

## Adults' motives and barriers of participation in mixed and asynchronous learning training programs

Azarias Mavropoulos<sup>a,1</sup>, Anastasia Pampouri<sup>b</sup>, Konstantina Kiriatzakou<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>*Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Thessaloniki (Greece)*

<sup>b</sup>*University of Macedonia, School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts, Dept of Educational & Social Policy, Thessaloniki, Greece*

(submitted: 6/5/2020; accepted: 7/4/2021; published: 22/6/2021)

### Abstract

This paper explores the motives, barriers and the facilitators of adults' participation in two training programs, organized by the Center of Training and Lifelong Learning (KE.DI.VI.M.) of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece. 215 trainees completed the questionnaire in the first program, entitled 'Training of Lifelong Learning Adult Trainers', while 70 students having attended the second program 'Vocational Education and Training: Specialization of Adult Executives, Teachers and Trainers' completed the questionnaire. It was found that the professional and personal development are the main reasons for participating in training. Regarding the barriers, the situational and institutional ones are the most important factors for non-participation in the training. Regarding the facilitators to participation in training, distance learning, recognition of certifications acquired from participation to training programs, salary's improvement and dissemination of seminars taking place are the main facilitators for participating in lifelong learning programs.

**KEYWORDS:** Adult Education, Motives, Barriers, Facilitators.

#### DOI

<https://doi.org/10.20368/1971-8829/1135256>

#### CITE AS

Mavropoulos, A., Pampouri, A., & Kiriatzakou, K. (2021). Adults' motives and barriers of participation in mixed and asynchronous learning training programs. *Journal of e-Learning and Knowledge Society*, 17(1), 29-38.  
<https://doi.org/10.20368/1971-8829/1135256>

### 1. Introduction

The rapid development of the economy and technology in international and national level has led to the continuous growing of Adult Education. Lifelong learning plays a significant role in modern societies as it can contribute to the employability of adults, economic growth, personal development and social inclusion. The

need for high-quality human resources with autonomous actions and skills capability combined with the development of modern technological tools have stimulated new human resource development practices, resulting in an increasing demand and supply of training programs. At the same time, the increase in unemployment and the number of pensioners, the need for new skills, the changes in lifestyle and work, such as increasing women's entry into the labor market, have led to the need for adult education (Vergides, 1998). Adult education has been a primary topic on the European agenda since 2001, when Lisbon Strategy identified education as an essential resource for European development (European Commission, 2001). However, despite the developments having been launched in recent years, those developments alone cannot explain adults' participation motives and barriers of participation in training programs. As a current trend in training programs, blended learning methods which "combine

---

<sup>1</sup> corresponding author - email: [azarias@auth.gr](mailto:azarias@auth.gr)

face-to-face instruction (e.g. lecture, cases or games) with on-line technology-based learning” (Noe, Tews & Dachner, 2010, p. 288) aim to combine the social context of classroom included in face-to-face learning with the flexibility of on-line learning, according to Bonk and Graham, (2012, as cited in Noe, Clarke & Klein, 2014: 253).

The aim of the study is to investigate adult trainers’ motives and barriers of participation in two training programs, addressed to adult trainers of lifelong learning, offered by the Center of Lifelong Learning of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Those two programs were implemented: a) the first one between October 2016 until December 2017, as a blended learning program and b) the second one between September 2018 until June 2019, as an asynchronous learning training program. One of the objectives of the research was also to explore factors that facilitate adult trainers’ participation in professional training programs.

### 1.1 Motives of participation in lifelong learning

Adult learners through lifelong learning acquire new skills and competences, modern knowledge and create an environment of professional autonomy and self-confidence. Motivational orientation is of the utmost importance and is described as the most important factor driving the individual to participate in continuing education programs, as demonstrated by many surveys, researching the participation motives in continuing education (Boeren, Holford, Nicaise, & Baert, 2012; Brookfield 1995a; Hiemstra & Sisco, 1990; Yousef, Chatti, Wosnitza, & Schroeder, 2015; Karalis, 2017; Mavropoulos, Sipitanou & Pampouri, 2019).

Motives are related to the perceptions and values of the individual, but also to the expectations the individual has from his profession. Initially, motive is defined as anything that pushes the individual into action. The motives that encourage adults to participate in educational programs are distinguished into two categories: a) the learning motives and b) the participation motives.

Motives are classified as intrinsic, extrinsic or a combination of both. So, some reasons could be the filling of educational gaps, the best work performance, the enhancement of job opportunities and the personal development. The adult learners’ reason and purpose for learning creates the motivation to engage in adult learning. Houle (1961) was the first researcher who tried to investigate the adults’ motives of participation in continuing educational training activities. According to Houle, there are three types of learners: a) goal oriented who through the educational process want to achieve clear objectives, b) activity oriented who are socially involved, and c) learning oriented who seek knowledge for their own development and cultivation.

