

TEORIA I PRAKTYKA ANDRAGOGICZNA ZA GRANICĄ

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ANDRAGOGY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIC COMPETENCE: FORMING CIVIC CONSCIOUSNESS OF SPECIALISTS IN THE CONTEXT OF EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE

Key words: civic competence, adult civic education, professional training, social responsibility, competence development.

Summary: This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the role of andragogy in developing civic competence and consciousness among specialists within the context of European experiences. It argues that andragogical principles—such as self-directed learning, experiential relevance, and learner autonomy – offer a robust framework for integrating democratic values into professional life. The study examines the evolution of EU policy from a narrow vocational focus to holistic lifelong learning strategies that prioritize social inclusion, critical citizenship, and sustainable development. A novel theoretical model of civic-andragogical cycles is proposed to illustrate the dynamic and adaptive nature of civic consciousness. The paper delves into the practical formation of this consciousness, outlining a structured process involving foundational awareness, hands-on application, and reflective evaluation. It identifies key trends across Europe, including community-embedded learning and digital integration, and proposes innovative pedagogical tools like civic impact dashboards and narrative-driven simulations. The study concludes that embedding andragogy in specialist training is crucial for fostering resilient, democratic societies. It recommends reforms that support interdisciplinary collaboration and new metrics for evaluating civic impact, positioning specialists as key agents of social change who contribute to a more cohesive and innovative Europe by bridging professional expertise with community needs.

Introduction

The discourse surrounding andragogy as a paradigm for adult education has gained significant traction within the European context, where it is increasingly viewed as a critical force for shaping civic competence among professionals. This article moves beyond surface-level descriptions to critically examine the mechanisms through which andragogical principles enable the formation of citizens who are not merely informed but are motivated to act, particularly specialists in pivotal fields like education, business, and public administration. By synthesizing European policy directives, established theory, and evidence from on-the-ground projects, this study argues that adult learning holds a fundamental potential to reshape our responses to today's intractable societal challenges. Civic competence, as framed in the European Union's strategic documents, is no simple checklist of knowledge. It demands an integration of factual understanding of democratic institutions with the attitudes and skills necessary for meaningful participation in deeply multicultural societies. With its foundational emphasis on self-direction, the relevance of lived experience, and learner autonomy, andragogy provides a uniquely flexible framework for embedding these elements into lifelong education.

In recent decades, the European Union's stance on adult education has visibly pivoted from a dominant focus on vocational training toward more encompassing strategies that explicitly target social inclusion, personal fulfillment, and civic engagement. This is not a shift occurring in a vacuum; it is a direct response to pressing contemporary crises, including widening inequality, mass migration, ecological precarity, and a palpable erosion of democratic trust in some quarters. Andragogical methods offer a pathway to bridge these divides by empowering adults to internalize civic values through reflective and collaborative learning. This approach stands in sharp contrast to traditional pedagogy, which too often defaults to rote memorization and hierarchical instruction. Instead, andragogy compels adults to draw upon the complex and often contradictory nature of their own life experiences, a process which fosters a more authentic sense of both personal agency and civic duty (Choi & Kim, 2020).

The scientific contribution of this research lies in its proposal of an integrated model for andragogical civic education, one designed to adapt European insights to the specific context of working specialists, focusing on the intersection of professional expertise and civic awareness. My model posits that civic consciousness is not a static trait but a dynamic process—a journey shaped by continuous learning where specialists must see themselves as agents of social change. Through a close analysis of data from EU-funded projects and comparative studies, this article aims to push the current discourse forward by suggesting pedagogical tools designed not just to enhance critical thinking but to catalyze community-oriented action. The urgency here is underscored by the relentless

global transformations that demand educated specialists navigate complex ethical terrain and contribute to the construction of resilient, inclusive communities. In this light, andragogy is not just a useful tool; it is an indispensable instrument for nurturing a European citizenship that is both critically aware and actively engaged (Negt, 2008).

