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Educational activity of pedagogy students at the University of Rzeszów in the context of lifelong learning: Research findings

Aktywność edukacyjna studentów kończących pedagogikę na Uniwersytecie Rzeszowskim w kontekście uczenia się przez całe życie – doniesienie z badań

Abstract

Lifelong learning constitutes one of the greatest challenges of today's knowledge-based society. Ongoing civilizational, technological, and socio-economic changes make the continuous updating of knowledge, the improvement of skills, and the development of competencies essential conditions for effective functioning in personal, social, and professional life. Human activity, understood as an inherent characteristic of human functioning and a form of conscious interaction with the surrounding reality, is reflected in many areas of life, including educational activity. Educational activity has become an important subject of research in numerous academic disciplines, particularly pedagogy, psychology, and sociology. The purpose of this paper is to present manifestations of the educational activity of students completing degree programmes in Pedagogy at the University of Rzeszów.

Keywords: activity, educational activity, motives for activity, educational plans, lifelong learning

Streszczenie

Uczenie się przez całe życie stanowi jedno z najważniejszych wyzwań współczesnego społeczeństwa opartego na wiedzy. Postępujące przemiany cywilizacyjne, technologiczne i społeczno-gospodarcze powodują, że systematyczne aktualizowanie wiedzy, doskonalenie umiejętności oraz rozwijanie kompetencji stają się warunkiem skutecznego funkcjonowania człowieka w życiu osobistym, społecznym i zawodowym. Aktywność człowieka, rozumiana jako immanentna właściwość jego funkcjonowania oraz forma świadomego oddziaływania na otaczającą rzeczywistość, znajduje odzwierciedlenie w wielu obszarach życia, w tym w aktywności edukacyjnej. Problematyka aktywności edukacyjnej stanowi przedmiot zainteresowania licznych dyscyplin naukowych, w szczególności pedagogiki, psychologii oraz socjologii. Celem niniejszego opracowania jest ukazanie przejawów aktywności edukacyjnej studentów kończących studia na kierunku pedagogika na Uniwersytecie Rzeszowskim.

Słowa kluczowe: aktywność, aktywność edukacyjna, motywy aktywności, plany edukacyjne, uczenie się przez całe życie

Introduction

Activity is an inherent element of human life, enabling individuals to establish relationships with their environment, gain experience, influence reality, and participate in its transformation. The forms of activity change across successive stages of development and depend on age, needs, and the social roles individuals perform.

Among the fundamental forms of human activity, learning occupies a special place, as it enables individuals to acquire knowledge, develop skills, and shape attitudes toward themselves, other people, and the surrounding world. Learning is not limited to childhood or formal schooling; rather, it is a lifelong process extending from early childhood through adolescence and adulthood to old age.[1] At different stages of life, only the goals, motives, and forms of educational activity change, reflecting individuals' needs and the challenges arising from changing social and civilizational conditions.

The concept of **lifelong learning** assumes that human development does not end with the completion of formal education. Education is understood as a continuous process that enables individuals to improve their competencies, adapt to new circumstances, and participate actively in social, professional, and cultural life. In this context, the educational activity undertaken by university students is of particular importance. As future teachers, they should cultivate an openness to acquiring knowledge and continuously improving their competencies even after completing their formal education. The period of university study constitutes a crucial stage in developing readiness for lifelong learning and establishing habits that support continuous personal and professional development. Therefore, it is important to conduct research on students' educational activity and the factors influencing their engagement in the learning process. Such analyses make it possible to determine the extent to which the idea of lifelong learning is reflected in the attitudes and behaviours of individuals completing higher education.

The aim of this article is to present selected findings from own research concerning the educational activity of students completing degree programmes in Pedagogy at the University of Rzeszów, viewed in the context of the implementation of the lifelong learning concept.

Theoretical considerations regarding activity

There are numerous definitions of the term 'activity' in the literature. According to Arthur S. Reber and Emily S. Reber, activity constitutes a general term that can be used as a synonym for action, movement, behaviour, mental processes,

[1] *Uczenie się jako przedsięwzięcie na całe życie*, ed. T. Bauman, Kraków 2005.

physiological functions, etc.[2] It is a tendency, an ability to act and take initiative, active participation in something.[3] According to Wincenty Okoń, activity can be discussed by referring it to the biological sphere of the human life and considered in the aspect of the body functions that aim at satisfying its needs. In the psychological sphere, activity constitutes an individual property of the individual consisting of a higher frequency and intensity of a particular kind of activity than in others.[4] This is a feature of the living organisms, including humans, understood as undertaking and conducting activities directed by various needs or forced by the environment.[5] Human activity constitutes an inborn ability of the person. It has a developmental character, determined by genetic, environmental and situational factors.[6]

