

Amina Isanović Hadžiomerović

## QUESTIONING ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT DEVELOPING AN ANDRAGOGY STUDY PROGRAM IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

### ABSTRACT

*This paper analyses how the key actors involved (university professors, policy makers, and practitioners) perceive the need for launching an andragogy study program in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). Drawing on the social field concept, the central argument posits that the perceptions of the three groups are shaped by their respective positions and interests concerning adult learning and education (ALE). The research methodology includes an analysis of university curricula and qualitative surveys based on the model of the problem-centred interview (PCI). The results show inter-group differences and intra-group congruence. University professors support the idea of launching an independent andragogy study program but have different visions of the implementation model. Policy makers and practitioners show less awareness of the need for such a program and for different reasons. The practitioners' opinion is that the relevant competencies can be obtained through non-formal or work-based learning, while policy makers cite lower interest in studying social sciences.*

**Keywords:** andragogy, adult learning and education (ALE), andragogy study program, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), social field

### PREIZPRAŠEVANJE PREDPOSTAVK O VZPOSTAVITVI ANDRAGOŠKEGA ŠTUDIJSKEGA PROGRAMA V BOSNI IN HERCEGOVINI – POVZETEK

*Članek analizira, kako ključni udeleženci (univerzitetni profesorji, oblikovalci politik in izvajalci) dojemajo potrebo po študijskem programu andragogike v Bosni in Hercegovini. Na podlagi koncepta socialnega polja je postavljena osrednja predpostavka, da na dojemanja vseh treb skupin vplivajo njihov položaj in interesi v povezavi z učenjem in izobraževanjem odraslih. Raziskovalna metodologija vključuje analizo univerzitetnih učnih načrtov in kvalitativnih anket, ki so bile oblikovane po modelu problemsko usmerjenega intervjuja. Rezultati so pokazali razlike med skupinami in skladnost znotraj posamezne skupine. Univerzitetni profesorji podpirajo vzpostavitev neodvisnega andragoškega študijskega programa, vendar si različno zamišljajo njegov izvedbeni model. Oblikovalci politik in izvajalci se manj zavedajo potrebe po tovrstnem študijskem programu iz različnih razlogov. Mnenje izvajalcev je, da je mogoče relevantne kompetence pridobiti prek neformalnega učenja ali učenja na delovnem mestu, oblikovalci politik pa kot razlog za nepotrebnost programa navajajo manjše zanimanje za študij družboslovnih ved.*

**Ključne besede:** andragogika, učenje in izobraževanje odraslih, študijski program andragogike, Bosna in Hercegovina, socialno polje

*Amina Isanović Hadžiomerović, PhD, Asst. Prof., Faculty of Philosophy, University of Sarajevo, amina.isanovic@ff.unsa.ba*

## INTRODUCTION

There is an obvious asynchrony in the development of adult learning and education (ALE) as a field of practice and andragogy as an academic discipline in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The practice of ALE in this country has deep historical roots and has managed to persist despite the challenges posed by turbulent eras in its past. Throughout the centuries, religious groups and national cultural organisations played a vital role in organising ALE in the form of edification activities (Mavrak, 2018). This tradition persisted in other forms of popular education such as literacy courses, and later during the era of industrialisation in the former Yugoslavia, when workers' education was widely spread (Bertsch & Persons, 1980).

Nowadays, ALE in BiH is recognised as the fourth sector of the education system and is regulated by corresponding legislation. Despite a long-standing tradition and recent dynamic development in the sector, andragogy as an academic discipline has remained woefully underdeveloped, with an inadequate historiography, inconsistent and elusive use of the terms adult education and andragogy, and unrecognised disciplinary territory. The initial development of andragogy as an academic discipline in BiH can be traced to the 1970s (Mavrak, 2004, p. 64).<sup>1</sup> However, since that time, andragogy has not managed to outline its *cognitive texture* (Keiner, 2002) in the sense of the differentiation of andragogical terms and concepts from the dominant pedagogical discourse. This has hindered its further disciplinary growth, resulting in scarce research activity and low social impact. This resulted in the struggle of andragogy to gain recognition and establish itself as an academic field in its own right. The idea of developing an independent andragogy study program in BiH has been a topic of interest within academic circles for quite some time, but has never reached the level of a structured discussion in the form of a symposium or a conference, nor has there been any written analysis on the subject. This is a question that requires careful consideration and thorough situational analysis, which this paper intends to offer.

