

ADULT EDUCATION - NEEDS AND REALITY

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Abstract

Adult education is one of the important segments in a society, because through the opportunities and programs it offers, it allows the adult population that has not completed primary and secondary education (which in Republic of North Macedonia is compulsory by Law) to complete its education, which will facilitate the process of integration into social living, the process of seeking and finding job, or in short will enable greater competitiveness in the labor market. At the moment we are facing a situation in which adults do not have a suitable institution in which to complete their education, which shortens their opportunities to look for a job or start their own company. Pending the institutionalization of the Law on Adult Education, which is still in the parliamentary procedure, non-formal education is the only option for adult education. This paper highlights the aspects of adult education, the needs and the real picture obtained from the empirical research of Roma adults in Bitola, made as part of the Project Roma ABC for the Western Balkans.

Keywords: adult education, functional illiteracy, non-formal education, labor market competitiveness, education

1. Introduction

The educational process, according to international law (Convention on the Rights of the Child, 17 April 2001) is "a process that enables the full development of every individual and his or her participation in social life." This means that children have the right to education, but also all persons regardless of their age, who want to complete their educational cycle. This process begins in the early years when children acquire basic competencies and skills, but there are still adults in the world who for some reason have failed to complete their education. This imposes the need for discussion, research and implementation of adult education in the education system in each country. Adult education is an integral part of the right to education and lifelong learning and encompasses "all forms of education and learning that aim to ensure the active participation of all adults in the environment in which they live. Indicates the entire learning process, both formally and informally, with individuals considered by adults in the society in which they live developing and enriching their ability to live and work, both in their own interests and in the interests of their communities. (Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education, 2015). The most common reasons for the inclusion of adults in education are completing their primary and / or secondary education, developing their basic mathematical and language skills, developing professional skills as a result of changes in the labor market, continuing their personal development and full integration and participation in social life. Adult education also makes it easier to deal with functional illiteracy in adults, which is another reason for the actualization of this issue in our country.

2. Adult education activities

It is estimated that there are 758 million 'illiterate' adults across the globe. However, this figure is based on a definition of literacy which delineates 'literate' and 'illiterate' based on the 'ability to read and write, with understanding, a short, simple statement about one's everyday life'. Based on a functional definition of literacy, it is likely that the true figure is closer to 1.5 billion. While literacy is not explicitly recognized as part of the right to education, it is integral to achieving the right to education. To this end, international human rights law obligates states to eliminate illiteracy. (Fact Sheet No.2 (Rev.1), The International Bill of Human Rights).

Starting from this need, and the need we have, which refers to dealing with and reducing the level of functional literacy, the authors of the paper, as part of the project activities conducted

research to detect the needs of the target group. It was identified on the territory of the municipality of Bitola and referred to adult Roma who face incomplete education and functional illiteracy. The research was conducted on a sample of 50 respondents through a survey questionnaire to identify the level of skills and needs for education. Also, before entering the test phase (trainings), their knowledge was assessed and the level of skills and competencies they have was determined. At the end of the project, a control assessment was made, which noticed changes in the acquired skills and transition to a higher level of knowledge.

The survey conducted a detailed analysis of Roma who were involved in the training and who need additional education. It was also revealed what their interests are and what they should pay attention to.

Figure no.1
Needs for further education

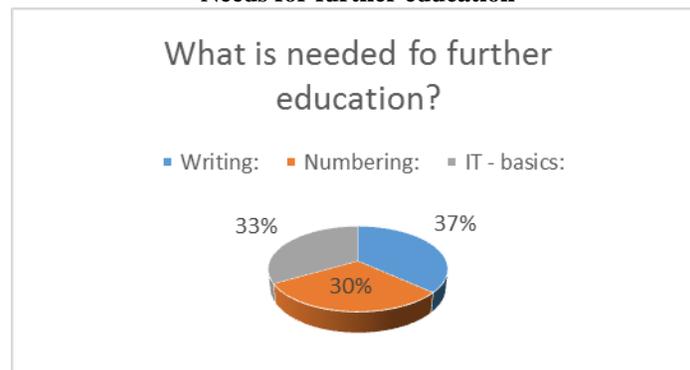


Figure no.1 show that Roma essentially need to supplement their education with writing, Nimeric skills and IT skills

