

# TEORIA I PRAKTYKA ANDRAGOGICZNA ZA GRANICĄ

*Nina Rapo*

ORCID 0000-0003-2077-4313

## COMPETENCES FOR LIFELONG LEARNING OF PEDAGOGY STUDENTS IN CROATIA AND POLAND

**Słowa kluczowe:** Uczenie się przez całe życie, mobilność, kompetencje, kompetencje w uczeniu się przez całe życie, Polska, Chorwacja, studenci pedagogiki

**Abstrakt:** Uczenie się przez całe życie jest strategicznym priorytetem dla krajów Europejskich, ponieważ przynosi społeczną stabilizację i rozwój oraz wzrost ekonomiczny dzięki właściwie przeszkolonej, łatwo się przystosowującej i mobilnej kadrze. Uważa się, że osoby chcące uczestniczyć w programach uczenia się przez całe życie i mobilnościach powinny/muszą posiadać następujące kompetencje w uczeniu się przez całe życie: (1) wyznaczenie celów edukacyjnych; (2) wykorzystanie właściwej wiedzy i umiejętności; (3) samoorganizacja i samoocena; (4) odnajdywanie potrzebnych informacji (Kirby R. i wsp., 2010) oraz (1) niezależność w uczeniu się i (2) zwyczaje dotyczące przyswajania wiedzy (Macaskill and Taylor 2009). W celu poznania rozwoju kompetencji w uczeniu się przez całe życie badanie zostało przeprowadzone wśród studentów ostatnich lat na poziomie licencyjnym i magisterskim na Uniwersytecie w Rijece oraz na Uniwersytecie Mikołaja Kopernika w Toruniu. W badaniu służącym zmierzeniu kompetencji w uczeniu się przez całe życie wykorzystano kwestionariusze opracowane przez Kirby R. i in. (2010) oraz Macaskill i Taylor (2009). Badanie to miało na celu sprawdzenie, czy studenci pedagogiki z Chorwacji i Polski posiadają kompetencje w uczeniu się przez całe życie, oraz czy istnieją różnice między studentami chorwackimi i polskimi, a także czy jest powiązanie między posiadanymi kompetencjami a udziałem studentów w programach uczenia się przez całe życie i mobilnościach. Wyniki badania pokazały, iż respondenci wysoko oceniają rolę kompetencji w uczeniu się przez całe życie, jednakże równocześnie są słabo zaangażowani w programy uczenia się przez całe życie i mobilności.

## Introduction

Education and science should be the country's development priorities as they can contribute to long-term social stability, economic growth, prosperity and cultural identity. According to the Europe 2020 (2015), lifelong learning is the key to competitiveness and employability, social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development. Fast social-economic changes need new and different knowledge, skills and ways of working, and thus new ways and approaches to learning. The traditional model of learning in youth, and then employment in the same profession „to the end of life” ceases to meet the demands of the modern labor market, as individuals can change several jobs during their lifetime. That is, every individual must learn new knowledge and get new competencies so that they can keep up with these changes. (Meerah et al., 2010) Such an individual should be responsible for his own learning, open to new experiences, have confidence in the beginning of new activities and should be motivated. (Macaskill and Taylor, 2010) On the other hand, Erasmus + Academic Mobility (Student Exchange and Student Practice) provides individuals with the experience of studying, working and living in a different academic, cultural and social environment. As a result, mobile individuals increase their employment opportunities and market competitiveness, social awareness increases and increases the level of tolerance and awareness of the necessity of combating all forms of discrimination that meet the set goals of development.

In Croatia and Poland, many other researches on lifelong learning have been conducted (Półturzycki, 2003; Klapan, 2004; Pavin et al., 2005; Vizek Vidović, 2005; Klapan, Rafajac, Rončević (2009), Rajić and Lapat, 2010; Szczucka et al., 2012; Jukić and Ringel, 2013; Badanie Aktywności Edukacyjnej Ludności EU (EU LFS), Badanie Edukacji Dorosłych (AES), Badanie Zawodowego Kształcenia Ustawicznego (CVTS)) If we take into account the importance of lifelong learning as a key element in adapting to these rapid changes in society, there is still a huge shortage of measuring instruments as well as research in that area. Within the field of lifelong learning and research studies, the issue of student competences as lifelong learners has not yet been explored in Croatia and Poland, thus arises the interest and needs of research competences for lifelong learning.