The main research question this paper poses is: How do the key actors in ALE assess the need for an independent andragogy study program in BiH? It is based on the premise that a study program nowadays needs to have political, disciplinary, and social justification, as suggested by Heikkinen et al. (2019). Grounded in Wilkinson's (1991) interpretation of social fields, we expect that the underlying assumptions existing inside the fields of practice, policy-making, and academia will show differences between the groups, but relative congruence within each of the groups. The analysis is based on four sets of data: surveys conducted with representatives of adult education organisations, policy makers, and members of the academic community, along with the analysis of university curricula.

---

<sup>1</sup> Pinpointing the precise academic year of the inaugural andragogy course presents a challenge, primarily due to gaps in the archived records held by the Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo. However, examination of the Curriculum of the Pedagogy-Psychology Department, dated April 1977, reveals that Andragogy was included as a subject during semesters VII and VIII (Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo, 1977). It is estimated that the introduction of this course occurred sometime between 1973 and 1976.

In the subsequent part of the text, we begin by showcasing the relevant experiences from the wider European context concerning the development of andragogy in the university context. This is followed by a discussion of recent accomplishments in the ALE sector in BiH, which indicate why developing an andragogy study program might currently be needed. Secondly, we define the concept of the field and proceed to outline the methodological framework that is grounded in the qualitative paradigm. We argue that the perception of the need for an andragogy study program in BiH is determined by the social field to which the experts participating in the research belong. This is followed by a presentation and discussion of the data obtained from the four sources.

## **ANDRAGOGY STUDY PROGRAMS IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT**

Discussing university programs in adult education across Europe, Egetenmeyer (2010, pp. 37–39) refers to the data from the German Institute for Adult Education showing 19 bachelor's (BA) and 94 master's (MA) programs in nine European countries. The list does not include Slovenia and Serbia, where such programs are also available and encompass a variety of ALE related specialisations. Notwithstanding the limitations of these data, it is indicative that the number of MA programs is significantly larger, reflecting the non-linear educational paths and trajectories of ALE specialists, who have more opportunities to complete BA studies in some other discipline and later orient themselves towards ALE.

Looking back at the beginnings of andragogy at German universities in the 1950s, Faber (2006) outlines the path travelled from a young discipline and a first generation of adult educators to professors in “double disciplines” and to a generation of explicit andragogy professors. At the beginning, the bearers of andragogical academic affirmation were professors with backgrounds in different fields (pedagogy, sociology, psychology, history, political science, and theology), which resulted in diversified perspectives and terminology in relation to ALE. Professors teaching andragogy at that time were motivated by the passion to tackle the problems of ALE that they personally found important. Their activity at that time was “without an academic mandate or an institutional structure” (Faber, 2006, p. 252). Following the 1950s, the academic development of adult education at German universities was led by professors dealing with adult education as part of their main subjects. Further development would lead to andragogy becoming emancipated from being an additional topic within another discipline to an independent discipline in its own right, and professors started to be explicitly identified as andragogy teachers.