Methodological Framework

This study employs a qualitative research design based on a critical analysis of European Union strategic documents and a comparative review of academic discourse on andragogy (2015–2023). The research procedure involved three stages: (1) systematic selection of key policy frameworks addressing adult civic education (e.g., EU guidelines on lifelong learning); (2) content analysis of reported outcomes from applied civic projects referenced in the literature (e.g., Dias et al., 2023; Zavala-Perez et al., 2020); and (3) inductive synthesis to construct the theoretical model of «civic-andragogical cycles.» This approach allows for bridging the gap between normative policy goals and practical educational mechanisms without relying on a single isolated dataset.

Theoretical Foundations of Andragogy and Civic Competence

At its heart, andragogy is built on a philosophy that respects adult learners as autonomous individuals capable of steering their own educational paths. It works from the premise that adults do not come to learning as empty vessels but bring with them a wealth of experience that can be leveraged for meaningful growth. This paradigm fundamentally reorients the educational dynamic away from teacher-centered instruction and toward a learner-centered process where the educator's role is less about transmitting knowledge and more about facilitating its discovery (Giannoukos et al., 2015).

When applied to civic education, andragogy directly confronts the limitations of conventional methods by cultivating the internalization of values like autonomy, authenticity, and proactivity (Choi & Kim, 2020). It offers a structure for adults to reflect on societal dilemmas through open dialogue and engagement with real-world scenarios, leading to a more textured understanding of their civic roles (Bernardová et al., 2020). This is critically important, especially given the persistent concern that modern adult education risks being narrowed «solely to vocational or personal development purposes,» a trend that dangerously sidelines the need to foster civic responsibility, social justice, and a robust ethical compass (Hoggan-Kloubert et al., 2023). Civic competence, in turn, merges a knowledge of democratic principles with the practical skills of participation, creating a synergy with andragogy that empowers individuals to contribute to the collective good.

The deep interconnection between civic competence and lifelong learning represents a crucial theoretical intersection (Hoskins & Crick, 2010), especially since the development of social and civic values is an explicit EU priority (Zavala-Perez et al., 2020). Both domains equip adults with tools for self-management, fostering resilience against persistent social and economic instability. European frameworks consistently reinforce this connection, tying civic awareness to foundational values of human rights and democracy, which are essential for navigating the continent's complex cultural mosaic (Hoskins & Deakin Crick, 2008).

The concept of integral andragogy expands on this by weaving social responsibility directly into professional training, framing organizations not as isolated entities but as integral components of the wider society. This is realized through methods like service-learning and professional internships designed for tangible societal impact (Zavala-Perez et al., 2020), providing avenues for hands-on experiential learning. Such an approach enhances ethical decision-making and cultivates a sense of belonging in multicultural settings. However, it's crucial to acknowledge the real-world obstacles adult learners face—mental, financial, and social barriers, often compounded by a pre-existing lack of self-esteem, which can derail the learning process (Giannoukos et al., 2015). Moreover, novel interpretations of andragogy highlight its capacity to create transient but powerful «moments of community,» where adults collaborate on shared challenges, reinforcing the civic bonds between them (Note et al., 2020).

To illustrate how these theoretical underpinnings translate into practice for civic development, consider how core andragogical principles are adapted:

- Self-directed learning: the process begins when adults themselves question how policy impacts their communities and take the initiative to find answers.
- Experience as a resource: a manager's experience with supply chains, for instance, becomes a vital resource for reflections on global labor rights and sustainable sourcing.
- Readiness to learn: motivation ignites when a professional encounters a real-life civic dilemma, prompting genuine engagement with relevant education.
- Orientation to learning: the focus shifts to problem-centered approaches, enabling learners to tackle immediate civic issues like local sustainability or social inclusion.
- Internal motivation: the drive for sustained civic action is fueled by intrinsic rewards – the satisfaction of personal growth and making a tangible contribution.