In 1973, Boshier, based on Rogers’s theory, proposed a congruence model of conflict-agreement between the individual, the educational organization and the rest of

the people, with their ideal self. The main factor of participation is the correspondence of self-esteem and self-image that individuals have for them with the form of the educational system. Disagreement between the individual and the educational environment has the effect of denying participation or abandoning the educational process. He created the Educational Participation Scale (EPS). According to the scale, the motives of participation are social relationships, external expectations, social welfare, professional advancement, escape/stimulation, and cognitive interest.

The Cross Chain-of-Response Model (1992), called the ‘chain of response’ model, consists of seven stages with their own impact on the decision-making process of participation in adult education courses. Every stage influences one another. The seven steps are: a) Self-evaluation, b) attitudes about education, c) the importance of objectives and the expectations that these will be implemented, d) life transitions, e) opportunities and barriers, f) information on educational opportunities, g) the decision to participate. According to Cross (1981), all relevant research shows that "the more people learn, the more they are interested in further education" or else: "learning is addictive; the more people have the training, the more they want it". The main obstacle to adult learning for the less trained is the lack of interest. At this point, it is necessary to note that in the international literature the term ‘reason for participation’ rather than motivation is used to a large extent, as the latter refers more to the concept of deeper internal affluence (see, for example, Boshier & Collins, 1996).

### 1.2 Barriers of participation in lifelong learning

Regarding the barriers to participation, the most common and widely used typology is that of Cross (1977, 1981), where barriers are divided into three categories:

- *Situational*: the barriers attributed to the situation in which an adult is during a particular period, including factors such as lack of money, lack of time due to professional and home responsibilities, childcare or transportation etc.
- *Dispositional*: the barriers include negative attitudes and perceptions about further education, its usefulness and the appropriateness of engaging in learning; low self-esteem and evidence of prior poor academic performance are also dispositional barriers.
- *Organizational*: barriers associated with institutions and organizations that offer adult education, such as inconvenient schedules or locations, inappropriate courses lack of interesting, practical or relevant courses; administrative or procedural issues; the lack of information about programs and procedures, etc. (Cross, 1992) etc.

Merriam & Cafferella (1991) stated that studies have categorized barriers of participation to adult learning

into situational (a person's situation at a given time), institutional (practices and procedures that discourage adults from participation), dispositional or psychosocial (person's beliefs about self and learning) and informational (person's unawareness of the availability of educational programs). Other barriers based on the social structure are geographic and demographic factors, socioeconomic conditions and educational and cultural determinants (Chao, 2009).

Rubenson & Desjardins (2009) grouped the first two types of Cross-typology barriers (situational and institutional) into one category, the structural barriers, because both types are ultimately referred to social conditions and structures, while they retained the third category (dispositional). Specifically, the typology they propose is as follows:

- Structural barriers, which essentially incorporate both the state and institutional obstacles of the Cross typology (family, work and obstacles related to institutional and organizational issues).
- Individual barriers, including capabilities and consciousness.

## 2. Methodology

This section is describing the aim of the research, participants, instruments and data analysis.

### 2.1 The aim of the study

The aim of the study was to investigate adult trainers' motives and barriers of participation in two training programs addressed to adult trainers of lifelong learning, offered by the Center of Lifelong Learning of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Those two programs were implemented: a) the first one between October 2016 until December 2017 and b) the second one between September 2018 until June 2019. One of the aims of the research was also to explore factors that facilitate adult trainers' participation to professional training programs.

### 2.2 Participants

The survey was based on the responses given by the trainees who participated in two professional training programs, which were organized and implemented by the Center of Training and Lifelong Learning (KE.DI.VI.M.) of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. The first, blended learning program, entitled 'Training of Lifelong Learning Adult Trainers', (E.E.E.D.V.M.) was addressed to: a) prospective adult trainers of all cognitive subjects, b) those registered in the National Organization for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (E.O.P.P.E.P.) as well as in other registers of adult trainers, who wanted to update their knowledge, and c) existing and prospective staff members of lifelong learning structures, such as Institutes of Vocational Training,

Second Chance Schools, Lifelong Learning Centers, etc., who wanted to upgrade their knowledge and gain additional certification (Mavropoulos, Sipitanou & Pampouri, 2019).

The second, asynchronous learning program, entitled 'Vocational Education and Training: Specialization of Adult Executives, Teachers and Trainers' (E.E.K.), was addressed to active and prospective executives as well as formal and non-formal educators or trainers wishing to update and upgrade their knowledge of Vocational Education and Training and design an educational program of their specialty. The benefits of the program included the allocation of teachers, the maximum allocation to trainers and executives for their participation in Calls for Proposals at the Public Institutes for Vocational Training (D.I.E.K.) and Public Vocational Training Schools (D.S.E.K.), certificate of attendance and Certificate of Training with the corresponding ECTS units (*ibid.*).

At the first program fourteen cycles of studies had been implemented since October 2016 to December 2017, with each cycle lasting between seven to eleven weeks, while the second program started from September 2018. Both programs had been implemented by using the electronic asynchronous distance learning platform (e-learning) of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

The sampling was carried out during the programs' period until June 2019 and the sample consisted of 215 trainees having participated in the first E.E.E.D.V.M. program and 70 trainees in the second E.E.K. program.