On the other side, based on the analysis of disciplinarianisation processes in adult and vocational education in Finland, Heikkinen et al. (2019) argue that these processes typically result from relations between actors in academy, politics, economy, and practice, and that they more often reflect power struggles than conceptual or theoretical progress. To address the issue of the agency of different actors and their interests, we introduced the concept of the social field. In his analysis of the relevance of field theory for social sciences, Martin (2003) argues that a social field represents the emergence of social regularities

through the interaction of entities that are positioned in the same space. These entities configure forces and align their actions in the same direction. Wilkinson (1991) further emphasises the importance of shared interests, concerns, experiences, and connections in defining a social field. By considering members of the academic community, practitioners, and policy makers as belonging to distinct social fields, it can be anticipated that different perspectives regarding the necessity of an independent andragogy program will arise. Academic community members are primarily interested in disciplinary development, which enables the social reproduction of knowledge. Practitioners, on the other hand, focus on addressing issues that arise in their day-to-day practice. Policy makers are concerned with allocating social resources and ensuring the functioning of the system.

## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FIELD OF ADULT EDUCATION IN BIH

A comprehensive overview of milestones with a critical projection of further developments is provided in the *Study on Adult Learning and Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, encompassing the achievements of the past 20 years in all areas relevant to the field (Isanović Hadžiomerović et al., 2022). It is apparent that adult education is becoming a primarily practice-based field, guided by legal regulations and with limited consideration of its theoretical foundations, resulting in a paucity of research output. Practitioners and decision-makers in some parts of the country were trained in basic andragogical skills, which provided them with the essentials on the distinctiveness of teaching adults compared to teaching children.<sup>2</sup> A series of other specific training programs was also organised on curriculum development, education management, and the recognition of informal learning, to name the most represented ones. The only glimpse of support for systematic research endeavours and for strengthening the discourse on adult education is represented in the *Journal of Adult Education* (Časopis *Obrazovanje odraslih*)<sup>3</sup> circulating from 2000 as the only andragogical journal in the country with remarkable contributing authorship from the region and beyond.

The domain of research and disciplinary development has remained marginalised, demonstrating weaknesses in taking determined steps towards emancipating andragogy from the well-established discipline of pedagogy. The relationship between the two disciplines could be described in Bright's (1989) terms as "regressive, ill-advised and unprofessional" (p. 6). It seems that pedagogy is content to keep andragogy as its *ancilla*, while andragogy *per se* does not show enough potency to step out of such a relationship.

The suspended disciplinary development of andragogy has become visible in the absence of evidence-based decision-making in matters related to ALE, the low professionalisation level, and the scarcity of qualified educators as well as other specialists to administer processes and implement regulations. We are currently witnessing the total "separation of

---

2 *Basic Andragogical Training*, a condensed version of the *Curriculum GlobALE*, gained the status of a publicly recognised program by the ministries of education in seven out of the twelve administrative units in BiH.

3 For the journal's website, see Centar za cjeloživotno učenje (2023).

academic from public discourse" (Wagner & Wittrock, 1991, p. 334), where chances for *discourse coalition* are suspended resulting in andragogy's unfavourable disciplinary position. The missing element that would regulate and institutionalise processes and lead to elevating professionalisation in the ALE sector in BiH is the development of an andragogy study program.

## METHODS

### Participants and documents

The participants of this research are representatives of ministries of education in BiH or persons who partook in the process of formulating laws and other regulations in ALE, employers of ALE centres, and university professors. The analysed documents include the curricula of the eight public universities in BiH in order to identify the position of andragagogical courses at the university level.

There are eight public universities in BiH, all of which provide a teacher training or a pedagogical study program. By scrutinising the curricula available on their respective websites, it was possible to extract data regarding the incorporation of andragagogical courses within the academic framework.<sup>4</sup> Curricula or syllabi at the University of Mostar were not available from the official web site (Faculty of Science and Education in Mostar, n.d.), so the relevant data were extracted from other sources (Timetable, Exam Schedule, as well as from communication with professors teaching at the University). A description of the research participants and the documents included is presented in Table 1.

