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Original research paper
UDC 316.722:316.647.5
DOI 10.7251/SOCEN1510005M
Accepted: 25.08.2015.

Using quality educational approaches to implement new skills

Abstract

Everyone is involved into the process of education, but the approaches and methods of each individual depend on the nature of their work, needs, capabilities and abilities. The primary socialization has an influence on how much of skills and knowledge we bring into further life which we then continuously upgrade and update.

I will carry out a survey using the survey method and statistical processing of the data collected within the management staff from educational organizations.

New knowledge to the individual can also be provided through Delores' four pillars of education:

- Learn to know.*
- Learn to be able to know.*
- Learn to know how to live in the community and among others.*
- Learning to be.*

We educate ourselves all our live. Depending on our own skills, abilities, support of primary and secondary environmental interdependence, of financial ability, will, Elan and needs to upgrade its own knowledge, as well as those that occur in the workplace. Lifelong Learning knows no age limit, not industries, is still only an aspiration to something new, different. The society, based on Lifelong learning, can provide a brighter future and better quality of life.

Key words: communication, teaching, knowledge, education, lifelong learning

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Introduction

The time we live in is the time of a postmodern and multicultural society that is constantly facing economic, cultural, political and technological changes. There is an increasing amount of the knowledge which is constantly developing. Considering that, in our education period we could accumulate supplies, which could be afterwards exploited throughout life. An individual has to deepen or enrich this first knowledge for their entire life or to know how to adjust to the ever-changing world. Skills and competences can be developed throughout life, not only for one's personal fulfilment and to be actively involved into society, but also to be successful in the world of work, which is constantly changing. It is the matter of a lifelong learning, which nowadays, irrespective to the age, cannot be avoided by anyone.

1. Learning and education

1.1 Learning

Through the whole our life, we learn. By learning we acquire knowledge and skills, which enable us to achieve a better quality of our life, and to live in accordance with our needs. In other words, one of human needs is also the need to learn. Clearly, it is different in adulthood as it was in youth. In adulthood, learning is focused on »managing the changes in a life cycle, on family and work, as well as on a life style and points of view «². It also focuses on personal development.

1.2 Lifelong learning

Due to the ageing population, the concept of lifelong education is becoming more and more important. It has also got a positive impact on economic growth, social development, and especially on life quality of the elderly, or the pensioners.

Lifelong learning no longer presents an aspect of education and training. It has to become the leading principle of the supply and participation in a complete continuum of learning contents. Everyone living in Europe should, without exception, have equal opportunities to adjust to demands of social

² Jelenc, Zoran. *Strategija vseživljenjskosti učenja v Sloveniji*. Ljubljana: Ministrstvo za šolstvo in šport Republike Slovenije: Javni zavod Pedagoški inštitut, 2007.

and economic life and to actively participate by designing the European future³.

If we consider learning in general, as stated by Brečko⁴, we do not only learn in schools (institutionalised) where we are educated, but we do that on a daily basis. Every day, we receive new pieces of information that have to be classified, selected, interpreted, and extracted out a logical meaning. We learn everywhere – at home, at workplace, in the company of friends, through media, we even learn from our enemies. The former thoughts were deduced from an interesting proverb, namely: »To live is to learn«. The world is thus a big classroom where everyone is a learner and a teacher at the same time. Considering adult learning, it is »an action by which persons who are intellectually, physically, and socially mature, acquire new knowledge, skills and behaviour« Jelenc⁵. Jelenc Krašovec⁶ says that an adult person can learn until they reach a cognitive impairment, while adult learning is focused on personal enrichment and harmony in life. Moreover, Jarvis⁷ emphasises that learning is determined by a greater width in several dimensions: it is happening everywhere, it encompasses all the positions, circumstances and opportunities. The contents are intertwined. We also learn from each other, not only under professional authorities. It has become a part of our life, it lasts for the whole life. This is where the term lifelong learning originates from. Illers⁸ states that learning is a triple process: cognitive, emotional and social. Considering the cognitive process, it is about acquiring skills and knowledge, while learning as an emotional process presents a psychological energy transmitted by feelings, points of view and motivation, which will be discussed later. Learning as a social process is defined as an interaction between an individual and the environment.