## Background

According to the strategy Europe 2020 (2015), a quarter of the total number of students can poorly read, every seventh young person is abandoning early education and around 80 million people have weak or just basic skills. Approximately 50% of young people finish their secondary education, after completion their competences often fail to meet the needs of the labor market. Lifelong learning programs are best used by better educated people.

The Eurostat statistics give us a clear picture of the situation of lifelong learning in individual EU countries, including Croatia and Poland. Results for 2016 Adult Education Surveys (AES) show that a total of 3.0% of Croatia's population and 3.7% of Poland's population aged 25–64 take part in lifelong learning. According to the results, the largest percentage of the population involved is in Sweden (29.6%) and Denmark (27.7%). (Eurostat, 2016)

Although Croatia has adapted many strategies and documents connected with LLL for the last ten years, statistics show that 2.9% of Croats in the age from 25 to 64 have no formal education and the percentage of inclusion in LLL programs is far below European (Meuronen T. et al., 2014) According to the BAED research in Poland (2000), analyzes have shown that 35% of people aged between 25 and 64 (5.1 million) are included in adult education.

Meerah et al. (2010) believe that it is necessary to adapt and constantly learn new skills in order to keep up with the constant changes that occur and therefore believe that modern universities can no longer satisfy themselves by providing well-established and current knowledge and skills to their students. The role of high (formal) education has changed its role from the traditional notion of formal education as transferring information and accepting wisdom in terms of knowledge and skills from different areas. Candy, Crebert and O'Leary (1994) and Knapper and Cropley (2000 according to Kirby et al, 2010) see the great importance of high (formal) education in providing students with generic skills to conduct their own learning in the various situations they will encounter after they leave the formal education system. Low inclusion in lifelong learning programs offers less opportunities for inclusion in learning in general. In order to participate in lifelong learning programs and mobility programs, users of these programs should have lifelong learning competencies and should become autonomous learners (Bryde and Milburn, 1990; Chemers, Hu and Garcia, 2001; Stephenson and Laycock, 1993; Macaskill and Taylor, 2009; : 3). Kirby et al. (2010) describe an efficient lifelong learner as a person who: sets educational goals; apply appropriate knowledge and skills; self-defines and self-directs; knows how to find the necessary information; adjusts learning strategies to different situations and conditions of work. Meer et al (2010) mentioned authors (Cacioppo & Petty, 1984; Deakin Crick et al., 2004; Kirby et al., 2010) that attempted to examine the development of competences for lifelong learning, because it believes that „... it is necessary to examine whether students have lifelong learning competences to better understand lifelong learning”.

## **Methodology**

### ***Participants***

Students of Pedagogy (n = 72) at the undergraduate and graduate studies of pedagogy of the University of Rijeka (Croatia) and Mikolaja Kopernika University in Torun (Poland) . The sample included students from Croatia and Poland because

the research sought to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference in the participation of students in mobility programs since Poland has been in the European Union for a longer period of time which means they have longer tradition of mobility programs for young people and students. Also included in the sample are students of pedagogy because pedagogy as a profession requires lifelong learning and self-directed learning.

### ***Procedure***

The survey used in this study is composed of 3 different instruments. The first is the Macaskill and Taylor (2010) instrument that consists of 12 particles and measures the independence of learning and learning habits. Another instrument is Kirby et al. (2010) which measures the five characteristics of lifelong learners and the third part of the questionnaire is taken from the research by Klapan et al. (2009), which includes student involvement in lifelong learning programs. In the survey there are open questions about self-education and student involvement in mobility programs (student exchanges, youth exchanges and volunteering). The data collected through the questionnaire are processed in the analysis and processing of statistical data „IBM SPSS Statistics”.

The part of Macaskill and Taylor (2010) and Kirby et al. (2010) questionnaire are originally in English. The survey used in this research was translated into Croatian and Polish, and during the translation the emphasis was placed on the fact that the survey is most similar to the original meaning. The survey consists of 26 components examining the development of lifelong learning competences and 3 open issues on inclusion in lifelong learning programs, self-education and inclusion in mobility programs. Answers in instruments from Kirby, R. et al. (2010) and Macaskill and Taylor (2009), were recorded on the Likert scale of 1 (I completely do not apply to me) to 5 (I fully apply to me). Reply with higher results indicate a greater level of autonomy, more independence and more positive attitudes about learning (Macaskill and Taylor, 2009) while some particles negatively formulated to prevent bias responses. In the opened questions regarding participation in lifelong learning programs and mobility, respondents state whether they have participated in some lifelong learning program, self-education or mobility program in 12 months prior to the research implementation. Also, respondents explained the reasons for their participation and the reasons why they did not participate in any of the programs examined.