The participants were selected based on their expertise, their specific knowledge related to adult education, and their position within the domains relevant to the research problem. ALE providers in BiH include a wide range of organisations such as public institutions, private organisations, and NGOs, where ALE is a part of their regular or complementary activities. While these organisations have premises and experience in providing education, public institutions of formal education often lack andragagogical competences and methods, and exhibit less ALE-attributed adaptability, inventiveness, and vitality. On the other hand, private organisations struggle to balance market demands and the need to attract learners while upholding educational standards. In addition to adult education, NGOs frequently offer a range of other services and this affects how their ALE programs are oriented.

4 The analysed curricula include:

- Revised Curriculum at the Faculty of Philosophy in Banja Luka (2022), starting from the 2022/2023 academic year
- Curriculum of the Teachers's Faculty at Džemal Bijedić, University of Mostar (2022), from 2015/2016
- Curriculum of Pedagogy at the University of East Sarajevo (2017), from 2017/2018
- Curricula of Pedagogy and Special Pedagogy at the Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo (2023)
- Curriculum of the PhD program in Pedagogy at the Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo (2021)
- Curriculum of Pedagogy at the Faculty of Philosophy in Tuzla (2022)
- Curriculum of Sociology and Curriculum of Security and Peace Studies at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Sarajevo (2019)

**Table 1***Description of research participants and documents*

Role(s)	Description	N
Representatives of ministries of education, members of expert groups for formulating laws and other regulations (code: M)	Parts of the country included: Sarajevo Canton, Tuzla Canton, Zenica-Doboj Canton, Una-Sana Canton, Republic of Srpska, West Herzegovina Canton, Posavina Canton, Bosnian Podrinje Canton	10
Employees of ALE centres (code: P)	Members of management structures, administrative staff, trainers	10
Members of academia (code: A)	Academics teaching Andragogy/Adult Education Academics teaching Pedagogy Academics teaching a wider range of social sciences	10
Curricula of educational and wider social sciences at eight public universities in BiH	Curricula of the first, second, and third study cycle	33

## Instruments

For the purpose of this research, two separate survey forms were designed and distributed in online form. Thematically, the surveys for the members of the academic community<sup>5</sup> covered four areas:

- perception of the current status of andragogy as an academic discipline in BiH,
- possibilities for improvement of the current status,
- most suitable model(s) for incorporating andragogy into university study programs, and
- possible rationale for launching a study program in andragogy in BiH.

Surveys for the representatives of ALE providers and ministries of education included<sup>6</sup>:

- assessment of the need for a study program in andragogy in BiH,
- the most appropriate models for a study program in andragogy in BiH, and
- necessary prerequisites before launching a study program in andragogy in BiH.

In order to elicit more specific and structured answers from the members of the academic community, we designed a pre-defined survey that followed the logic of a problem-centred interview (PCI), with the questions serving as a topical guide (Witzel & Reiter, 2012). This decision was made after recognising the potential pitfalls of the interview process (Döringer, 2021) including time limitations, the tendency to avoid explicit answers, and the risk of participants telling accustomed or approved stories. Moreover, since the idea of developing an andragogy study program has been circulating in an informal context for a while, and was never articulated in public discourse, there was a threat that during the interviewing process, the same phrases would be repeated and clear conclusions would not

<sup>5</sup> To access the survey, see Isanović Hadžiomerović (2023a).

<sup>6</sup> For a survey link, see Isanović Hadžiomerović (2023b).

be reached. To mitigate this risk, participants were given the choice whether or not they wanted their answers to be anonymous. This was a way to overcome the social desirability bias (Piedmont, 2014) specially occurring in relation to the interview partners holding a socially recognised position, for example, of an academic or a ministry representative, which was the case here. We found that none of the representatives from the education authorities and ALE providers wanted their answers to be attributed to them by name, and half of the academic community members also chose to remain anonymous. This suggests that providing survey participants with this option was an appropriate methodological and ethical decision.