1.3 Competences of quality and effectiveness of education

The working group of European Commission (Education in Europe up to 2010) has determined eight (multifunctional and transdisciplinary) competences that aim to improve quality and effectiveness as well as developing skills for the knowledge society:

³ Komisije Evropske skupnosti. Data retrieved: <http://linux.acs.si/memorandum/html/>, 2000.

⁴ Brečko, Daniela. *Kako se odrasli spreminjamo?* Radovljica: Didakta, 1998.

⁵ Jelenc, Zoran. *Terminologija izobraževanja odraslih*. Ljubljana: Pedagoški inštitut pri Univerzi v Ljubljani, 1991.

⁶ Jelenc Krašovec, Sabina. *Strategija vseživljenjskosti učenja v Sloveniji*. Ljubljana: Ministrstvo za šolstvo in šport Republike Slovenije: Javni zavod Pedagoški inštitut, 2007.

⁷ Jarvis, Peter. *Globalisation, lifelong learning and the learning society: sociological perspectives*. London, New York: Routledge, 2007.

⁸ Illers, Knud. *The three dimensions of learning*. Frederiksberg: Roskilde University Press, 2004.

- Communication in the mother tongue, communication in a foreign language/language of the environment, mathematical literacy and basic competences in natural sciences and technology, digital competence, learning to learn, personal and social competences, entrepreneurship, cultural awareness.

Regarding to all this, we need to be familiar with global goals of learning to learn:

- Internal motivation and relevant emotional and motivational strategies which stimulate learning;

- The ability to understand a narrow as well as a wider social context of learning and relevant personal characteristics and social competences required for learning within a group;

- Relevant cognitive and learning strategies – cognitive strategies with effective methods and learning techniques; being able to develop the ability to recognize their own style of comprehension and learning and to adjust them to learning goals in different situations;

- Meta-cognitive strategies – orientation, planning, monitoring, evaluation and reflection of one's own learning⁹.

Every individual should gain key competences for the lifelong learning. In a globalised society, sometimes it seems that we are losing the battle for communicating in the mother tongue comparing to other, greater languages. We have to be aware of the fact that communication in mother tongue is one of the basic rights and obligations of each citizen in a relationship with other language groups. It is important to bear in mind that, despite tendencies for a complete sovereignty of the mother tongue, communication in a foreign language is becoming more and more important. Everyone in the society needs to be enabled to learn and to improve foreign language skills.

2. Education

2.1 Key competences of education

Lifelong learning is a key element of every generation in society, moreover, it is gaining an important role in the third and the fourth age. Following contents present key competences of the lifelong learning.

Due to the influence of globalisation, the world in the third millenium is characterised by quick and decisive changes in society, economy and interpersonal relationships. Europeans are already classified as some of the most edu-

⁹ Bezič, Tanja. *Učenje učenja – ena od osmih ključnih kompetenc*. Postojna, 2007.

cated inhabitants in the world, however, the United Europe has determined a very important priority in the field of education and training. In 2010, Europe became the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-designed economy in the world, that will be capable of constant economic growth with a greater number of better workplaces and a higher social cohesion¹⁰.

Within the aim of developing skills for the knowledge society (the improvement of literacy, knowledge base and skills, learning abilities), after some years of coordination, in 2006, the European Union has accepted a reference framework of key competences of the lifelong learning as a recommendation of European parliament and European Council. European reference framework of key competences determines eight key competences, important for one's personal fulfilment, active citizenship, social cohesion and employability. Detailed descriptions can be found in the attachment, namely Official Journal of the European Union L 394/30.12. 2006 SL¹¹. Let's consider briefly the kinds of determined competences and their basic features.

1 Communication in the mother tongue

2 Communication in foreign languages

3 Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology

4 Digital literacy

5 Learning to learn

6 Social and civic competences

7 Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship

8 Cultural awareness and expression

Competences of the lifelong learning are important in all frames of education and learning, for all generations – for the youth and the elderly.

