academic publications on selected areas of adult education. In 1968, the European Centre for Leisure and Education was established in Prague as a joint venture of UNESCO and the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. It was tasked with coordinating and documenting research in the field of leisure with special respect to its educational aspects. Its research reports were published in the periodical *Bulletin for Sociology of Leisure, Education and Culture*.

At the Czech Ministry of Education, detailed review articles on the outcomes of ministerial research activities were published by the Adult Education Commission in its bulletins. Government education policy was increasingly shaped by research evidence on the changing status and significance of the field (Škoda, 1985, p. 50). Adult education was gradually incorporated into government policy, as evidenced by a number of policy documents. It became the dominant perspective that lifelong education is important for the development of a “socialist society” and adult education forms an integral part of the country’s educational system. There were increasing calls for creating the conditions for workforce mobility and retraining in the context of a changing work environment, technological development, and skills obsolescence.

These strategies immediately shaped the nature of adult education research as well as the concept of academic programmes in the field. In 1976, expert committees of Czech and Slovak state ministries of education recommended more differentiated cultivation of college-educated professionals in line with policy documents and changing educational realities. As a result, the academic programmes of Popular Education were discontinued while two new programmes were created to better reflect the current state of adult education: *theory of culture* for non-formal adult education (categorised as an arts discipline) and *adult education* for school- and work-based adult education (categorised as a pedagogical discipline; Gallo, 1986, p. 8).

Consistent political pressure was applied on instruction in both types of programmes. The activities of academic departments were deformed by increasing demand for providing college instruction to screened cadres from the different ministries and priority organisations. This was mostly the case of part-time education; the domain of work-based education was generally less ideologised, with businesses striving to secure practically oriented instruction for their employees. In contrast, ideological deformation affected the domains of non-formal and civic education the most (Vymazal, 2002, pp. 100–101).

The above thesis, namely that vocational education and training were relatively less ideologised than other segments of adult education, is also supported by an abundance of outputs produced by a network of company-based educational institutions, such as guidelines, research studies, and policies. These institutions date back to the 1950s, when many were formed with a view to educating qualified workers in line with industry demands, all in the context of the post-war economic reconstruction, technological development, a changing workforce structure, and the need to develop the skills of the emerging working class.

A later piece of legislation codified two types of company-based providers of vocational education (Institutes) and training (Technical Schools). A subsequent government decree provided for a third type, namely Company-Based Work Schools. Adult education was primarily valued for its effects on qualifications, integration, and humanisation. Emphasis was placed on self-teaching instead of group instruction. The 1980s saw the experimental introduction of vocational self-teaching centres, i.e. skills-oriented educational institutions that individualised the learning process by providing a repertoire of learning aids (professional literature, tape recordings, educational motion pictures, computers, etc.; see Livečka, 1984, pp. 141–143).

The abundance of course materials disseminated demonstrates that the practice was highly up-to-date and compatible with international evidence, as exemplified by ICT-supported instruction, programmed learning, effective self-directed learning, etc. Ministerial, industry-wide and company-based institutes produced numerous scholarly publications; the above-mentioned government scheme of basic research released periodical bulletins for its different priority areas; and there were publications by the Socialist Academy of the Czech Socialist Republic (a leading non-formal adult education institution at the time);

etc. The country's labour union federation supported activities to develop workers' skills and implement the decisions of political leadership, as well as education in the aesthetic, cultural, sports, and other domains (Neužil, 1975, pp. 41–45).

The communist regime entered a slow liberalisation process in the mid-1980s. There were efforts to reform the centrally planned economy and make society more democratic. This was reflected in the intensification of diverse educational activities. To bring down the curtain on the normalisation era, the international conference *Current Priorities in Adult Education* was held under the auspices of the Prague academic department in April 1989. The participation of scholars from the USA, Canada, the UK, Austria, Germany, Sweden, and Finland foreshadowed the transformations to come.

THE 1990S AS A TURN AND AN ATTEMPTED RETURN – BUT WHERE?

Associated with radical changes in politics, the economy, and beyond, the year 1989 also proved to be a turning point in education and research. After all, it was college students who played a decisive role at the outset of the Velvet Revolution.

Given their disproportionate ideological deformation, the social sciences and humanities (e.g. philosophy, sociology) were affected even more fundamentally than other disciplines (engineering). The academic departments of adult education were no exception among the social sciences.