## **Results**

### ***Competences for lifelong learning in Croatian and Polish pedagogical students***

According to the tasks of research, results show that the Croatian and Polish students have competences for lifelong learning, which confirm the research hypothesis. The results show that both students from the University of Rijeka and

from the Nicolaus Copernicus University show high scores in all categories of lifelong learning competences.

**Table 1. Competences for lifelong learning in Croatian and Polish pedagogical students**

Competences	Claims	Croatia		Poland	
the application of appropriate knowledge and skills (B).	I'm trying to link the theoretical knowledge with practical problems	92,8%	$\bar{x} = 4,45$ ; SD= 0,77	90 %	$\bar{x} = 4,10$ ; SD= 0,66
TOTAL SAMPLE			with a confidence level of 95% of a statistically significant difference (p = 0.012)		
Self-Direction and Self-Evaluation (C)	I feel responsible to give meaning to what I learned at school or at college	73,8%	$\bar{x} = 3,83$ ; SD = 1,01	73,4%	$\bar{x} = 3,80$ ; SD = 0,85

This implies that lifelong learners take the responsibility for their own learning, are motivated to learn, enjoy learning, manage their time, plan effectively, meet deadlines, are open to new experiences, have self-confidence and intrinsic motivation and endurance when encountering difficulties.

### ***Competences for lifelong learning for Croatian and Polish students pedagogy by gender and year of study***

In the case of Polish students it can be said that there is no statistically significant difference either in one observed category based on the year of study ( $p > 0.05$ ). According to the level of study, there was a statistically significant difference ( $p = 0.012$ ) among students from Rijeka (Finding Required Information) where 3-year undergraduate students have a higher response value than 2 years of graduate study. Although it may be concluded that with the experience of studying graduate students of graduate studies it is easier to find the necessary information. Based on the results of the research we can reject the hypothesis that there is a statistically significant difference in the competences for lifelong education according to gender and year of study.

**Table 2. Competences for lifelong learning for Croatian and Polish students pedagogy by gender and year of study**

	Year of study		undergraduate	graduate	Sex
Croatia	finding necessary information	The arithmetic mean	24,65	15,83	(p>0,05) (N = 7)
statistically significant difference (p = 0.012)		The sum of ranks	665,50	237,50	
Poland	there is no statistically significant difference either in one of the observed categories based on the year of study (p> 0.05)				

In this study, the results show that by gender there are no statistically significant differences in the competences for lifelong learning of Croatian and Polish students (p> 0.05). It is also difficult to make a comparison with regard to the small number of male respondents (N = 7) who participated in the study.

**Involvement in lifelong education and self-education**

According to the research results we can conclude that the incidence of inclusion of Croatian and Polish students in lifelong learning programs is small (11.1%). The only difference in lifelong learning competencies between Croatian and Polish students is reflected in the Lifelong Learning Program. The results show that Croatian students are more involved in lifelong learning programs, in Croatia N = 8, in Poland N = 0, thus we rejecting the hypothesis that Polish students are more involved in lifelong learning and mobility programs. There is no statistically significant difference in the frequency of subjects at the faculties observed. The area or contents of lifelong learning where Croatian students are involved are auto school, foreign language school, dance lessons or education in the direction of volunteering and working with young people. The reasons for participation include usefulness, acquisition of new experiences and competences, love for learning, and getting to know new people.

As the main reason why they do not participate, the respondents state lack of time, lack of finances, motivation of overload with obligations (N = 19). They also state lack of information and lack of information and inaccessibility of the program. Students indicate the lack of an interesting program (N = 3) but also lack of need to involv in lifelong learning programs (N = 2). 19% of students enrolled

in education programs. In the last 12 months, apart from studying at a regular study, none of the Polish students participated in any lifelong learning program. For the sake of reason, respondents to the fullest mention the lack of time and lack of program information.