2.2 Delores – the pillars of education and schooling

Education has to massively and effectively communicate an increasingly high level of ever evolving knowledge. This has to include a directly applicable knowledge required for the civilisation and its development. Education and schooling has to – as it was the case in past – ensure »maps« of this complicated world and, at the same time, be a compass which will help the

¹⁰ Ivšek, Milena. *Vzgoja in izobraževanje* (3). Ljubljana: Zavod RS za šolstvo, 2004.

¹¹ *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning*. European Reference Framework. Data retrieved: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2006/l_394/l_39420061230en00100018.pdf

people to find the right way to the introduction of »four pillars of education and schooling«, suggest Delores¹².

»Four pillars« of education and schooling (presented in abstract) do not refer to one part of life or one place only. Education and schooling are an internal voyage, levels of which correspond to periods of a constant internal maturation (ibid.)

2.3 Higher education for adults

In highly developed countries, the importance of higher education of adults has been increasing. Although higher education of adults has been for a long time treated separately and considered different from the traditional higher education intended for a selected population of the young people, the nature of the relationship between higher education, adults and society at large is changing. Facing major social and technological changes, initial education and formal education are becoming a basis for further learning and specialisation. Despite numerous obstacles, an increasing amount of adults integrate in higher education whether occasionally or more frequently. A higher rate of the adults involved into higher education is also connected to broader factors resulting from demographic, social and technological development¹³.

In Slovenia we distinguish public and conceded private independent higher education institutions. According to the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education¹⁴, 235 providers performed adult education within 4.041 educational programmes school year 2013/2014. Most of the education providers presented their education supplies within the overview last year already, however 27 providers presented themselves for the first time. They recorded a decreased number of presented education providers and educational programmes. Statistical data shows that the investments into education and trainings have decreased during the past few years, moreover, there is a decrease of external forms of education and trainings for employees; basically internal education and trainings are carried out, whereas the number of the enrolment into education is decreasing, which has affected several educational organizations.

¹² Delores, Jaques. *Učenje - skriti zaklad: poročilo Mednarodne komisije izobraževanju za enaindvajseto stoletje*. Ljubljana: Ministrstvo za šolstvo in šport, 1996.

¹³ Mihevc, Bogomir, Jelenc, Zoran, Kump, Sonja, Podmenik, Darka, Zgmajster, Margerita. *Visokošolsko izobraževanje odraslih*. Ljubljana: Andragoški center Slovenije, 1995.

¹⁴ *Pregled ponudbe izobraževanja odraslih v Sloveniji 2013/2014*. Andragoški zavod Slovenije. Data retrieved: http://arhiv.acs.si/porocila/Pregled_IO_2013.pdf

In the past few years, the number of people's universities and secondary schools for adult education has decreased, and several secondary schools have merged into secondary school centres. Furthermore, decreased number of adult education and educational programs for adults.

3. Empirical part

3.1 Research purpose

Within this paper I want to determine the importance of education for the knowledge, which should be upgraded on a daily basis throughout our life.

Based on the research I presented the importance of education among the managerial employees and their co-workers in educational institutions.

3.2 Research hypotheses

Within the research I will, based on a questionnaire, support or disprove the following hypotheses:

H1: I assume that many pedagogical workers and senior executives in the field of education are involved into a continued education.

H2: I believe that, comparing to men, more women on leading positions decide for the lifelong learning.

H3: I assume that only rare institutions finance a continued education for their employees.

H4: I assume that a relationship and a family life is »deprived« due to the continued education.

3.3 Research aim

The aim of this research is to find out whether education truly presents the most important element of each individual, with the emphasis on the employees in education and schooling.

3.4 Methodology

3.4.1 Research method

In order to collect data I used a descriptive method of the empirical pedagogical research.