The narrative of return was typical of the early 1990s developments. It was employed both at the rhetoric level (most emblematically in the notion of returning to Europe with its democracy and prosperity) and at the level of everyday life, for example, when the academics who had been dismissed during the normalisation era rejoined their former teams.

Underlying the narrative was a mix of rationales that can be subsumed under Habermas' term rectifying (*nachholende*) revolution (according to Jeffries, 2022, p. 376): to overcome the discredited heritage of ideological leadership, to correct some of the injustices suffered by the previously discriminated academics, to increase the quality of work, or to catch up with the international state of the art. In other words, there was a collective attempt to overcome the baggage of the past and return to a seemingly natural trajectory.

Likely also at play was a sense of moral blame, albeit not necessarily one targeted at specific people. To blame was rather the discipline of adult education and its problematic close association with the old regime, and some were suggesting to outright remove the discredited discipline from universities. Others hoped for a radical turn to re-legitimise adult education and preserve the field by providing it with a new meaning and impetus for development. Thus the concept of *andragogy* was introduced as the embodiment of a symbolic turn in both strategy and content. It was Vladimír Jochmann who introduced the concept in the Czech context and gathered support for it (Šimek, 2004, p. 145).

However, the story of a rectifying revolution in Czech andragogy was marked by at least two paradoxes. First, there is a disconnect between, on the one hand, the value-based

concepts of andragogy presented by Pöggeler, Hanselmann, or Ten Have, and on the other hand, the concept that gained traction in Czechoslovakia and its successor country, the Czech Republic. The Western European approaches of the 1950s to 1970s that had helped introduce andragogy in the academia were characterised by relatively strong normative orientations (Loeng, 2010, pp. 68–72, 76). The main founding fathers of post-WWII Western European andragogy formulated its goals not only as a science, a research orientation, or a study programme, but also more practically and normatively, treating andragogy as a field supporting adults and their concrete value orientations. Pöggeler (1971) emphasised the religious role of adult education, he and Hanselmann (Škoda, 1996, p. 94) highlighted the need to deal with the key questions of the meaning of human life and rejected the field's religious and political neutrality, and Hanselmann even considered religious faith to be an important trait of an adult educator (Matulčík, 2004, p. 84). In contrast, the worldview that shaped Ten Have's approach to andragogy was not religious but radically political and, more specifically, social democratic (Matulčík, 2004, p. 98).

In the post-revolutionary Czech society, political and economic liberalism or neoliberalism, as a set of assumptions about a free individual and his/her task to adapt to societal demands while maximising his/her utility, became the mainstream perspective on the individual and society. The Czech version of andragogy was no exception, given the almost complete absence of social ethics in its foundation. The 1990s were marked by andragogy's pragmatic orientation towards the domain of work and human resources development. This (seemingly) apolitical strategy was strongly driven by the demands of a changing labour market.

Even discussions of non-vocational adult education were marked by the notion of a universal, non-contextualised individual. While focus on the microsocial level was the norm, social/societal developments were mentioned rarely and only as a distant framework providing new stimuli for education, one that does not need to be problematised. Therefore, the first paradox observed can be referred to as the paradox of values.

The second paradox can be called the paradox of obsolescence. The nationwide effort to catch up with the West, which was generally seen as the role model, motivated Czech andragogy to adopt approaches that had been more or less abandoned at the time. Here, perhaps more poignantly than Heraclitus' saying that "you cannot step into the same river twice" is Cratylus' reply "nor once either" – because the river changes in the time between assuming one's intent and acting on it. Metaphors aside, the Czech effort to introduce andragogy as an umbrella concept for evidence-based adult education was inspired by ambitions that eventually proved to be too bold and thus unrealistic. This was not due to the field's focus on the specifics of adult individuals³ but rather to the goal of building a "strong" version of an independent scientific discipline.

3 After 1989, the Czech scholarly community departed from the previous era's belief that adults can be "brought up" in terms of direct formation of character and attitudes, which clearly corresponds with the beliefs of Pöggeler and indirectly also Knowles.