**Table 3. Involvement in lifelong education and self-education**

		<b>Contents</b>	<b>Reasons +</b>	<b>Reasons -</b>
Croatia	N = 8	auto school, foreign language school, dance lessons or education in the direction of volunteering and working with young people	usefulness, acquisition of new experiences and competencies, love for learning and getting to know new people	lack of time, lack of finances, motivation of overloading obligations, lack of an interesting program
Poland	N = 0			lack of time and lack of program information

Apart from regular studies and lifelong learning programs, over the last 12 months 73.3% of Polish respondents have been self-educated in the areas they are interested in. As an area of self-education, foreign languages (English language), computer science, sports and recreation are mentioned. There are also topics related to pedagogy, psychology, leisure time organization, sociotherapy and pedagogy of re-socialization. Modes of self-education for Polish students are mainly use of the internet and reading literature, online courses, conferences, workshops and volunteer activities. As reasons for self-education, they state their own needs, interests, development and practical application of knowledge, curiosity, and writing of final papers. The only reason students mentioned as a reason why they were not self-educated is the lack of time. The content of self-education of Croatian respondents encompasses different areas and themes, mainly those in the field of personal interest. To a large extent, these are areas related to pedagogy. In the last 12 months, 64.3% of Croatian students were self-educated and, for main reasons they mention personal reasons, their desire for learning, interest, free content, the need for development, curiosity and employers' requests. They also state that they were self-educated because they „could fit in and work at home”.

### Involvement in mobility programs (Erasmus +)

According to the results of the overall research there is no statistically significant difference in the inclusion of students in mobility programs with respect to the observed faculties. The results show that the incidence of inclusion of both Croatian and Polish students in mobility programs is extremely low. As for participation in mobility programs (Erasmus +), only one Croatian respondent participated in student exchange in the last 12 months. Also, only one respondent noted the benefits of participating in mobility - „getting to know other cultures, learning languages, and learning experience in another education system”. Based on the results obtained, we can reject the hypothesis that lifelong learning students are more involved in mobility programs because the results point to the possession of competences for lifelong learning for students from both faculties, but inclusion in the programs is extremely small. In the research, we asked students to explain why they did not participate in student exchange. As the most common cause students mention lack of time and motivation, lack of finances and lack of interest and lack of information and program offerings.

**Table 4. Involvement in mobility programs (Erasmus +)**

	student exchange	Internships	youth exchanges / trainings	European Volunteer Service
Croatia	N = 1	N = 3	N = 1	N = 1
Poland	N = 0	N = 7	N = 3	N = 0

None of the Polish students participated in the student exchange and as a reason the respondent stated lack of time and overload of the obligations. They also state that they are not interested, have no need or have not had the information in time. One respondent replied, „*I believe that student exchange is losing time when a person does not study languages or studies of culture. I think that travel is encouraging for a man, but I think he will lose a lot of knowledge as he leaves the university. Besides, I have to work*”.

Of the 42 respondents from the University of Rijeka, 97.6% (N = 41) did not participate in youth exchanges / trainings. One person who participated in the exchanges of youth / trainings stated that the welfare of participation „informal education provides a different possibility for acquiring competences”. The reasons for not participating Croatian respondents state similar reasons as for other mobility programs - lack of time, motivation, and finances, lack of commitment,

lack of interest and fear of new surroundings and lack of knowledge of a foreign language. A large number of respondents state the reason for insufficient information. 10% (N = 3) of respondents from the Nicholas Copernicus University in Torun participated in exchanges of young people / trainings, and as a benefit they mentioned personal development and learning about other cultures.

## Conclusion

Based on the research we can say that we have been able to explore whether there are differences in lifelong learning competences with Croatian and Polish pedagogical students and whether there is a link between individual competences for lifelong learning for students and their inclusion in lifelong learning and mobility programs. By research we have confirmed a hypothesis that claims that both Croatian and Polish pedagogical students possess lifelong learning competencies. The results show us that students highly value their claims for all 7 lifelong learning competences. According to the authors of the instruments, the high value of the results obtained through this research suggests that students have lifelong learning competencies. According to Macaskill et al. (2010) these students take responsibility for their own learning, are motivated to learn, enjoy learning, manage their time, plan effectively, meet deadlines, are open to new experiences, have self-confidence and intrinsic motivation and endurance when encountering difficulties. This can be confirmed by the responses of participants who participated in lifelong learning programs, self-education and mobility programs. Respondents plead time management, motivation, desire for learning, and openness to new experiences as the reasons for participating in these programs.

The survey was completed by a larger number of students from the University of Rijeka, although at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun there are more students of pedagogy than at the University of Rijeka. The data collection method at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun was via an online survey and this may be one of the disadvantages of collecting data in this study and the reason for a smaller number of respondents. There is also no statistically significant difference in the competences for lifelong learning in Croatian and Polish pedagogical students regarding gender. This hypothesis was difficult to confirm given the small number of male respondents (N = 7). Although the results of Kirby et al., 2010, show a significant difference between men and women, there is a lack of unequal numbers of male and female sample in this study. In order to determine gender differences, we consider it important to have a larger and balanced pattern.