An analytical matrix was constructed for curricula analysis containing data on the university, faculty, study program, course titles, course status, semester, number of European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System credits (ECTSs), essential readers and teacher profiles for the andragogical courses.

### **Data collection and analysis**

All participants were contacted individually and invited to take part in the survey. Within the first week, 80% of the invitees filled the survey, and in the second round of reminders, three more surveys were submitted. Following that, we could conclude that data saturation was reached in the sense that informants from all three groups were equally represented (Sandelowski, 1995), so the analysis process was initiated. All surveys were coded with the letter indicating the group they belonged to (see Table 1), along with a number indicating the order in which the questionnaires were submitted to the system. Only the full names of some members of the academic community who authorised their answers will be used when referring to their statements. Since the themes were already defined in the survey, the aim of the thematic analysis was to identify the corresponding codes. This was done using an inductive open coding process.

## **RESULTS**

In the process of the qualitative analysis of the collected data, results on the opinions of all three groups involved in the research, along with the position of andragogy in the study programs in BiH universities, were obtained. The data are structured according to the groups and are presented below.

### **Position of andragogy in university study programs in BiH**

Data showing the presence of andragogy in university study programs, together with the number of courses and the allocated corresponding ECTSs, are presented in Table 2. The obtained data were compared to those from an analysis conveyed seven years earlier (Isanović Hadžiomerović, 2016) in order to identify any potential changes or advancements that may have occurred during the intervening period. Among the eight universities analysed, the University of Bihać and the University of Zenica do not offer separate andragogical courses, while data for the six remaining universities are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2***The presence of andragogical courses in study programs at universities in BiH*

University	Faculty	Study program	Number of andragogical courses in study cycles			Number of ECTS		
			BA	MA	PhD	BA	MA	PhD
University of Banja Luka	Faculty of Philosophy	Pedagogy	3	2*	4*	12	10*	20*
		Teacher Education	-	1	-	-	2	-
Džemal Bijedić University of Mostar	Teachers' Faculty	Pedagogy	2	-	-	10	-	-
University of East Sarajevo	Faculty of Philosophy	Pedagogy	2	1*	-	6	5*	-
University of Mostar	Faculty of Natural and Educational Sciences	Pedagogy	1	1	-	5	6	-
		Teacher Education	1*	-	-	4*	-	-
University of Sarajevo	Faculty of Philosophy	Pedagogy	4	-	1*	13	-	10*
		Special Pedagogy	2	-	-	10	-	-
	Faculty of Political Sciences	Sociology	1	-	-	5	-	-
		Security and Peace Studies	1	-	-	5	-	-
University of Tuzla	Faculty of Philosophy	Pedagogy	3**	-	-	13**	-	-

\* Elective subjects are indicated with an asterisk.

\*\* The program includes one elective subject titled *Industrial Pedagogy* with 3 ECTS and two mandatory subjects, *Life-long Education and Andragogy*, each with 5 ECTSs.

Andragogy is typically studied as part of Pedagogy or Teacher Training programs in the form of one or two introductory courses. The Faculty of Political Sciences in Sarajevo is an exception, offering these courses as part of the programs of Sociology, and Peace and Security Studies. Professor of Andragogy at the Faculty of Political Sciences Haris Cerić suggests that andragogy should not be only limited to teachers' faculties, but that it should find its place in other social sciences and humanities, as well as in natural sciences, medical and technical faculties, wherever students are being prepared for a profession that involves working with adults: "For instance, it would make sense to study andragogy within a study program that deals with the management of any type of organisation (healthcare, police, education, justice, religious institutions, etc.)."<sup>7</sup>

7 Prof. dr. Haris Cerić, survey A08.

In terms of BA studies, andragogy is most often included as a mandatory course, with the exception of the Teacher Training program at the University of Mostar, where it is an elective course in the fourth semester. At the MA level, three universities in BiH offer andragagogical courses (Banja Luka, East Sarajevo and Mostar). Andragogical courses are only mandatory in the MA program of Teacher Training in Banja Luka and the Pedagogy program in Mostar. The number of allocated ECTSs for andragagogical courses ranges from 5 to 12 in the obligatory program.