### 2.3 The instrument

The questionnaire constructed by researchers was used as a research tool, with the use of questions from surveys by Karalis (2013) based on the Educational Participation Scale (EPS) of Boshier (1973). The instrument was divided into three parts. The first part which concerns the motives in learning contained 4 items for professional upgrade motives, 2 items for certification/education recognition, 2 items for the interest in learning, 4 items for motives concerning personal/family life and 2 items for motives concerning social participation. The second part, based on Cross typology (1992), consisted of 21 items, 5 items for situational barriers, 12 items for organizational barriers and 4 items for dispositional barriers. The third part consisted of 7 items investigating the facilitators of participation in training programs. The questionnaire was completed by participants through the e-learning platform of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Moodle) and included 27 questions.

The questions concerned the demographic characteristics of the participants and the level of certified knowledge and study. Still, specific questions related to the motives of participation in training actions, the barriers to their participation as perceived by themselves and the facilitators to their participation in

training. In particular, the question that explored the motives for participating in the training consisted of 14 statements with the choice of the three most important reasons. The question that explored the obstacles to participation in training consisted of 22 statements and trainees were asked to choose from the same list of factors the three most important, while the question concerning the facilitator factors contributing to facilitating participation in the training consists of 7 questions with the choice of three answers.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Research results from the 'Training of Lifelong Learning Adult Trainers' Program (E.E.E.D.V.M.)

From the 'Training of Lifelong Learning Adult Trainers' program, 215 trainees completed the questionnaire, 48 were men (22.33%), 159 were women (73.95%), and 8 did not respond (3.72%). Regarding the age, 45.58% of the sample trainees is aged between 24 and 35, 33.49% from 36 to 45, 15.35% is aged between 46 and 55, 1.9% from 56 to 65, while 3.25% of respondents did not indicate in which age group they belong.

Regarding the educational level, 43.26% of the participants hold a postgraduate degree, 40.93% are graduates of Higher Education, 5.58% are graduates of Secondary Education and 2.79% hold a PhD degree, while 4.19% did not respond to this question. Regarding the working status, 133 participants (61.86%) are employees, while 74 participants (34.42%) are unemployed. 50 participants of the employees (23.26%) are educators, 8 are teachers of non formal education (3.7%), 22 are civil servants (10.23%), 35 are private sector employees (16.28%) and 23 are self-employed (10.70%).

Table 1 shows the percentages of respondents' answers to the survey regarding the motives of their professional advancement. According to Table 1, the statement 'to be more efficient at my work' gathered 40%, the statement 'to find a better job' gathered 39.07% and the statement 'to increase my income' 20.93%, while the statement 'to keep my job' had the lowest rate of 6.51%. As far as the motives for obtaining a certification the statement 'to increase my qualifications' had the highest rate of 67.44% while the percentage of the statement 'to obtain a certificate' was 46.05%.

It is worth noting that the motives connected to the value of learning ranked very high since the statements "because education should be lifelong" and "because I like to learn new things" gathered the same percentage of 48.37%. The rest of the statements ranged to low preference rates (Table 2).

In Table 3 we observe that the motives concerning personal/family life and social participation gathered low percentages. So, the statement 'to give my children a good example' reached 9.3%, and the statement 'because I didn't have the opportunity to study as much

as I wanted in the past', reached 6.98%, while the statements 'to be more accomplished citizen' and 'to make the best of my free time' gathered 6.51% each.

Observing Table 4, we find that half of the participants recognized barriers that refer to the lack of time due to occupational obligations (47.44%). The lack of time due to childcare or due to other activities are the third and fourth major barriers to participation in training with percentages of 25.59% and 24.65% respectively.

**Table 1** - Percentages of learners' responses to the motives for participation concerning professional upgrade and certification/education recognition.

Professional advancement	Percentages
To keep my job	6.51%
To increase my income	20.93%
To be more efficient at work	40%
To find a better job	39.07%
Certification/Education recognition	Percentages
To obtain a certificate	46.05%
To increase my qualifications	67.44%

**Table 2.** Percentages of learners' responses to the motives for participation concerning the interest in learning

Interest in learning	Percentages
I like to learn new things	48.37%
Education should be lifelong	48.37%

**Table 3** - Percentages of learners' responses to the motives for participation concerning personal/family life and social participation.