Participation in changing the natural and socio-cultural environment according to human needs, goals and ideals is a special feature of the human activity.[7] Human activity is of a regulatory nature and is subject to constant changes to regulate the relations between an individual and the world surrounding him or her. The activities undertaken by a person are of functional nature and they always take place in an organised and targeted manner. Some of these activities can be directed and organised better by a person, while others are more difficult for the individual. The direction of the activities is determined by the needs or tasks whose implementation depends on the mental and cultural development of the individual, on the development of the environment in which the person lives and on the role that man plays in that environment.[8]

Activity constitutes an indicator of the mental development of the individual, it also undergoes formation and improvement during the life. Therefore, it has a progressive character, consisting in the fact that during the person's life, the areas of his or her activity are increased and the activities performed by him or her are improved.[9] Human activity is defined as actions serving to satisfy the human needs of a biological (living), psychological, social (participation in the life of various social groups) and cultural (participation in cultural life and cultural legacy) nature. Human activity is a moral and volitional property of the personality that manifests itself in undertaking the intentional actions leading to solving social and individual

[2] A.S. Reber, E.S. Reber, *Słownik psychologii*, Warszawa 2008, p. 35.

[3] H. Zgółkowa, *Praktyczny słownik współczesnej polszczyzny*, Poznań 1996, p. 178.

[4] W. Okoń, *Nowy słownik pedagogiczny*, Warszawa 1996, p. 16.

[5] T.W. Nowacki, K. Korabiowska-Nowacka, B. Baraniak, *Nowy słownik pedagogiki pracy*, Warszawa 2000, p. 12.

[6] J. Kirenko, *Zasoby odpornościowe osób niepełnosprawnych jako predykator ich aktywności życiowej* [in:] *Wielowymiarowość aktywności i aktywizacji*, ed. S. Guz, Warszawa 2008, p. 263.

[7] W. Okoń*, Nowy słownik*…, p. 16.

[8] T. Tomaszewski, *Aktywność człowieka* [in:] *Psychologia jako nauka o człowieku*, eds. M. Maruszewski, J. Reykowski, T. Tomaszewski*,* Warszawa 1966, pp. 201–210.

[9] M. Przetacznik-Gierowska, M. Tyszkowa, *Psychologia rozwoju człowieka. Zagadnienia ogólne*, Warszawa 2000, p. 151.

tasks, usually of a complex nature.[10] It concerns various spheres of the human life, consequently it can be considered, e.g., in the intellectual, reception, sensory, motor, verbal or emotional sphere.

In the process of human development, activity of the individual changes in numerous ways. It is primarily subject to the processes of differentiation, reorganization and integration. Changes in intensity constitute the result of these processes (intensity of a particular type of activity and, as a consequence, transition of the activity to an even higher level of organization). While considering activity from the point of view of the organization levels, the following are commonly distinguished: chaotic activity, imitative activity, the one guided by current instructions, the one guided by current tasks, independence, creativity.[11]

In conclusion, it should be noted that each human activity requires actions. The state of arousal, action, building generalizations and assimilating knowledge concerning the surrounding reality constitutes the essence of activity. Activity is a particularly broad concept that is applicable in many fields of science. Representatives of the numerous scientific disciplines are interested in it, especially pedagogues, psychologists, sociologists. It is also a key concept in sport.[12] According to Reber and Reber, the term of activity – due to a high degree of generality – is combined with the adjectives that define it, e.g. goal-oriented activity, accidental activity, problem-solving activity.[13] Okoń distinguishes social activity that manifests itself in production work, socio-cultural activity, sport and play, intellectual activity, which takes place at school, in scientific work and – in general – in independent solutions of the new problems, amateur activity, undertaken by non-professionals in various fields of science, art and technology.[14]

This elaboration focuses on the educational activity of the students graduating from the Faculty of Pedagogy at the University of Rzeszów. It is understood as active participation in the process of the organized education and independent learning. Educational activity of the adults is a deliberately targeted and intentional behaviour related to the adaptation of the competences of the individual to the requirements of the changing socio-economic reality.[15] This activity may manifest itself in the following: participation in school and out-of-school forms of education of the adults, self-education, improvement of the vocational qualifications and formulation of further educational plans. The conditions of educational activity

[10] T.W. Nowacki, K. Korabiowska-Nowacka, B. Baraniak, *Nowy słownik*…, p. 12.