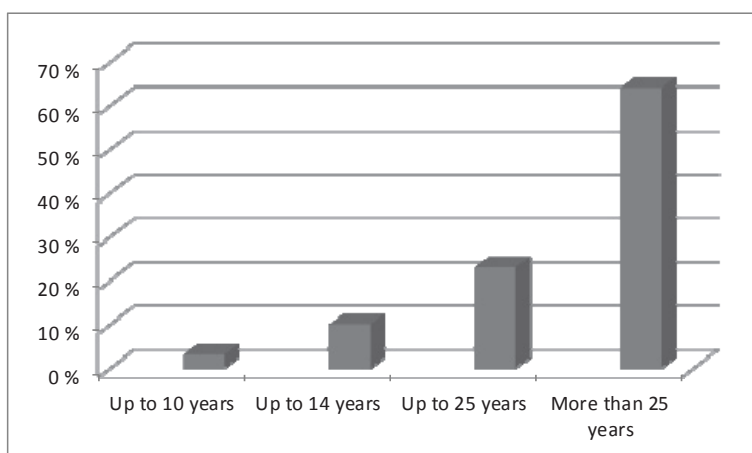
3.4.2 Research sample

The participants in this research were headmasters and headmistresses of the kindergartens, primary and secondary schools (15 men and 24 women) of the Pomurje region of the average age of 50,3 years. I inquired their attitude towards their own education and the education of their co-workers.

3.4.3 Question analysis

The questionnaire included 11 open questions. Next, I present the analysis of the respondents' answers.

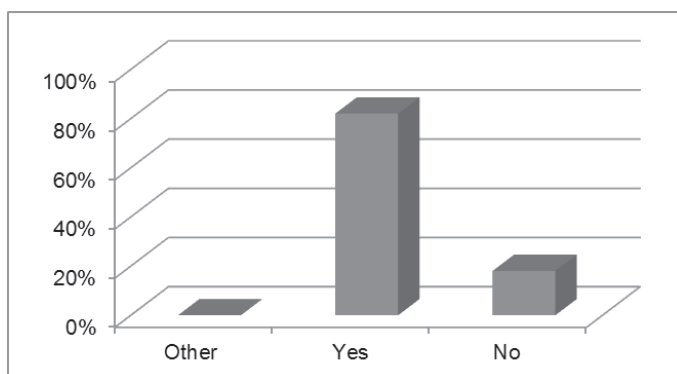
Figure 1: *How many years of service in education and schooling have you completed so far?*



Source: Author's own graphical display

Based on the results, it is evident that there are 64, 2 % of the respondents who have been employed in education for more than 25 years, followed by 23, 1 % of these who have been employed up to 25 years, and 10,3 % of these who have worked on that area up to 15 years. The answers presented relate to the experience required for performing the pedagogical work.

Figure 2: *Do you think senior executives in education should have at least a university pedagogical degree?*

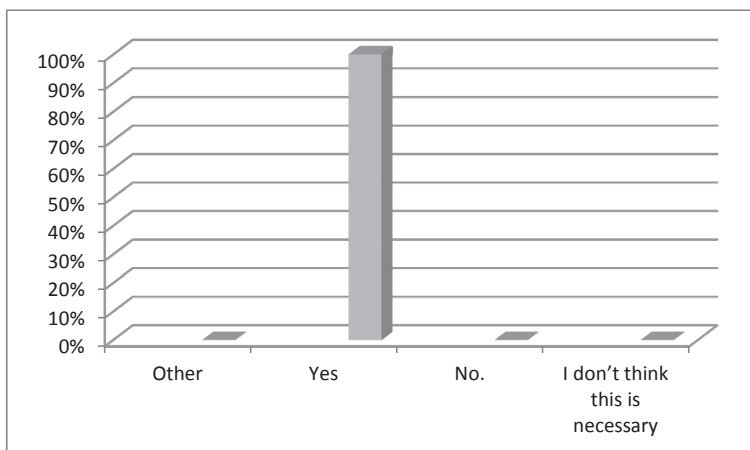


Source: Author's own graphical display

Among all the respondents, 82,1 % of them were of opinion that managing of an educational institution requires a university degree in pedagogical programmes.

A university degree in pedagogical programmes is completely understandable and acceptable for the field of work and management in presented institutions.