Personal/family life	Percentages
To give my children a good example	9.3%
To escape from personal/family problems	0.5%
To make the best of my free time	6.51%
I didn't have the opportunity to study as much as I wanted in the past	6.98%
Social participation	Percentages
To be more accomplished as a citizen	6.51%
To improve my social network	3.26%

**Table 4** - Percentages of learners' responses to the situational barriers.

Situational barriers	Percentages
Taking care of children	25.58%
Taking care of relatives	5.12%
Occupational obligations	47.44%
Other activities	24.65%
Negative attitude of family/friends	1.4%

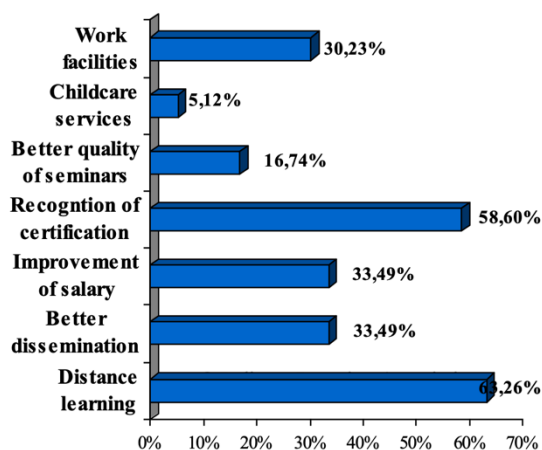
Then, there were a number of organizational barriers such as seminars' timing, lack of information, transportation difficulties to the venue and undesirable organization and operation of seminars at rates of 21.4%, 18.14%, 14.41% and 12.09% respectively,

while the dispositional barriers had almost zero percentages (Table 5).

Figure 1 shows the percentages of learners' responses for the factors that would facilitate them in attending training programs. According to figure 1, the most important facilitating factor for attending seminars would have been distance learning seminars (63.26%), while the recognition of certificate obtained by the seminars is the second facilitator with a percentage of 58.6%. The next facilitators for attending seminars were 'better dissemination of seminars' and 'salary improvement', which accrued the same rate of preference (33.49%). In addition, 30.23% of the sample indicated the work facilities as a significant factor. Other facilitators, such as the best quality of seminars and the availability of child labor services during the seminar had lower rates, 16.74% and 5.12% respectively.

**Table 5** - Percentages of learners' responses to the organizational and dispositional barriers.

Organizational barriers	Percentages
Participation cost	60.47%
I won't improve my work position	1.86%
Days and time I cannot attend	21.4%
The selection procedure	0.93%
Transportation difficulties	14.41%
I do not have the essential skills	1.4%
Lack of information	18.14%
A certificate is not provided	5.12%
The programs last too long	8.84%
The quality and the organization of the programs	12.09%
It is not an asset at my work	3.72%
I don't meet the typical requirements	0.93%
Dispositional barriers	Percentages
I have health issues	0.93%
I have learnt enough	0.47%
Such programs remind me of school	0%
I am too old to learn	0%



**Figure 1** - Percentages of learners' responses for participation facilitators to training.

### 3.2 Results of the 'Vocational Education and Training: Specialization of Adult Executives, Teachers and Trainers' Program (E.E.K.)

From the EEK program, 70 questionnaires were filled out, of which 23 (32.86%) were men and 46 were women (67.14%), while 1 respondent did not answer. 17 trainees are 24 to 35 years old, 26 are 36 to 45 years old, 22 are aged between 46 to 55, and 4 are between 56 to 65 years old, while 1 respondent did not respond. Concerning the educational level, 4 trainees are graduates of secondary education, 24 are graduates of tertiary education, 8 hold a second degree, 31 hold a postgraduate degree and two have a doctorate, while 1 respondent did not answer. Regarding the working status, 47 are employees (67.14%), 21 are unemployed (40%) and 2 had not responded. From the 47 employees, 22 are educators, 16 are D.I.E.K. (Public Vocational Training Institute) trainers, 5 are O.A.E.D. (Labor Force Employment Agency) trainers and 2 are V.E.T. (Vocational Educational and Training) executives.

Table 6 below shows the percentages of the statements concerning the professional advancement motives and the motives for obtaining a certification. Analyzing Table 6, we note that the statement 'to increase my qualifications' had 64.29% percentage. A relatively high percentage (41.43%) was also accounted for the statement 'to obtain a certificate'. Regarding the motives for professional upgrade, the statement 'to be more efficient at my work' gathered 55.71%, while the statements 'to keep my job', 'to find a better job' and 'to increase my income' gathered 17.14%, 14.29% and 12.86% respectively.

Table 7 below shows the percentages of the statements concerning the motives for learning. The statement 'because education should be lifelong' gathered 52.86% of the sample's preferences, while the statement 'because I like to learn new things' statement accounted for 50%.

**Table 6** - Percentages of learners' responses to the motives for participation concerning professional upgrade and certification/education recognition.

Professional advancement	Percentages
To keep my job	17.14%
To increase my income	12.86%
To be more efficient at work	55.71%
To find a better job	14.29%
Certification/Education recognition	Percentages
To obtain a certificate	41.43%
To increase my qualifications	64.29%

**Table 7** - Percentages of learners' responses to the motives for participation concerning the interest in learning.

Interest in learning	Percentages
I like to learn new things	50%
Education should be lifelong	52.86%

Finally, low rates were observed for other statements such as ‘to give my children a good example’ at 8.57%, ‘to be more accomplished as a citizen’ at 7.14%. The statements ‘because I didn’t have the opportunity to study as much as I wanted in the past’ and ‘to make the best of my free time’ had the same rate of 5.71%, while the statement ‘to meet new people and improve my social network’ accounted for 4.29%.