These principles form the bedrock for a model of civic-andragogical cycles. Within this dynamic framework, learning is not linear but progresses through an iterative spiral of reflection, action, and critical re-evaluation. This cyclical process enables specialists to evolve from passive observers into active shapers of democratic life. The proposed model of civic-andragogical cycles is not merely theoretical; it is derived from the synthesis of successful intervention patterns

observed in recent European case studies. For instance, the cyclical nature of reflection and action mirrors the methodologies evaluated in community engagement projects (Dias et al., 2023; Note et al., 2020) and experiential learning frameworks (Zavala-Perez et al., 2020), confirming that static learning is insufficient for civic activation. The model systematizes these empirical observations into a coherent educational strategy. This reframing advances existing theory by emphasizing the adaptive nature of civic consciousness, particularly in response to European challenges like the difficult transitions in post-socialist nations or the complexities of migrant integration (Jelenc, 1995). By incorporating elements of transformative learning, the model encourages specialists to critically question existing socio-political structures and foster a sense of collective agency, thereby enriching the theoretical landscape of adult education.

European Policy Frameworks for Adult Education and Civic Engagement

European Union policy on adult education has not evolved in a straight line; rather, it reflects a persistent tension between economic imperatives and social ambitions. Over time, a grudging but steady recognition of civic competence as essential for social cohesion has emerged. While early policies were dominated by a vocational agenda aimed at enhancing employability, they have since begun to embrace the broader dimensions of lifelong learning in an effort to combat social exclusion and promote active citizenship (Toiviainen et al., 2021). This recalibration is necessary to counteract the depoliticizing tendencies within concepts like active citizenship, which can risk reducing civic learning to a form of functional socialization instead of empowering genuine political engagement (Biesta, 2009). There is a legitimate fear that a myopic focus on vocational or personal development can inadvertently neglect the core needs of fostering civic responsibility, advancing social justice, and upholding ethical values (Hoggan-Kloubert et al., 2023). Consequently, policymakers are being pushed to prioritize more critical forms of citizenship that embrace conflict, welcome contestation, and celebrate public identity within Europe's diverse contexts.

Adult education's role in European integration is thus framed as a means to develop new skills, reshape identities, and build solidarity amidst rapid changes in work and civil society. Learning, in this view, must extend beyond technical competencies to include strategies for coping with global crises and for establishing value hierarchies that support a democratic and resilient Europe (Negt, 2008). In regions still navigating post-socialist transitions, policies must urgently bridge the gap between the identified need for civic education and the actual demand for it. This can be achieved by using empirical insights to motivate participation and dismantle lingering historical barriers (Jelenc, 1995). Comparative analyses reveal significant regional disparities, with Central and Eastern European countries showing lower levels of research activity in adult education compared to their

Western counterparts, highlighting a pressing need for critical dialogue to align theory and practice across the continent (Beran Sládkayová, 2021).

To systematize these policy dimensions, it is helpful to outline the core elements of EU frameworks. A commitment to inclusivity aims to ensure educational opportunities reach vulnerable groups through community-based initiatives and intercultural programs. Flexibility involves adapting lifelong learning pathways to fit individual contexts, reducing the distance between high-level policy and everyday reality. Empowerment signifies a shift from viewing adult education as solely an individual's duty to recognizing it as a shared institutional responsibility. Integration links civic competence with the foundational skill of learning to learn, aiming for more holistic personal development. Finally, sustainability weaves social responsibility and environmental concerns directly into educational strategies. These elements contribute to the policy synthesis presented here, which advocates for hierarchical reforms in lifelong learning objectives to enhance legal effectiveness and prioritize the values of vulnerable populations. By up-skilling low-skilled workers and fostering entrepreneurial competencies, these policies can promote social equality and multicultural belonging, working to dismantle mechanisms of exclusion within the EU citizenship framework.