Recently, Universities in Banja Luka and East Sarajevo have introduced new electives at the graduate level, while new courses have also been included in PhD programs in Banja Luka and Sarajevo. These courses include the *Theoretical-methodological foundations of andragogical work*, *Theories and models of experiential learning for adults*, *Andragogical didactics*, and *Evaluation in pedagogical-andragogical work* (in Banja Luka). The PhD program at the University of Sarajevo also includes an elective module with an andragogical perspective called *Creativity in a learning society*. This reflects the intention to offer an andragogical orientation to doctoral candidates with a series of electives that span the entire doctoral program.

Most curricula have undergone changes over the past seven years; new courses have been introduced, some have been renamed, the distribution of the number of ECTSs has been restructured. However, the number of andragagogical courses and ECTSs allocated to them has not markedly increased. The only visible progress achieved is in the Curriculum of Pedagogy at the Faculty of Philosophy in Banja Luka, which now entails two electives at the MA level and four in the PhD program, with one subject offered per semester. At the Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo, andragagogical courses have been relocated from the third to the second year of BA studies, with additional practical instruction in both semesters. The aim of this was to enhance students' identification with the field of andragogy at an earlier stage of their studies. However, this initiative remained incomplete as the MA program does not encompass any andragogical subjects. Consequently, andragogy remains reduced to introductory courses, without possibilities for further development and diversification since it is not integrated into the graduate level curriculum. The resulting effect is that fewer students opt for master's theses in andragogy.

The total number of ECTSs allocated to andragogical extramural practice and fieldwork has only slightly increased in Banja Luka and Sarajevo. Professor Mujo Slatina from the University of Sarajevo, one of the pioneers of andragogy in BiH, warns that the current reduced status of andragogy within university programs does not allow it to fully cover all the problems and demands of ALE. In his opinion, andragogy currently lacks serious academic and social status, which has overarching consequences. If an academic discipline "has not optimally progressed and attained the necessary level of scientific development, it will not have the chance for normal, natural participation in multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary processes of high-technology science development".<sup>8</sup>

---

8 Prof. dr. Mujo Slatina, survey 09.

Essential readers at all universities still include what could be considered classical works in the south Slavic languages: Kulić and Despotović's *Osнове andragogije* (2005), Paus-tović's *Edukologija* (1999) and Andrilović et al.'s *Andragogija* (1985), complemented by other more recent publications specific to certain departments.

In addition to Andragogy and Adult Education, a wider variety of terms appear as course titles. While many of these terms reflect the key concepts circulating in political discourse, they may not necessarily have scientific resonance and disciplinary aspirations. Course titles include terms such as: *permanent education, lifelong learning, lifelong education, professional development, learning society*. Popović (2021) cautions against the uncritical usage of concepts that carry an ideological burden and reflect power plays in the global arena, particularly between organisations like UNESCO (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) and OECD (The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), which each advocate for their own vision of ALE. Furthermore, incorporating such terminology in course titles may not necessarily have the potential to promote disciplinary tendencies and could instead be focused on reinforcing specific, sometimes harmful, discourses.

Teachers of andragogical courses regularly hold posts in pedagogical disciplines and most of them (with one exception) hold a PhD in pedagogy/educational sciences. This reflects a strong bond between pedagogy and andragogy within the country's academic context and resembles the fourth phase of the development of andragogy as an academic discipline in Germany, as identified by Faber (2006), named as professors in "double disciplines". One survey participant, a professor of pedagogy, explained this connection by stating: "Andragogy is close to my academic habitus, and I try to incorporate its perspective in all the subjects that I teach, which are more dominantly pedagogical. I want students to see that pedagogical work also entails andragogical principles."<sup>9</sup> This effort is a sign of what Andragogy Professor Mirjana Mavrak from the University of Sarajevo describes as andragogy's "implicit presence within pedagogical narrative" and continues stating that even the name andragogy is not sufficiently pronounced in academic discourse and the practical field.<sup>10</sup>