By “strong” we refer not only to the discipline’s intended comprehensive coverage of adult education but also to its ambition of building a system of knowledge underlying various activities to effectively guide an adult individual through life and support all aspects of his/her development (typically Hanselmann and Ten Have). Such knowledge should serve not only education but also counselling and some elements of therapy, social work, and intervention (Matulčík, 2004, p. 118). The ambition for andragogy to guide the adult through his/her life was not only bold but, above all, beyond the reach of the social sciences. Therefore, the contemporary field sees the *research* of adult *learning* as an interdisciplinary and pluralistic field (Fejes & Nicoll, 2013; Fejes & Nylander, 2019).

However critical one can be of the “strong” notion of andragogy as an independent discipline, it still a source of ideas of interest to today’s scholars. Above all, adult education was viewed as deserving a systematic approach – worth of observation in all its forms as a diversified but at the same time distinct phenomenon of social relevance. To understand it requires more than an eclectic erudition relying here on sociology, there on psychology, anthropology, or economics. In other words, one needs long-term reflection on adult education as a whole.

ON THE WAY TO ANDRAGOGY AND BEYOND (FROM 1990 TO THE PRESENT)

In the 1990s and 2000s, it was the Department of Sociology and Andragogy at Palacký University that led the way of andragogy as a discipline and simultaneously a set of interventions. This was the underlying idea of the concept of *integral andragogy*, which became the long-term foundation of the Department’s teaching and research activities and also inspired some other universities, especially in Slovakia. Informed by the works of German-language authors (mainly Hanselmann), Ten Have, and also Polish authors like Radlińska, Wroczyński or Turos, it was the above-mentioned Vladimír Jochmann who elaborated the concept (Šimek & Dopita, 2018, pp. 247–248).

The keyword *integral* referred to multiple intentions, namely to include and integrate four main areas: adult education, personnel management, social work, and cultural work (Šimek, 2004, p. 145). The ambition was to go beyond a ‘mere’ scientific discipline and provide tools for the mobilisation and management of human resources. Integral andragogy was presented as a theory and practice of leadership in the broadest sense of the term, as a science of the adult individual’s adaptation to social institutions in its educative dimension (Jochmann, 1992, p. 21). Additional emphasis was placed on the individual’s social ties and ability to adapt to social change, with sociology providing an important basis of the concept. Although the adult individual is the focus of integral andragogy, attention is also paid to other stages of the lifecycle and the ways to develop one’s ability to cope with difficult situations at different ages (Šimek, 2004, pp. 146–149).

Integral andragogy was not embraced by Charles University as the other centre of 1990s Czech andragogy, whose perspective was more conventional in a sense (see above). At the same time, both institutions emphasised andragogy as an independent discipline, with

clear boundaries dividing it from pedagogy and other fields, one capable of formulating its own original theories and methodology.

And precisely the discipline's high ambition may have been one of the reasons why the effort to legitimise Czech andragogy as a full-fledged independent discipline became its central theme in the 1990s. This was at least partly inevitable, as further use of older Czech publications was precluded by their severe limitations. More specifically, it was necessary to revisit the fundamental questions of the area we refer to as general andragogy or andragogical theory: how adults are defined, where and why they get their education, or what kind of contents, forms, and benefits to adult education there are. Additional priority areas included didactics in adult education and education policy at the level of national government and international organisations, with their concepts of lifelong education and learning.⁴

The efforts in these directions were not matched by a significant volume of empirical research. This brings us to another paradox: Czech andragogy as a scientific discipline was founded predominantly in a top-down manner: there was a general argument about its tasks and instruments but also a persistent deficit of empirical research on concrete forms of adult learning and education.

Among other factors, the deficit was caused by the academic departments' primary instructional orientation. A relatively strong influx of andragogy students proved to be an ambiguous factor for academic programmes. On the one hand, the general public showed strong interest in the field and viewed it as promising; on the other hand, the ensuing radical massification of teaching made it difficult to uphold the classic Humboldtian ideal of unity in teaching and research. Opportunities for more ambitious research goals were further undercut by the composition of academic departments, which were typically understaffed and partly recruited among adult education practitioners oriented towards "knowledge-how" rather than "knowledge-that". An entire study would be needed to encompass the debate on the massification of Czech college education in relation to andragogy (for more details, see Poláchová Vašátková & Dopita, 2019).

The popular demand for academic programmes in adult education had another important effect. It helped spark the formerly pedagogically oriented departments' interest in adding adult education and andragogy to their portfolios. The fact that the formerly institution-centred academic and public debate on education shifted towards lifelong learning worked in the same direction.