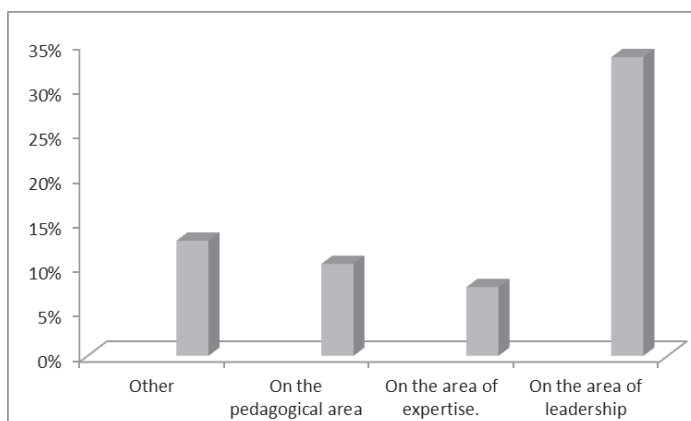
Figure 3: *Do you agree with the fact that employees, including managerial staff, in education should constantly improve their knowledge and educate themselves?*



Source: Author's own graphical display

All respondents (100 %) answered that a continuous education of pedagogical and managerial employees is self-evident. This is often a case in educational institutions, since curriculum is oriented in a way that the employees have to individually educate at home, while group education takes part within and outside the institutions.

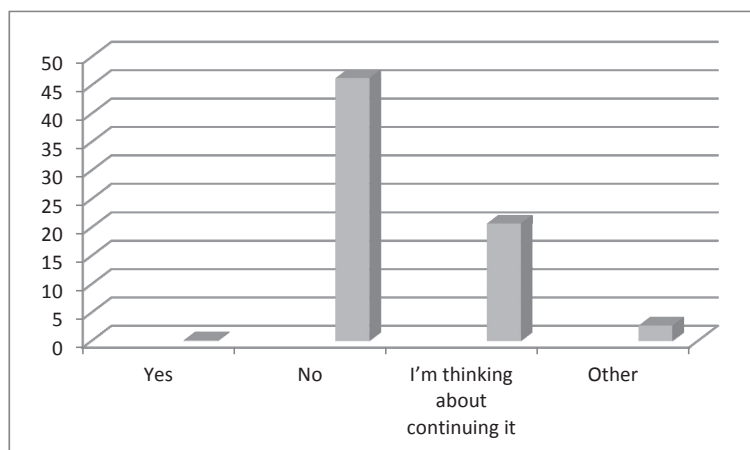
Figure 4: *Which additional skills do you lack at your workplace and believe that should be upgraded?*



Source: Author's own graphical display

The respondents answered which skills they personally lack at their workplace. Most of them need to acquire additional skills in the area of management (33,4 %). Managerial employees in educational institutions are pedagogical workers who do not possess skills in management and therefore still need to acquire them through practical work.

Figure 5: *Are you continuing with your post-graduate studies?*



Source: Author's own graphical display

30,8 % of respondents are already engaged into post-graduate studies, or have a purpose to do so in the future (20,6 %), while 44,2 % of respondents are not interested in post-graduate studies.

Considering the need for continuous education, in the future there will be an increased number of that sort of education, or the upgrade of the existing one. This will not only include continuing with post-graduate studies, but also an increasing amount of individual self-education. Based on responses, I found out that managerial staff mostly have a university degree in pedagogical field. Since many of them lack managerial skills, post-graduate studies in that particular area could present a challenge for them.

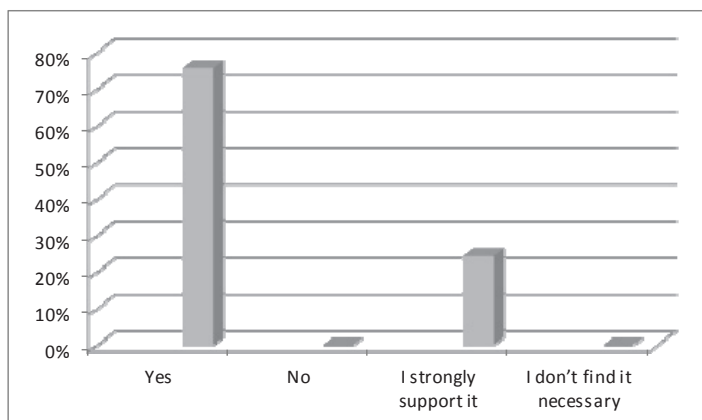
Figure 6: *If your answer was YES – Who finances or co-finances your continuous education?*



Source: Author's own graphical display

Only the respondents whose response to the former question was YES answered this question. More than a half (56,5 %) of the respondents cover the expenses of their post-graduate studies by themselves. This is not surprising since Ministry of education, science and sport does not cover study expenses of employees in educational institutions. Conditions required to fill the post of a manager in a kindergarden or a school are not linked to the education; the only condition is an attained education in a suitable (pedagogical) field.