Based on the analysis presented, it can be observed that the current state of andragogy only makes it possible to provide students with a basic knowledge of ALE, but a neglectable number of students pursue this field for further development. Thus, there is no natural production of young researchers and scholars, as warned by Academician Adila Pašalić Kreso.<sup>11</sup>

---

9 Survey A02.

10 Prof. dr. Mirjana Mavrak, survey no. 06.

11 Acad. Adila Pašalić Kreso, member of the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, survey A03.

## Opinions of the academic community

The survey answers of university professors were thematically scrutinised and coded. A summarised overview of the obtained results is presented in Table 3. The overall conclusion is that the professors recognise the need to improve the status of andragogy in BiH. They believe that a separate andragogy program is necessary, but the assumptions on which such a stance is based are different, as is the perception of the most appropriate models.

**Table 3**  
*Thematic coding of surveys with university professors*

Theme	Codes
Perception of the current status of andragogy in BiH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Symbolic</li> <li>• Static</li> <li>• Dysfunctional</li> <li>• Institutionally unrecognised</li> <li>• Marginalised in relation to pedagogy</li> <li>• Implicitly present in pedagogical narrative</li> </ul>
Possibilities for improvement of the current status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positioning andragogy within education policy</li> <li>• Develop a separate study program in andragogy</li> <li>• Drawing attention to the necessity and relevance of studying andragogical issues for overall social progress</li> <li>• Raising awareness of misuse in ALE by unqualified persons</li> <li>• Positioning andragogical professionals on the labour market</li> <li>• Funding for launching a study program and engagement of lecturers from abroad</li> <li>• Raising awareness of the relevance of andragogical knowledge in different professions and institutions</li> </ul>
Models of andragogy study programs in BiH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study program in andragogy with some fundamental pedagogical courses in addition to some other courses from other disciplines (e.g. educational management, human resources management), organised as a 3+2 scheme</li> <li>• MA program in andragogy open to all professions and profiles with an obligatory short propaedeutic program and an entrance exam</li> </ul>
Rationale for launching a study program in andragogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequacy of a single course to cover ALE issues</li> <li>• Contemporary challenges of ALE</li> <li>• Needs of personal, civic, social development of adults and necessary educational services</li> <li>• Need for a genuine jurisdiction of the scientific discipline for a specific area of scientific research</li> <li>• Need for competent action in the non-formal education sector</li> </ul>

The current status of andragogy in BiH is described as symbolic, static, dysfunctional, institutionally unrecognised, marginalised in relation to pedagogy with only an implicit presence within the pedagogical narrative or serving the purposes of pedagogical work (e.g. in programs of professional development for school teachers). This status is further

elaborated in the context of the influences of actors from the NGO sector who impose the special education approach as a mainstream pedagogical way of thinking. Such an approach hinders the development of other education science disciplines and given that NGO actors are financially supported by international players, below the surface, neoliberal motives dominate over humanistic ones. This further impacts the academic trajectories of young researchers and their readiness to develop within andragogy, “rather than utilising andragogy as a ‘crutch’ or ‘transitional aid’ in achieving personal ambitions in the pedagogical sphere.”<sup>12</sup> Professor Mavruk also points out the fact that the development of andragogy as a discipline is not a priority for the majority of current university teachers in the field of education sciences.