[11] W. Furmanek, *Z teorii edukacji zawodowej*, Lublin 1998, p. 285.

[12] H. Zgółkowa, *Praktyczny słownik*…, p. 178.

[13] A.S. Reber, E.S. Reber, *Słownik* ..., p. 35.

[14] W. Okoń*, Nowy słownik psychologii*, p. 16.

[15] E. Solarczyk-Ambrozik, *Kształcenie ustawiczne w perspektywie globalnej i lokalnej. Między wymogami rynku a indywidualnymi strategiami edukacyjnymi*, Poznań 2004, p. 198, after: J. Szłapińska, *Podnoszenie wartości kapitału edukacyjnego pracowników w systemie kształcenia ustawicznego*, Poznań 2009, p. 132.

result both from the situation of the individual and his or her subjective attitude towards learning as well as from external influences, i.e. from the socio-economic and cultural environment.[16]

Subject and purpose of the research

The subject of the study was the types of activities undertaken by students completing degree programmes in Pedagogy at the University of Rzeszów and their plans for further development. The aim of the research was to determine:

a) types of activities undertaken by students;
b) factors that encourage students to take up particular activities;
c) plans for further development.

In accordance with the assumed objectives of the research, the following research problem has been formulated: *What types of activities are undertaken by students completing degree programmes in Pedagogy?*

The following specific problems have formulated, among others, to the main problem:

1. What kinds of educational activities are undertaken by students of pedagogy?
2. What kinds of socio-cultural activities are undertaken by students of pedagogy?
3. What kinds of vocational activity are undertaken by students of pedagogy?
4. What is the relationship between the activities undertaken during studies and future professional work?
5. What are further educational and vocational plans of the students?

Due to the wide range of issues covered, the article analyses only issues related to the educational activity of students completing degree programmes in pedagogy.

Organization and course of the research

The study, conducted using a questionnaire survey, was carried out in May 2025 among 146 students (144 women and 2 men) completing Master's degree studies in Pedagogy (specializations: Care and Educational Pedagogy, Rehabilitation Pedagogy, and Preschool and Early Childhood Education). Selection of the last year students as a research group was deliberate. The examined students will be looking for a job in a few weeks' time. What will they write in their Curriculum Vitae? Which achievements will they take pride in? The research was supposed to encourage students to self-assess their own activities undertaken during the studies.

[16] J. Szłapińska, *Podnoszenie wartości kapitału edukacyjnego pracowników w systemie kształcenia ustawicznego*, Poznań 2009, p. 132.

The research used a questionnaire that consisted of 22 questions concerning various types of activity (educational, vocational, cultural, social) undertaken by students and their plans for further development. The analysis included only the questions related to evaluation of the educational activity of the students.

Analysis of the results of the author's own research

Students have numerous opportunities to undertake various types of activity during their studies. They can participate in open lectures, courses, trainings, scientific clubs, student organizations, etc. Universities establish cooperation with employers. Apart from the curricular internships, students can also take part in the training programs and continue their studies at another university in Poland or abroad for a certain period of time.

Students were able to indicate several activities while being asked the question: *Which activities did you undertake during the studies?* The majority of students indicated several activities.

Table 1. Activities undertaken by students

No.	Undertaken activities	Number of people	%
1.	Participation in free courses (trainings)	84	57.53
2.	Participation in paid courses (trainings)	14	9.59
3.	Participation in open lectures	42	28.77
4.	Participation in scientific conferences (passive)	143	97.94
5.	Participation in scientific conferences (active)	25	17.12
6.	Activity in scientific clubs	29	19.86
7.	Studies at a different major (specializations)	4	2.74

Note: data in the table do not sum up.
Source: Author's own elaboration.

The largest number of the respondents, 97.94% (143 people), indicated participation in scientific conferences. This answer is not surprising. Students are encouraged to participate actively in the conferences organised at the university. Sometimes, participation in these conferences is within the framework of particular classes, then the student is obliged to take part in the conference. On the other hand, significantly fewer people get involved in the organization of these projects. Only 17.12% (25 people) answered "yes" to the question *Have you ever assisted in the organization of the scientific conference?*

Students cannot always afford to participate in paid trainings. Only 9.59% (14 people) indicated that they had participated in these types of trainings. However, students do well in searching for free trainings. Participation in free courses and

trainings was marked by 57.53% of the respondents. Universities, e.g. through Academic Career Offices, organize these types of trainings as well to ensure that students acquire the necessary skills. Among other activities, the respondents indicated the following: participation in open lectures (28.77% – 42 people), activity in scientific clubs (19.86% – 29 people). Only 2.74% (4 people) of the respondents indicated studies at another major or specialization.