Figure 7: *Do you support continuous professional training of your employees?*

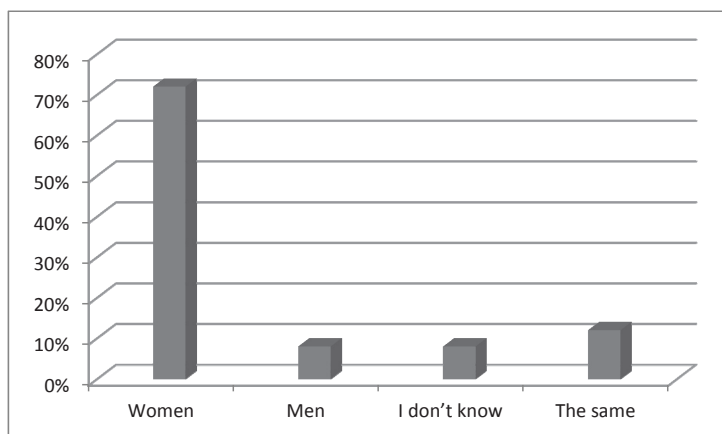


Source: Author's own graphical display

All the respondents support (75,6 %) or strongly support (24,4 %) the education of their employees. This is encouraging and completely understandable at the same time.

Without education, continuous updating and upgrading of acquired knowledge it is practically impossible to educate young generations.

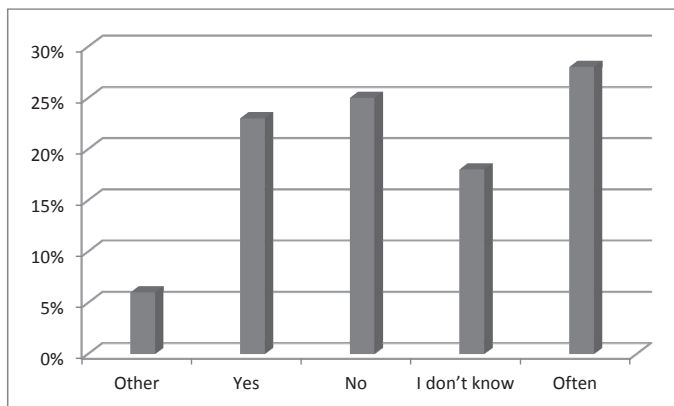
Figure 8: *Do you think more men or more women continuously educate and upgrade their skills?*



Source: Author's own graphical display

Based on results obtained before this survey (employees in educational institutions), the new ones are not surprising as well. Namely, 71,8 respondents believe that continuous education is more common in women, and only 7,7 % of them think more men comparing to women continuously upgrade their education.

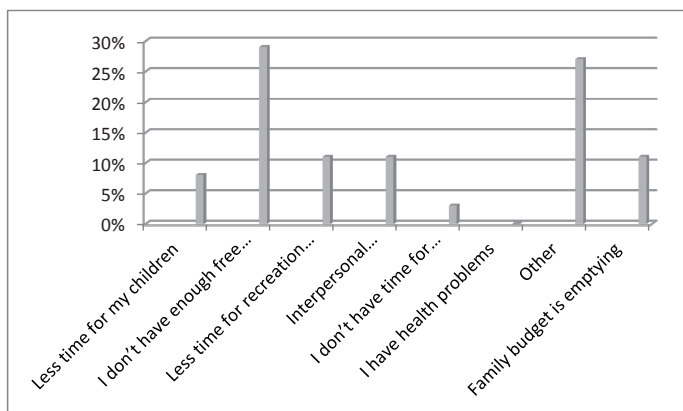
Figure 9: Do you think a relationship/a family is »deprived« due to continued education of one of the partners/parents?