Table 9 illustrates the percentages of learners’ statements related to situational barriers to participation in the training process. Observing Table 9, we find out that the main situational barrier to participation in training courses was the lack of time due to work commitments with 60%. Significant barriers were also considered by the trainees the lack of time due to childcare or other activities (27.14% for each of the two statements). Then, some organizational barriers were following such as the transportation difficulty to the seminar and the timetable of the seminar by gathering the same percentage of 15.71%, while the duration of the seminars as a barrier to participation gathered the 10% of the sample preference.

The cost of participation was the main barrier from the organizational barriers as it accounted for 55.71%. Then, some other organizational barriers were following, such as the transportation difficulty to the seminar and the timetable of the seminar by gathering the same percentage of 15.71%, while the lack of information and the absence of certification as barriers to participation gathered the 7.14% of the sample preference. Concerning the dispositional barriers, all statements gathered low rates (Table 10).

**Table 8** - Percentages of learners’ responses to the motives for participation concerning personal/family life and social participation.

Personal/family life	Percentages
To give my children a good example	8.57%
To escape from personal/family problems	0%
To make the best of my free time	5.71%
I didn’t have the opportunity to study as much as I wanted in the past	5.71%
Social participation	Percentages
To be more accomplished as a citizen	7.14%
To improve my social network	4.29%

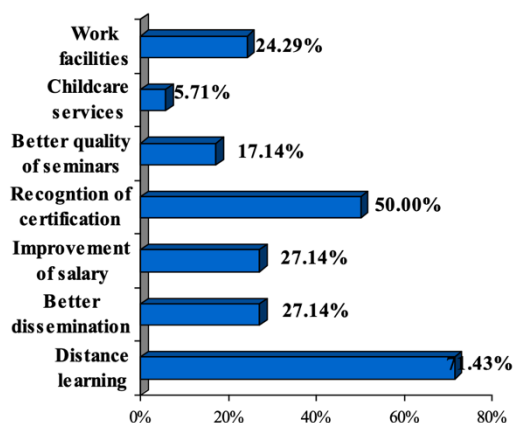
**Table 9** - Percentages of learners’ responses to the situational barriers.

Situational barriers	Percentages
Taking care of children	27.14%
Taking care of relatives	5.71%
Occupational obligations	60%
Other activities	27.14%
Negative attitude of family/friends	0%

**Table 10** - Percentages of learners’ responses to the organizational and dispositional barriers.

Organizational barriers	Percentages
Participation cost	55.71%
I won't improve my work position	4.29%
Days and time I cannot attend	15.71%
The selection procedure	1.43%
Transportation difficulties	15.71%
I do not have the essential skills	0%
Lack of information	7.14%
A certificate is not provided	7.14%
The programs last too long	1%
The quality and the organization of the programs	4.29%
It is not an asset at my work	2.86%
I don't meet the typical requirements	0%
Dispositional barriers	Percentages
I have health issues	0.93%
I have learnt enough	0.47%
Such programs remind me of school	0%
I am too old to learn	0%

Figure 2 shows the percentages of the learners’ responses to the facilitators that can be provided for attendance of training programs. As can be seen in Figure 2, an important facilitator to participate in training programs was ‘distance learning’ programs, as it collected a significantly high percentage (71.43%). The second most important facilitator was ‘the recognition of certificate’ acquired from the attendance of training programs as it gathered 50% of the sample’s preferences, while ‘better dissemination of seminars’ and ‘salary improvement’ gather 27.14% of the learners’ preferences. An important parameter for the participation of the trainees in the training was also the ‘work facilities’ with 24,29%, while the ‘childcare services during the seminars’, as a facilitator, accumulated a low percentage (5,71%).



**Figure 2** - Percentages of learners’ responses for participation facilitators to training.

#### 4. Discussion

It is worth noting that the trainees' majority of both samples were young people (up to 45 years old), with a high level of education and employees. Research reveals young, employed and highly educated individuals, who seek both intrinsic motives (interest in the subjects of educational programs, personal development) and extrinsic motives (job related) for participation, are the individuals who participate in adult learning mostly (Berker & Horn, 2003). Lower participation rates are observed among less qualified and unemployed adults who report mainly professional reasons for educational training, such as finding a better job (Daehlen & Ure, 2009; Konrad, 2005).

Regarding the age, in the present study, we observe that the majority of the trainees in both programs are aged up to 45 years (61.4% in the program 'Vocational Education and Training: Specialization of Adult Executives, Teachers and Trainers' and 79.07% in the 'Training of Lifelong Learning Adult Trainers' Program). According to research findings, participation tends to decrease as age increases (specially above 45) mainly because as adults approaching retirement, they perceive less advantages coming from education to their professional development and they experience less support from their employers (Kyndt, Michielsen, Van Nooten, Nijs, & Baert, 2011). However, there is an increasing body of research that shows higher levels of intrinsic motivation to nontraditional age undergraduates (above 25) rather than younger, traditional age undergraduates (Bye, Pushkar, & Conway, 2007; Steinberg, 2006), and the same results were noted for the nontraditional female students (Justice & Dornan, 2001; Murphy & Roopchand, 2003).