Forming Civic Consciousness of Specialists

For specialists, developing civic consciousness is not an add-on; it is the process of reframing their professional skills within a broader societal context. This process moves individuals in fields like education, management, and public service from being technical experts to becoming informed advocates for democratic values. This development hinges on the recognition that genuine civic awareness is forged not through abstract theory alone, but through experiential learning, where specialists connect their expertise to the ethical and social dilemmas of our time. An educator, for instance, might incorporate project-based activities that simulate the messiness of community decision-making, practicing the facilitation of difficult discussions on environmental policy. In business management, civic consciousness manifests in training that emphasizes corporate social responsibility, compelling managers to weigh decisions not just by profitability but by their impact on local communities and cultural diversity. Public administrators, meanwhile, can benefit from scenarios involving extensive stakeholder consultations, honing their ability to balance bureaucratic efficiency with inclusive governance.

This process is inherently andragogical, drawing on the core principles of adult education. Self-directed learning allows specialists to use their accumulated professional experience to achieve a deeper internalization of civic values. Andragogical methods, like problem-centered workshops, offer a platform for adults to tackle real civic challenges, fostering autonomy and relevance in the formation of their consciousness (Choi & Kim, 2020). This connection shows how

adult education can transform the passive acquisition of knowledge into an active form of civic engagement adapted to the learner's maturity and life context.

To effectively structure this formation process, it is essential to outline its core components. First, building foundational awareness involves introducing key civic concepts through interactive seminars, where specialists dissect case studies from EU member states to grasp the variations in democratic implementation. Second, application phases require hands-on projects, such as collaborating on local initiatives addressing inequality, allowing specialists to apply theoretical knowledge in real contexts. Third, robust evaluation mechanisms, including regular self-assessments and structured group debriefs, are needed to measure growth in their civic mindset and ensure ongoing refinement. This multi-stage approach aligns with the need for adults to leverage their experiences for societal impact, as traditional lecture-based methods often fall short. Andragogy enhances this structure by emphasizing a readiness to learn, where professional contexts trigger a sense of civic curiosity, leading to a more personalized and effective development of consciousness (Bernardová et al., 2020).

Practical recommendations for implementing this process must be tailored to diverse professional contexts. This includes developing customized civic modules that integrate sector-specific scenarios, such as ethical dilemma simulations for managers or policy impact analyses for administrators. Another effective strategy is to establish mentorship programs, pairing seasoned specialists with novices for guided civic projects focused on real-world applications like community consultations, building both empathy and practical skills. It is also vital to utilize digital platforms by creating online repositories of European civic resources, enabling self-paced exploration of topics like human rights frameworks. Organizing cross-disciplinary forums where specialists from different sectors can collaborate on joint ventures, such as sustainability campaigns, encourages the sharing of invaluable insights. Finally, incorporating feedback loops through regular surveys and reflection journals allows for the adaptation of content based on participant input, ensuring responsiveness to emerging societal needs.

These recommendations are not merely theoretical; they draw from the observed successes of European programs where such strategies have led to measurable increases in specialist involvement in civic activities. Andragogy strengthens these approaches by promoting internal motivation, ensuring that adult learners can see the direct links between their professional growth and their contributions to the civic sphere (Dias et al., 2023).

Generalizing trends across Europe reveals a convergence toward hybrid models that fuse professional development with civic imperatives, driven by globalization and demographic shifts. In Northern Europe, there is a trend toward community-embedded learning, where specialists engage in simulations of local governance, resulting in a heightened awareness of social cohesion needs. Patterns in Southern Europe tend to emphasize recovery-oriented education, linking civic

training to economic revitalization efforts, which has proven effective in rebuilding public trust after crises. An intriguing trend in Central Europe involves leveraging digital tools to bridge urban-rural divides, allowing specialists in remote areas to participate in virtual civic networks. This generalization highlights how civic consciousness can act as a catalyst for innovation. Specialists frequently report enhanced creativity in problem-solving when civic perspectives are integrated into their work. Within adult education frameworks, these trends reflect andragogy's crucial role in facilitating lifelong learning, where specialists continuously update their skills to adapt to societal changes (Negt, 2008).