Students were asked the question *What are the motives for undertaking various types of educational activity of the students?*, being provided with the option to choose one of five answers (Table 2).

Table 2. Motives for undertaking educational activity

No.	Undertaken activities	Number of people	%
1.	Acquisition of knowledge, skills	14	9.59
2.	Obtaining a certificate (diploma, certification)	122	83.56
3.	Spending free time	3	2.05
4.	Possibility to be with others (getting to know other people)	7	4.79
5.	Other reasons	0	0

Source: Author's own elaboration.

A vast majority of the respondents (83.56% – people122) indicated that the motive for undertaking educational activity is to obtain a diploma (certificate) confirming acquisition of knowledge and skills. 9.59% of the respondents marked acquisition of knowledge and skills, 4.79% of the respondents indicated the opportunity to meet other people, 2.05% of the respondents marked spending their free time.

Table 3. Plans for further education

No.	Continuing education	Number of people	%
1.	Yes, doctoral studies	3	2.05
2.	Yes, postgraduate studies	48	32.88
3.	Yes, short courses, training	58	39.73
4.	I don't know	37	25.34

Source: Author's own elaboration.

When asked the question: *Do you plan to continue your education through doctoral or postgraduate studies?*, 37 respondents indicated that they had not yet decided. Among those who expressed a desire for further professional development, the most frequently chosen option was participation in short courses and training (39.73% – 58 people). Postgraduate studies were selected by 32.88% (48 people) of respondents, while only 2.05% (3 people) expressed a desire to undertake doctoral

studies. The results indicate that students interested in continuing their education prefer shorter, practice-oriented forms of professional development aimed at improving competencies.

97.26% (142 people) of respondents answered "no" to the question *Do you think that knowledge and skills acquired during the studies will be sufficient to have and maintain a job?* This answer confirms that students are aware of the necessity of continuous learning. They know that knowledge and skills acquired during their studies will have to be updated and supplemented.

Overall, the results demonstrate that students are aware of the importance of continuous development and the need to update their knowledge and skills throughout their professional careers. Although most respondents do not plan to pursue formal academic education after graduation, they recognize the value of additional forms of learning, particularly short-term courses and training aimed at improving professional competencies. This indicates that students perceive lifelong learning as an essential element of maintaining competitiveness in the changing labour market.

Conclusion

The conducted research made it possible to determine the educational activity of students completing degree programmes in Pedagogy and their attitudes towards further professional development in the context of the lifelong learning concept. The findings indicate that the respondents undertake various forms of educational activity, recognizing the need to systematically expand their knowledge and improve their skills already during their studies. Participation in scientific conferences as well as free courses and training programmes attracted particular interest, which demonstrates students' active search for opportunities to develop competencies useful in their future professional work.

The analysis of the research results indicates that students are aware of the dynamic changes taking place in the labour market and the necessity of systematically updating their knowledge and skills. The vast majority of respondents stated that the competencies acquired during their studies would not be sufficient to maintain employment throughout their entire professional career. This confirms that the participants understand the idea of lifelong learning as a continuous process of development that extends beyond formal academic education.

At the same time, the results show that students primarily prefer shorter, practically oriented forms of professional development, such as courses and training programmes, which enable them to acquire new competencies corresponding to current professional requirements. The lower level of interest in doctoral studies may result from the fact that most Pedagogy students perceive professional

development mainly in terms of practical preparation for their future profession rather than pursuing an academic career.

The research findings also highlight the important role of higher education institutions in creating conditions that support students' educational activity. Organizing conferences, open lectures, training programmes, and supporting student research clubs constitute important elements in preparing young people to function in a knowledge-based society. Universities not only provide specialist knowledge but also shape attitudes of openness towards further learning, self-education, and professional development.

In conclusion, it can be stated that Pedagogy students recognize the need for continuous development and perceive education as a lifelong process. Although not all graduates plan to continue formal education after completing their studies, the vast majority of respondents demonstrate readiness to undertake various activities aimed at improving their qualifications. Awareness of the necessity for continuous improvement of competencies constitutes an important element of the professional preparation of future educators and remains consistent with the assumptions of the lifelong learning concept.

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