Regarding the participation motives in the training process, comparing the findings of the two research samples, it was found that high rates are recorded for the reasons that are included in the categories 'certification/ recognition of education' (to obtain the certificate, to increase my qualifications), 'cognitive interest' (because I like to learn new things, because education must last throughout our lives) and 'professional advancement (to find a better job, to increase my income, to be more efficient in my work). It is worth noting the difference percentage between the two samples regarding the motive of finding a better job, since the percentage at the E.E.E.D.V.M. program is up to 39.07%, while in the E.E.K. program the percentage reaches to 14.29%. Also, the percentage of income's raising as a motive to participation shows a fairly significant difference between the two samples, as the trainees' rate of the E.E.E.D.V.M. program reaches 20.93% and the trainees' rate of the E.E.K. program reaches 12.86%. The above mentioned differences may appear due to the fact that the first program has been attended by several unemployed trainees and workers who are preparing to take part in the E.O.P.P.E.P.'s

examinations in order to raise their income or to find a job, while the second program is mainly addressed to training staff and executives who have started their career and probably do not intend to change jobs.

According to literature, the main motives of adult participation in training programs are: (a) the development of social relations, (b) the external expectations, (c) the social contribution, (d) the professional development, (e) and (f) the interest in knowledge (Boshier, 1971; Boshier, 1973; Boshier & Collins, 1985). In Greece, the study of Karalis (2013) in education programs reveals that the answer "because I like to learn new things" gathered the highest rates, while high rates are accounted for the answer "because education has to last throughout our lives". High acceptance rates are also noted for reasons of professional development such as an increase in earnings, formal qualifications, finding better work, and securing a job. The same results were also found in the Karalis survey (2016) which reports the results of the three phases of his survey (2011, 2013, 2016) and it appears that the main trends remain the same, i.e. high rates are found in the categories 'cognitive interest' and 'professional advancement', while it should be noted that the findings for civil servants are not different from those of other professional categories. However, some studies show that less qualified people say that they enroll in a training course because they want to improve their self-esteem (Valentine, 1990) and to meet young people (Daehlen & Ure, 2009, Kim & Merriam, 2004).

In a survey of a sample of 223 Primary Education Teachers in two regions of Greece, the two main factors influencing their participation in training were firstly the personal development and, secondly, the acquisition of better qualifications (Salpigidis, 2011). At the survey of the National Center for Social Research (2008) the most important reasons teachers would follow a training program in the future is the improvement of teaching methods (46%) and techniques (25%) and the improvement of their scientific knowledge. On the other side, formal certification from a training program (0.7%), avoiding the daily routine (4.7%) and meeting with colleagues (4.4%) do not seem to be particularly important motivators. In a survey of 272 teachers for the assessment of ICT (Level 1 and Level 2) Training Programs, it was found that the majority of the sample (80.2%) declared personal development as a motive to participation in ICT programs, 54.1% and a 16.2% curiosity (Sergis & Cottman, 2014). Also, in a survey with a sample of 556 Primary and Secondary Teachers, teachers were found to be involved in training for their professional development (MO = 6.13) and to a lesser extent in the career development (Pampouri, Tsolakidou & Mavropoulos, 2020), while a similar survey to adult educators at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki found that the main reasons for participation were professional (Mavropoulos, Sipitanou & Pampouri, 2019).

Regarding the barriers to participation in training, it was found that situational barriers are the main factors for not participating in training (lack of time due to work obligations, childcare, to other activities or taking care relatives). Also, the main obstacle regarding the institutional barriers is the participation cost, which accounts for a high percentage of trainees for both programs. Of the remaining institutional barriers, relatively high rates in both samples were: (a) the seminars taking place in inconvenient days and hours, (b) the lack of information on the seminars and (c) the quality and the organization of seminars which are not at the desired level. It is worth noting the percentage's difference between the two samples regarding the barrier of professional obligations, since the percentage at the E.E.D.V.M. program is up to 47.44%, while in the E.E.K. program the percentage reaches to 60%. This difference may be explained by the fact that the first program was attended by several unemployed trainees who had free time while, the participants in the second program were mainly employees.

As we can see, the cost of participation is the biggest barrier since it is selected by more than 60% of both research samples, as is the case of Karalis survey (2016) in all its phases, while in the 2016 survey there is a significant increase in the percentage of those who state as a barrier the lack of time due to childcare (from 28.3% in 2011 to 41.8% in 2013 and 46.2% in 2016). As we can assess, many individuals have a difficulty to self-finance their education or even participate in offered programs. It is necessary to point out that the first ten barriers are structural barriers according to Rubenson–Desjardins typology, seven factors are organizational barriers and three are mostly situational barriers according to Cross typology. Respectively, the dispositional barriers recorded low rates, a fact that we can assume the positive predispositions of adults' learners toward education. It is worth noting that in his survey, Karalis (2016) concluded in the same results, regarding the predominant types of barriers.