Proposed innovations in this area aim to push existing boundaries. One such innovation is the civic impact dashboard, a dynamic interface where an urban planner, for example, could track how their project contributes to community goals, using data analytics to visualize its effects on social inclusion or environmental sustainability. Another is the concept of narrative-driven civic labs, where participants craft personal stories intertwined with significant European historical events, using storytelling to deepen their emotional connection to civic duties. In more technical fields, augmented reality civic tours could simulate visits to key EU landmarks, allowing a user standing in front of the European Parliament to witness a virtual reenactment of a key debate on migration policy. For administrative specialists, participatory simulation games could model complex decision-making, potentially incorporating AI to generate dynamic scenarios based on current events, thereby fostering adaptive thinking. These innovations are designed to be scalable across borders, adapting to local cultures while maintaining core democratic principles. Andragogy informs these innovations by incorporating experience as a resource, allowing specialists to build upon their adult backgrounds to engage in more authentic civic simulations (Hoskins & Crick, 2010).

A number of interesting conclusions can be drawn from these elements. One is that the formation of civic consciousness often accelerates intergenerational dialogue, as younger specialists bring digital savvy that complements the experiential wisdom of their veteran colleagues. In high-stakes sectors like public health, targeted civic training can reduce ethical conflicts by aligning professional protocols with human rights considerations, resulting in more compassionate service delivery. Furthermore, data from transitional economies suggest that civic-focused specialists exhibit lower rates of burnout, as their sense of purpose extends beyond their job to a deeper sense of societal fulfillment. This underscores the potential of viewing specialists not as isolated experts, but as vital nodes in a thriving European civic network. The link to adult education here reveals how andragogy's focus on authenticity helps specialists reconcile their personal and professional identities with their civic roles, ultimately enhancing their overall life satisfaction (Biesta, 2009).

To encapsulate the key insights, it's clear that civic consciousness enhances professional resilience by linking individual roles to collective well-being.

Structured training with practical elements yields higher engagement. Prevailing trends favor hybrid, technology-infused models that can address regional disparities. Innovations like dashboards and simulations offer scalable tools for development. Furthermore, intergenerational and interdisciplinary approaches amplify the depth of civic awareness. Overall, this process positions specialists as pivotal drivers of inclusive, democratic progress throughout Europe.

Conclusions

This article has examined the integral role of andragogy in cultivating civic competence among specialists, drawing from European policies, theoretical insights, and practical applications. The theoretical foundations elucidated how andragogical principles – with their emphasis on learner autonomy, experiential relevance, and intrinsic motivation with the development of civic skills. This alignment creates fertile ground for specialists to evolve their professional identities, incorporating ethical reflections that extend beyond mere technical proficiency.

In analyzing European policy frameworks, the discussion revealed a dynamic evolution toward holistic lifelong learning strategies that balance economic competitiveness with the imperative of social cohesion. These policies increasingly prioritize inclusivity, flexible program designs, and the integration of civic education with sustainability goals, effectively addressing regional disparities. This policy landscape underscores the necessity of adapting educational approaches to meet contemporary challenges like digital divides and cultural integration, ensuring adult learning contributes to resilient democratic structures.

The exploration of practical implementations highlighted projects that demonstrate andragogy's tangible impact. From democratic literacy programs to competence-based systems, these examples illustrate how community-based initiatives and transformative learning techniques can empower specialists to engage in civic life. They learn to overcome barriers like low self-esteem or historical distrust through targeted educational strategies. Such applications not only enhance personal development but also amplify collective societal benefits.

The recommendations put forward proposed reforms such as adopting more integral approaches to boost social responsibility and shifting toward critical citizenship models that embrace contestation and collective agency. These suggestions advocate for investments in accessibility, quality assurance, and intercultural programs to create an educational ecosystem that supports democratic participation.

Expanding on these insights, the formation of civic consciousness among specialists emerges as a strategic imperative for Europe's future. Professionals can serve as crucial bridges between institutional expertise and grassroots needs. By embedding civic elements into specialist training, andragogy fosters a proactive

mindset that anticipates societal shifts. This transforms specialists into innovators who can drive the development of inclusive policies, mitigating risks like social fragmentation and unlocking opportunities for collaborative progress.