Figure no.2
Writing skills

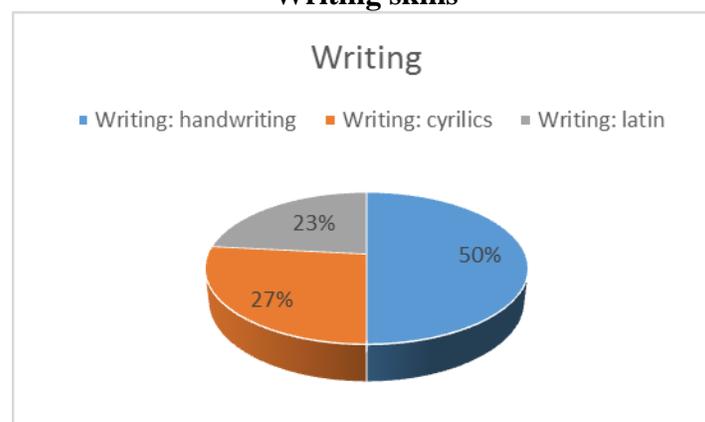


Figure no.3
Numeric operation

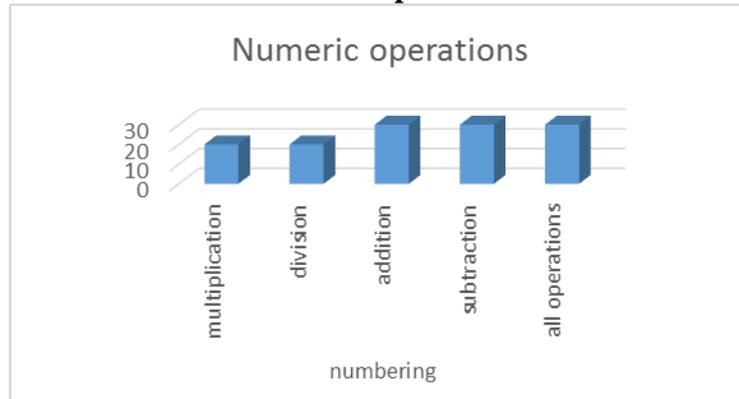
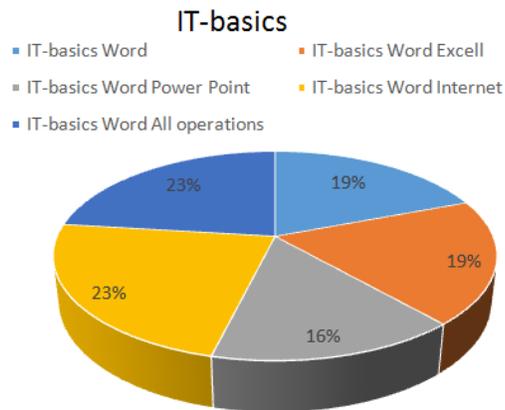
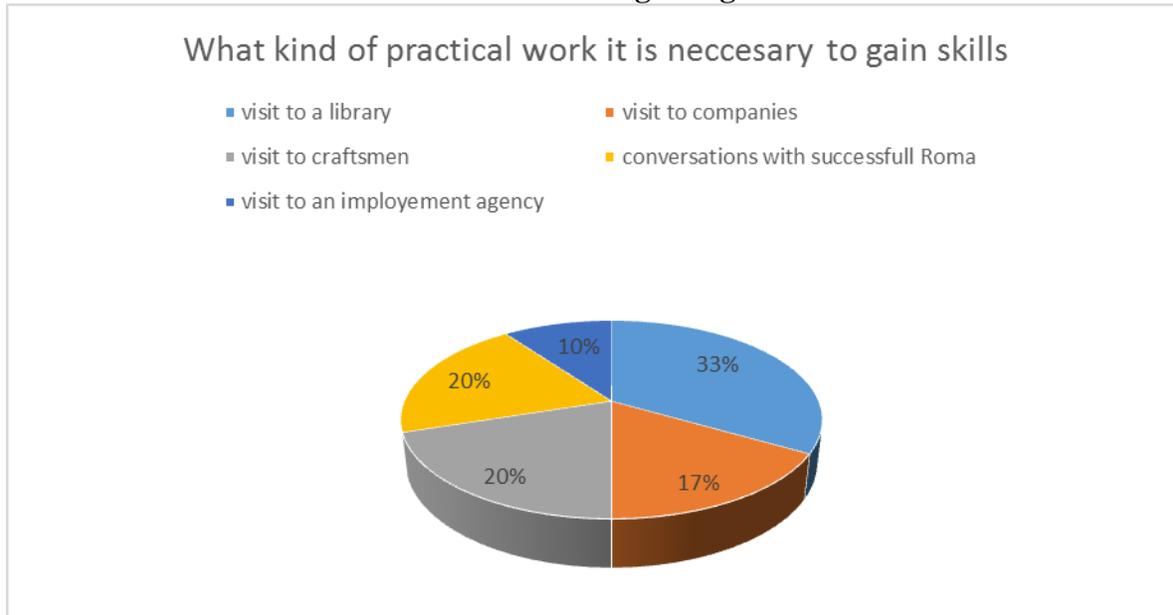


Figure no.4
Numeric IT skills



The figures no. 2,3,4 show which skills the Roma need. From writing they want to learn to write Cyrillic and Latin completely as well as improve their reading, further from mathematical operations they are multiplication, division, addition and subtraction, while from IT skills they work in Word, Excel and Power Point.

Figures no. 5
Practical work for gaining skills



When we look at the answers to this question shown on the figures no. 5, we can see that the Roma are most interested in practical skills and that is why, for their needs, we will implement more practical teaching, where through visits they will be able to learn the skills, but also to master the terminology they need to perform a given job or task. In constant communication with Roma people who are potential participants in the course with whom we had the opportunity to talk, as a supplement it was that they most want to be literate to learn to read and write but also need practical skills to be able to find work.