A statistically significant difference occurred with the students of the University of Rijeka in „finding the necessary information”. Students who are on the 3rd year of undergraduate studies responded to find easier all the necessary information from the students on the 2nd year of graduate study although similar researches that were conducted indicated the growth of competences with regard to year of study. It is also possible that hypothesis rejection was due to a small number

of respondents. The key trends shown by the Eurobarometer results are confirmed by this research. The most important barrier to lifelong learning is the lack of time due to family and business obligations. Lack of inclusion in lifelong learning programs is also a result of the lack of an institutional education framework and poor infrastructure of service providers. *Therefore, they are conceived of education, access to learning and family-based learning experiences, and preschool institutions as the basis for continuous and self-initiative learning and education throughout their lives ... „because”... the curiosity, joy of learning new, motivational and habit of constant learning is being created in younger lifestyles* (MZOS, 2014: 4).

Based on the strategies adopted at European level as well as in Croatia and Poland, many activities are being carried out for the promotion and motivation of the participants and despite these efforts, there is no significant increase in the participants involved in lifelong learning. (MZOS, 2014) Very few students participated in lifelong learning programs over the last 12 months. The main reasons pointed out are lack of time, program inefficiency, but also lack of time and funding for programs. Also due to lack of information and lack of information on student exchanges as a reason. This raises the issue of quality student mobility promotion because if the respondents mention a lack of finance, we may wonder whether the students are sufficiently familiar with the basic rules of the programs and the scholarships for student mobility. Also, the question arises as to whether study programs are adapted to student mobility if, for reasons of reason, the students state the lack of time due to the obligation to study and the fear of „loss of the year”. Respondents mention the fear of a new environment, lack of competences for studying in a foreign country, and strangulation of a foreign (English) language. This questions whether there is intercultural education and the promotion of mobility and European identity during the study. The same obstacles to participation are also mentioned in the Education, Science and Technology Strategy (2012), where 53.8% of Croatian responded that the programs are overpriced and they do not participate in lifelong learning programs due to family commitments (48.7%).

We can come to the conclusion that for these reasons, a greater number of students have been self-educated in the last 12 months, and as reasons of participation they cite flexibility, work from home, and greater opportunities for development in „what they are interested in.” That is why we come to the issue of promoting lifelong learning programs at universities and beyond, given that few students have said they have no information on lifelong learning programs. We believe that the availability and tracking trends in program developing will increase the number of participants in Lifelong Learning programs. This research did not establish a statistically significant difference in the inclusion of students in lifelong learning programs and mobility programs because the involvement of respondents was very small. It is therefore difficult to confirm the hypothesis that lifelong learning students are more often included in lifelong learning programs

and mobility programs, as this research indicates the competences for lifelong learning but the inclusion in lifelong learning and mobility programs is very small. According to the results of the study on the inclusion of students in mobility programs (Erasmus +), we can conclude that mobility programs are not sufficiently promoted and do not point to the benefits and the importance of mobility.

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### **Competences for lifelong learning of pedagogy students in Croatia and Poland**

**Keywords:** lifelong learning, mobility, competences, lifelong learning competences, Poland, Croatia, students of pedagogy

**Abstract:** Lifelong learning is a strategic development priority of the European countries because it brings social stability and progress and economic growth by an appropriately trained, adaptable and mobile workforce. In order to participate in lifelong learning and mobility programs, it is assumed that these people need to have lifelong learning competences: (1) setting educational goals; (2) the application of appropriate knowledge and skills; (3) self-direction and self-evaluation; (4) finding the necessary information; (According to Kirby R. et al., 2010) and (1) independence in learning and (2) learning habits (according to Macaskill and Taylor 2009). For the purpose of exploring the development of competences for lifelong learning, a research has been conducted with pedagogy students of the last years of undergraduate and graduate studies of the University of Rijeka and the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Poland. In order to measure Lifelong Learning competences, questionnaires from Kirby R. et al. (2010) and Macaskill and Taylor (2009) were used in this research. The aim of the research was to examine whether the students of pedagogy in Croatia and Poland have lifelong learning competences, whether there are differences between Croatian and Polish students and whether there is a link between lifelong learning competences for students and their inclusion in lifelong learning and mobility programs. The results showed that respondents highly evaluate the claims of all of the Lifelong Learning competences examined but, on the other hand, are poorly involved in lifelong learning and mobility programs.

Dane do korespondenciji:

**Nina Rapo**

University of Rijeka

e-mail: rapo.nina@gmail.com