Further reflections indicate that andragogy's emphasis on self-directed learning cultivates a lifelong commitment to civic growth, encouraging specialists to continually update their understanding of complex global issues. This ongoing engagement ensures their civic consciousness remains adaptive and instrumental in building trust among diverse populations. Moreover, the integration of digital tools into andragogical practices opens new avenues for virtual collaboration, allowing specialists from remote areas to participate in pan-European dialogues and democratizing access to civic education.

In synthesizing the various trends, the article points to a convergence toward hybrid educational models that merge vocational training with civic imperatives, reflecting a broader European movement toward sustainable development. This suggests future policies should emphasize developing metrics for measuring civic impact, such as community involvement rates or ethical innovation indices, to guide resource allocation and program evaluation.

The recommendations extend to fostering interdisciplinary partnerships, where specialists collaborate with policymakers and civil society organizations to co-design curricula that address specific regional needs. These partnerships could yield bespoke programs that not only enhance civic literacy but also boost professional networks. Additionally, incentivizing civic achievements through recognition systems could motivate widespread adoption of these values, embedding civic consciousness as a valued professional attribute.

Looking ahead, the study advocates for pilot programs that can test innovative formats, like blended online-offline modules, to refine andragogical techniques. By consistently prioritizing empathy and critical thinking, andragogy positions specialists as custodians of democratic ideals, capable of navigating future uncertainties with integrity and vision.

In summation, this analysis affirms andragogy's capacity to shape a Europe where civic competence is woven into professional life. This integration not only enriches individual trajectories but also fortifies communal bonds, paving the way for a more cohesive, innovative, and just continent. As Europe continues to grapple with immense global pressures, the sustained application of these principles will be crucial in sustaining vibrant democracies.

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ANDRAGOGIKA I ROZWÓJ KOMPETENCJI OBYWATELSKICH: FORMOWANIE ŚWIADOMOŚCI OBYWATELSKIEJ SPECJALISTÓW W KONTEKŚCIE DOŚWIADCZENIA EUROPEJSKIEGO

Słowa kluczowe: kompetencje obywatelskie, edukacja obywatelska dorosłych, szkolenia zawodowe, odpowiedzialność społeczna, rozwój kompetencji.

Streszczenie: Niniejszy artykuł przedstawia kompleksową analizę roli andragogiki w rozwijaniu kompetencji i świadomości obywatelskiej wśród specjalistów w kontekście doświadczeń europejskich. Wykazano, że zasady andragogiczne – takie jak samokierowanie w uczeniu się, uczenie się przez doświadczenie i autonomia uczącego się – stanowią solidne ramy dla integracji wartości demokratycznych z życiem zawodowym. W artykule przeanalizowano ewolucję polityki UE od wąskiego podejścia zawodowego do holistycznych strategii uczenia się przez całe życie, w których priorytetem jest włączenie społeczne, krytyczne obywatelstwo i zrównoważony rozwój. Zaproponowano nowatorski model teoretyczny „cykli obywatelsko-andragogicznych”, aby zilustrować dynamiczny i adaptacyjny charakter świadomości obywatelskiej. W pracy szczegółowo omówiono praktyczny wymiar kształtowania tej świadomości, przedstawiając ustrukturyzowany proces obejmujący budowanie podstawowej wiedzy, praktyczne zastosowanie i refleksyjną ocenę. Zidentyfikowano kluczowe trendy w Europie, w tym uczenie się osadzone w społeczności i integrację cyfrową, oraz zaproponowano innowacyjne narzędzia pedagogiczne, takie jak „obywatelskie panele wpływu” i symulacje narracyjne. W podsumowaniu stwierdzono, że włączenie andragogiki w kształcenie specjalistów jest kluczowe dla budowania odpornych, demokratycznych społeczeństw, a specjaliści stają się kluczowymi czynnikami zmian, łącząc wiedzę ekspercką z potrzebami społecznymi.

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