Source: Author's own graphical display

Responses to this question were, as expected, pretty much diffused. For some people, continuous education of one of the parents or a partner does not present any troubles (25, 7 %), however 23,1 % there are some consequences observed. It can be observed from the results that over 50 % of the respondents had doubts when answering this question. I personally believe education requires a lot of time and denials, consequently connected to family life as well.

Figure 10: If your former response was YES – Please determine your affirmative response!



Source: Author's own graphical display

Based on the responses given by the respondents it can be observed that they lack free time, even though it is even closely bound to other activities in one's life (29,8 %), they have less time for recreation (10,9 %) and less time for children (8,2 %).

The problem of our free time does not only originate from our commitments, but an equal distribution of it and its embedment into daily work commitments. Free time presents a problem of a contemporary time, since we increasingly lack it. Often we are unable to distribute it proportionally regarding other commitments.

3.4.4 Interpretation of research hypotheses

I set the following hypotheses, which were interpreted based on results obtained by a questionnaire:

H1: I assume that many pedagogical workers and senior executives in the field of education are involved into a continued education.

Based on the survey results, it is evident that 100 % of pedagogical and managerial employees in education educate or continuously educate themselves. Based on results obtained using a questionnaire, I can *confirm* H1.

H2: I believe that, comparing to men, more women on leading positions decide for the lifelong learning.

Within the survey it was observed that 71,8 % of women and only 7,7 % of men are involved in continuous education. Also H2 can be *confirmed* based on the data obtained.

H3: I assume that only rare institutions finance a continued education for their employees.

Ministry of education, science and sport does not finance or co-finance graduate or post-graduate study programmes of the employees in education and schooling. Results obtained by a questionnaire showed that most of the respondents (56,5 %) cover their study expenses by themselves. Based on that, I can *confirm* H3.

H4: I assume that a relationship and a family life is »deprived« due to continued education.

Pedagogical work is very demanding. It requires an individual to be a human as a whole. In case a pedagogical employee decides to continue with studies, that does not only require denials on financial area, but also in a family or a relationship. Interesting responses were introduced under »other« (5,1

%) - It depends on an individual and their relationship with their partner. For study itself, a relationship is not deprived, quite the opposite. – It is the matter of an agreement and mutual distribution of work among family members. I believe education requires a lot of time and denials, consequently related to a family life. Based on the results obtained, I can *confirm* H4 as well.

4. Concluding remarks

Education is the basis for everything in an individual's life. Considering this, it is very important how we deal with it. Since people differ from each other, the educational approaches are different as well.

By continuous education, learning and additional qualification, we acquire new skills required in everyday professional performance as well as in our life in general. For that purpose, teaching is of great importance, and we have to be aware that not everyone is able to do it. A teaching profession and working as a teacher is a mission. A high amount of quality staff is required, while on the other hand, we need less those who only decided for a teaching profession because it was their only chance when entering a university study programme. Institutions that educate people in order to attain a teaching profession, should ensure that. These should provide teachers with as many trainings and upgrading of skills required in their work as possible.

Based on the data collected it is clear that number of women occupying managing positions of education institutions prevailed over men. Women still present the majority of employees in education and schooling. This can however not be observed in leading positions, which are still more frequently occupied by men rather than women.

Research findings showed that education and training are regular features of education and schooling. Although survey only encompassed a little less than 10 % of headmasters and headmistresses of schools in the Pomurje region (Slovenia) it was found out that managerial employees are constantly educating and support the education of their co-workers within collectives at the same time. Since more women than men are employed in education and schooling, this affects many areas. Almost half of them continue or intend to continue with a study programme, which is most likely to be financed by themselves, noting in this regard that this should consensually be discussed with a partner. By all means, supplementary education decreases the amount of free time and other activities related to it and to family life and relationship.

Managerial employees in schools support education of their co-workers, as well as they provide its upgrade for themselves. Due to the increasing level of skills and needs of learners, additional trainings are very much required. The problem occurs because these activities affect a personal life of an individual at home, in their family, as well as considering spending their free time, which however should not present an obstacle, since pedagogical workers precisely should strive for continuous education and training.

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