The development of empirical (mostly quantitative) research in adult education was boosted by new academic departments entering the stage (especially the Masaryk University in

4 To better characterise the founding era of Czech andragogy, a brief note on the way international influences were mediated by specific leaders is necessary. Franz Pöggeler made repeated guest appearances in Prague; Walter Leirman (Leuven University) was also actively interested in the Czech discipline; Jindra Kulich (Vancouver University), a Czech expatriate based in Canada, taught at several universities (especially in Olomouc); and the 1990s saw the return of Milan Beneš (Freie Universität Berlin), a long-term German expatriate of the younger generation.

Brno) but also by factors like internationalisation, generational changes in academic staff, or the political demand for expertise.

In the middle of the last decade, then, it could be observed that Czech adult learning research had been able to encompass most of the key topics of European research in the field, as represented by the different European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA) Networks (Dopita, 2015, pp. 28–29). Yet questions about the extent, quality, and impact of that research remain unanswered (Poláchová Vašátková & Dopita, 2017).

Adult education programmes can be studied at five public universities in the Czech Republic. All the programmes have the word andragogy in their titles. At the Charles University (Prague), there are programmes integrating andragogy with personnel management (Faculty of Arts, bachelor's degree (BA) and master's degree (MA) levels) and andragogy with educational management (Faculty of Education, MA level). At the Palacký University (Olomouc, Faculty of Arts), andragogy can be studied with an orientation towards human resource development or as a dual-major programme with sociology (at the BA level) or as single-major programmes (at the MA and Ph.D. levels). The Masaryk University (Brno) offers MA and Ph.D. programmes at its Faculty of Arts. A BA programme is organised by the University of Ostrava (Faculty of Education). Until recently, the Tomáš Baťa University in Zlín offered a BA programme in personnel management in NGOs.

All in all, there is a clear long-term tendency in the Czech context to use the concept of andragogy in increasingly habitual ways, out of inertia. To put it in more flattering terms, andragogy has become a traditional concept. The general debate on the discipline's possibilities and position within the social sciences has been fading. Instead of debating the mission of a specific discipline as a whole, its theories, and more importantly, instead of producing a set of tools to manage adult education in its broad sense, increasing attention has been paid to particular topics and issues of adult learning and related phenomena.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The paper has identified and described the main stages of the development of Czech adult education practice and the different academic approaches to adult education from the end of the Second World War to the present. Czech academia consistently responded to existing social conditions and forms of adult education practice, and it also debated alternative conceptualisations of adult education while reflecting international debate.

The Interwar period before the emergence of college programmes in adult education was characterised by an advanced adult education practice and the intermittent attention of intellectuals. The post-WWII period only saw short-term efforts to develop adult education research and it was not until the 1960s that such efforts strengthened. In a discontinuous development, the 1970s and 1980s stage was marked by disparate advances in adult education practice. In view of the state of the academia, among other things, only partial achievements were made in the context of overall stagnation. The social transformation of

the late 20th century brought new hope. The stage of the last three decades started with a turn to andragogy as an ambitious but inconsistent project. Czech authors identified with the concept to effect a symbolic and thematic turn while bolstering it (selectively) with Western inspirations. Their high ambition to form both an independent discipline and a set of techniques to shape the practice proved unrealistic and, as a result, in the Czech context, the concept of *andragogy* has increasingly become a synonym of all that is represented by the international term *adult learning and education*. This is bringing the field – again paradoxically – to meeting the 1990s goal of forming a standard social scientific discipline. The concept of andragogy can be expected to continue to be used for some time, probably in the long term. So far, there has been no attempt to argue for replacing it, let alone to foster a debate on such a proposal. The question is to what extent the concept of andragogy has become a “shell institution”, one whose actual content only partially meets the original expectations of the 1990s. However, the current situation is a result of a silent, relatively long and perhaps even natural evolution, rather than a kind of revolution. We have thus witnessed a long-expected convergence (actual, rather than merely terminological) between Czech and international research based on their orientation toward specific areas of the diverse and dynamic realities of adult learning and education. In other words, the real content of the term andragogy in the contemporary Czech context is consistent with what the global mainstream refers to as adult learning and education.

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