Regarding the factors that facilitate adults' participation in training, it was found that: (a) distance learning is the most important factor in both research samples, perhaps because both programs were distance learning programs; (b) recognition of qualifications acquired through monitoring is the second most important facilitating factor; and (c) salary improvement and more information on seminars held are the following factors indicating the same rates in both samples (27,14% in the first sample and 33.49% in the second sample). It is worth noting that the first four facilitating factors to participation in training coincide with the results of Karalis survey (2016).

## 5. Conclusion

The present study aimed to highlight the reasons and obstacles for the participation of trainees in two training programs of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. It was found that the main motives for participation concerned professional development ('in order to maintain my job', 'to increase my financial earnings', 'to be more profitable in my work') and personal development ('because I like to learn new things', 'because education has to last throughout our lives'), observing that adult learners have both intrinsic motives and extrinsic motives regarding the registration and the participation in adult education (Berker & Horn, 2003, Carré, 2001; Pires, 2009; Vertongen et al., 2009). As far as the barriers to participation are concerned, the main barriers are the situational and the organizational ones according to the statements of the survey respondents. Different categories of barriers to participation in adult education can be considered to affect an individual at different stages/needs of his life and different dimensions of learning. Most importantly, the emotional and environmental dimension seems to be mainly influenced by the different barriers and therefore requires a great deal of attention and can be the subject of future research. Currently, a critical challenge for adult learning is to overcome multidimensional barriers to participation and provide flexible services and relevant responses for the demands of the labor market and society.

The experience and the way an adult really appreciates education in relation to the stages of his life needs to be further studied. How do the motivational factors and barriers to adult education affect the different dimensions of learning and how do the different dimensions really interact with each other and shape the decision to participate in adult education, especially in a multi-faceted life of an adult learner? Finally, in order to better understand the involvement of adults in learning, it is also important to explore the level of autonomy and self-determination, i.e. whether they have a more autonomous or more controlled motivation.

## References

- Berker, A., & Horn, L. (2003). Work first, study second: Adult undergraduates who combine employment and postsecondary enrollment. (NCES 2003-167). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC.
- Boeren, E., Holford, J., Nicaise, I. & Baert, H. (2012). Why do adults learn?: Developing a motivational typology across 12 European countries. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*. 10(2) 247-269.
- Boshier, R. (1971). Motivational orientations of adult education participants: A factor analytic exploration



- of Houle's typology. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 21(2), 3-26.
- Boshier, R. (1973). Educational participation and dropout: A theoretical model. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 23(4), 255-282.
- Boshier, R., and Collins, J.B. (1985). The Houle typology after twenty-two years: A large-scale empirical test. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 35(3), 113-130.
- Brookfield, S. (1995a). *Adult Learning: An Overview*. In A. Tuinjmans (ed.), *International Encyclopaedia of Education*. Oxford: Pergamon Press
- Bye, D., Pushkar, D., & Conway, M. (2007). Motivation, interest, and positive affect in traditional and nontraditional undergraduate students. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 57 (2), 141-158. DOI: 10.1177/0741713606294235.
- Carré, P. (2000). Motivation for adult education: From engagement to performance. Document presented at AERC 2000 Conference in Vancouver (BC), Canada, June 2000. Retrieved from: <http://www.edst.educ.ubc.ca/aerc/2000/carrep1-final.PDF>
- Chao, R. (2009). Understanding the Adult Learners' Motivation and Barriers to Learning. Educating the adult educator: Quality provision and assessment in Europe, ESREA-ReNAdET e-book Conference Proceedings pp. 905 – 915, paper presented during the ESREA-ReNAdET inaugural conference: Educating the Adult Educator: Quality Provision and Assessment held 6 to 9 November 2009 at the University of Macedonia, Thessaloniki, Greece.
- Cofer, C. N., & Appley, M. H. (1968). *Motivation: Theory and Research* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed) . New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Cross K. P. (1992). *Adults as learners: Increasing participation and facilitating learning*. San Francisco: Jossey –Bass.
- Daehlen, M., & Ure, O. B. (2009). Low-skilled adults in formal continuing education: does their motivation differ from other learners? *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 68(5), 661-674.
- European Commission (2001). *Lisbon Strategy*. Brussels.
- Hiemstra, R. & Sisco, B. (1990). *Individualizing instruction for adult learners: Making learning personal, powerful, and successful*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Hilgard, E.R. (1962). *Introduction to psychology* (3rd ed.). New York: Harcourt
- Houle, C. O. (1961). *The inquiring mind*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Illeris, K. (2007). *How We Learn: Learning and non learning in school and beyond*. New York: Routledge.
- Justice, K., & Dornan, T. (2001). Metacognitive differences between traditional-age and nontraditional-age college students. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 51, 236-249.
- Karalis, A. (2013). *Motives and barriers to adult participation in Lifelong Learning*. Athens: INE GSEE and IME GSEVEE.
- Karalis, T. (2016). *Adult participation in lifelong learning: Barriers & motives for participation (2011-2016)*. Athens: INE GSEE and IME GSEVEE.
- Karalis, Th. (2017). Shooting a moving target: The Sisyphus boulder of increasing participation in adult education during the period of economic crisis. *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education*, 23(1) 78–96.
- Kim, A., & Merriam, S. (2004). Motivation for learning among older adults in a learning in retirement institute. *Educational Gerontology*, 30: 441–455.
- Konrad, J. (2005). Learning motivation of lower qualified workers. Centre for Applied Research in Education, University of East Anglia.
- Kostaridou-Euclidis, A. (1997). *Psychology of motives*, Athens: Greek Letters.
- Kyndt, E., Michielsen, M., Van Nooten, L., Nijs, S., & Baert, H. (2011): Learning in the second half of the career: stimulating and prohibiting reasons for participation in formal learning activities. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 30(5), 681-699.
- Mavropoulos, A., Sipitanou, A. & Pampouri A. (2019). Training of Adult Trainers: Implementation and Evaluation of a Higher Education Program in Greece. *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 20 (1), 279-287. doi: <https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v20i1.4143>
- Merriam, S. & Caffarella, R. (1991). *Learning in Adulthood*. San Francisco: Jossey -Bass.
- Murphy, H. & Roopchand, N. (2003). Intrinsic motivation and self-esteem in traditional and mature students at a post-1992 university in the north-east of England. *Educational Studies*, 29(2/3), 243-259. doi.org/10.1080/03055690303278.
- National Center for Social Research & Kedros SA (2008). *Detection of training needs in secondary education*. Athens: O.E.EK.
- Noe, R., Tews, M. & Dachner, A. (2010). Learner Engagement: A New Perspective for Our Understanding of Learner Motivation and Workplace Learning. *The Academy of Management Annals*, 4(1), 279-315.
- Noe, R., Clarke, D. & Klein, H. (2014). Learning in the Twenty-First Century Workplace. *Annu. Rev. Organ. Psychol. Organ. Behav.*, 1, 245-75.
- Pampouri, A., Tsolakidou, P. & Mavropoulos, A. (2020). Training of Lifelong Learning Adult Trainers: Motivation and Obstacles, ICERI2020 Proceedings, 6212-6219.
- Pires, A. L. S. (2009). Higher education and adult motivation towards lifelong learning: an empirical analysis of university post-graduates perspectives.