Figure no. 6
Additional knowledge

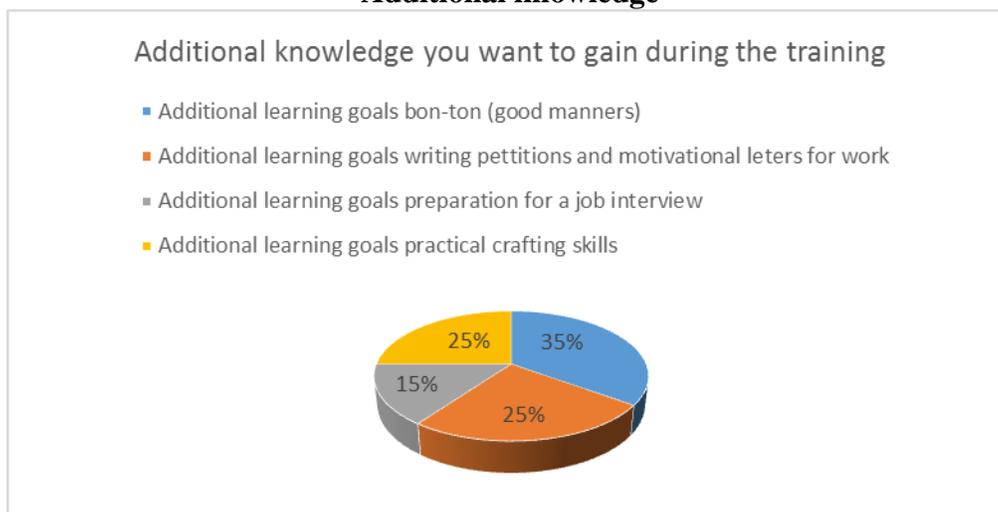


Figure no. 6 detects exactly those skills and exercises that are most needed by the Roma in our country and what should be most focused on their interest, in addition to linguistic and mathematical literacy.

Based on the conducted survey, the needs of the participants were detected and based on these data, exercises for realization of the trainings were developed.

3. Informal education- training for adults

Working together on the project and realizing the activities, the authors came up with the idea to adapt the scenarios to the needs of the target group, the situation and the real picture in Bitola and to translate them into practical scenarios, which would be the basis for opening Education and Training Centers. of adult education who have incomplete education and face functional illiteracy. By conducting field screening, analyzes that were needed to adapt the documents that already exist from previous projects and to adapt them to our situation, we came across a different situation from other countries that are partners in this project. Most of the Roma who were included in the trainings have incomplete primary education, incomplete secondary education and are self-taught in writing and their education. From that starting point, a selection of the proposed scenarios and exercises was made to the needs for education and adaptation of the exercises themselves during the realization of the trainings, to the needs of the target group. The scenarios have their own breadth and allow their modification and preparation of various exercises during trainings or classes, in order to acquire lasting skills, which will help the participants for greater competitiveness, but also solid education. Each section covers scenarios that contribute to the development of literacy, speech, expression, as well as mathematical and IT skills that have helped participants gain practical and lasting skills and knowledge that will help them to write documents, express themselves properly, use everyday mathematical operations without relying on a calculator, to make it easier to use the computer and their Smartphone, to write and send documents, etc. These are mainly practical exercises, with a little theory and rules, and more activities by the participants, which give them the opportunity through work and situational learning to acquire the skills and knowledge needed for their integration and socialization in social life, as well as finding a job and competing in the market. (Non-formal adult education to combat functional illiteracy,

<https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/blog/non-formal-adult-education-combat-functional-illiteracy>, 2021).

4. Conclusion

In the Republic of North Macedonia, there is a Center for Vocational Education that deals with additional education as well as courses for some trades and crafts, but we have huge gap in adult education, i.e. people who are stuck between the old system in which they studied and the new educational programs.

According to the research done by the project team, we came to the data that there are:

- persons with completed eighth grade (and now the ninth grade is mandatory)
- persons with completed primary education, who have not completed secondary education (and now secondary education is compulsory)
- persons with completed fourth grade from primary education, who for certain reasons interrupted the educational process
- persons who are 9, 10, 11 years old and who have not started the educational process at all.

All of these people fall into the category of functionally illiterate, some have enrolled themselves, but do not have degrees and certificates, some know little to read and write, but have no way to get a degree or any education so they can find a job and enable their existence (those of adulthood).

As a proposal for measures to deal with functional illiteracy, the authors suggest:

- Institutionalization of the Law on Adult Education
- Opening of schools for adult education
- Opening of centers for non-formal adult education, through which additional education of adults in the Republic of North Macedonia will be performed.

In this way, the target group that has not completed its education and faces functional illiteracy, will be able to acquire appropriate education, will be able to more easily find a job and / or use the active measures for self-employment of ESA, which will affect the reduction of unemployment, stimulating economic growth, but also the most important part, easier integration in social life.

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