- European journal of vocational training, 46, 129-150.
- Platsidou, M., & Gonida, E. (2005). Motivational theories in the workplace. At A. Kapsalis (Ed.) *Organization and Administration of School Units* (pp 159-182). Thessaloniki: University of Macedonia.
- Rubenson, K., & Desjardins, R. (2009). The Impact of Welfare State Regimes on Barriers to Participation in adult Education: A Bounded Agency Model, *Adult Education Quarterly*, 59/3, 187-207.
- Sergis, St., & Koutromanos G. (2014). Evaluation of Training Programs by Participants Teachers. *Science of Education*, 1 (2014).
- Sipitanou, A.A., Salpingidis, SA & Plattsidou, M. (2012). The Educational Needs of Primary Education Teachers in Proceedings of the Pan-Hellenic Conference with International Participation Quality in Education: Trends and Prospects (Vol.2) 11-13 May 2012, Athens University of Economics and Business.
- Steinberg, L. C. (2006). The graying freshman: examining achievement motivation goals and academic performance in traditional and nontraditional undergraduate students. (doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from: Proquest (1438849).
- Valentine, T. (1990). What motivates adults to participate in the Federal Adult Basic Education Program? *Research on adult basic education*. Number 1/Series 3. Des Moines: Iowa State Department of Education.
- Vergides, D. (1998). Modern economic and social developments in Greece and Open Education. In: D. Vergides, A. Lionarakis, A. Lykourgiotis, V. Maikakis & C. Matralis, *Open and Distance Education Institutions and Operations*, vol. A (pp. 95-111). Patras: Hellenic Open University.
- Vertongen, G., Bourgeois, E., Nils, F., de Viron, F. & Traversa, J. (2009). Les motifs d'entrée en formation des adultes en reprise d'études universitaires. *L'Orientation Scolaire et Professionnelle*, 38, 25-44.
- Yousef, A. M. F., Chatti, M. A., Wosnitza, M., & Schroeder, U. (2015). A Cluster Analysis of MOOC Stakeholder Perspectives. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, 12(1) 74-90. doi <http://dx.doi.org/10.7238/rusc.v12i1.2253>
- Harasim L. (1990), *Online education: perspectives on a new environments*, New York, Praeger.
- Johnson A., Raath M. A., Moggi-Cecchi J., Doyle G. A., eds (2018), *Humanity from African Naissance to Coming Millennia*, Firenze, Florence University Press.
- Smith F. (2015a), Is computer-mediated communication intrinsically apt to enhance democracy in organisations? *Human Relations*, 47 (1), 45-62.
- Smith F. (2015b). Creating technology-supported learning communities, URL:<http://carbon.cudenver.edu/~bwilson/learncomm.html> (accessed on 15th November 2004).