Suggestions for enhancing the status of andragogy in BiH include various measures such as positioning it within education policy documents and allocating adequate funding for its further development, raising awareness of the needs in practice, developing a study program in andragogy, and acknowledging the needs adult learners have for essential skills and competencies. Incorporating the development of andragogy into strategic documents, according to the results, would lead to the definition of needs, relevance, and perspectives of ALE within educational policies, alongside with the conceptualisation of research directions. “The logic that should be followed includes this pattern: education → research-scientific work → social production ↔ learning society”<sup>13</sup>

Thoughts on how the current insufficient presence of andragogy in academic and public discourse could be improved include fostering scientific and professional research and publication, as well as the organisation of symposia, round tables, and conferences. This would facilitate bringing andragogy from the margins to the centre, as Pašalić Kreso puts it.<sup>14</sup> The need for the recognition of the profile of an adult education specialist/andragogue is also cited. When it comes to the models of andragogy study programs in BiH, two positions are being profiled among members of the academic community:

1. introducing BA and MA andragogy programs that would include certain basic pedagogical courses, and possibly courses from other disciplines as a common core, in a 3+2 scheme;
2. MA program in andragogy that can be enrolled in after completing a BA program in any discipline.

Discussing the relationship between pedagogy and andragogy in the context of study programs, Professor Mujo Slatina argues that “the combination of a more developed discipline [pedagogy] with a less developed one [andragogy] can result in one stifling the development of the other, or one dominating the other, which is not uncommon in the educational domain.”<sup>15</sup> Hence the rationale for establishing a separate study program in

---

12 Prof. dr. Mirjana Mavruk, survey A06.

13 Prof. dr. Mujo Slatina, survey A09.

14 Survey A03.

15 Survey A09.

andragogy, on both the BA and MA levels, with the intention of fostering its further development as a distinctive discipline.

Academician Adila Pašalić Kreso further argues that the ultimate goal should be to develop a distinct and independent study program in andragogy in addition to establishing a professional andragogical association similar to those found in neighbouring countries (e.g. the Andragogical Society of Slovenia, the Croatian Andragogy Society and the Serbian Association of Andragogists). However, considering the current resources available, she suggests the following:

An MA program in andragogy should be established as soon as possible. This would generate, in a relatively short period, the necessary pool of qualified experts and academic youth who would be entitled to contribute to the further development of an independent study program in andragogy, running parallel to pedagogy and potentially including some shared courses.<sup>16</sup>

Professor Mirjana Mavrak further elaborates on the practical implementation of an andragogy study program. In her opinion, it should be an MA program open to all, regardless of their BA degree, but with a mandatory propaedeutic program that would be verified by attending a short-cycle andragogy program and a special entrance examination procedure.

In the first 4–7 years of operation, funds will be needed for lecturers from the region, after which the program should become self-sustainable in terms of competent local academic staff. The participation of professors from abroad would give the program an international dimension and foster vertical and horizontal mobility. In Professor Mavrak's opinion, "such a program would educate professionals (holding an MA or PhD) who would be aware of their andragogical identity and committed to developing the discipline."<sup>17</sup> This program can have either a professional orientation (lasting for a year) or an academic one (two years). Priority should be given to courses such as Research Methodology (emphasised in the academic program) and Methodology of Teaching Adults (included in both programs). Her vision of andragogy as an "inclusive discipline" (Mavrak, 2018) appeals for accepting influences of anthropological, psychological, sociological, linguistic and communicology knowledge, thus granting the opportunity to future students to think about traditional andragogical concepts in a new way and re-conceptualise their knowledge. Moreover, the inclusive dimension of an andragogy study program would also be achieved by engaging retired andragogy professors and professionals experienced in ALE (from public, private, and NGO sectors). Cooperation between the university and the business sector is needed in an andragogy study program, which the other two research groups also emphasised.<sup>18</sup>

16 Survey A03.

17 Survey A06.

18 Surveys P01; P05; P07; P09; P10; M01; M02; M05; M10.

The results of this research show strong support to developing an andragogy study program from university professors, regardless of their affiliation and academic habitus. However, as Professor Cerić notes,<sup>19</sup> one should be aware that the introduction of such a program would be accompanied by a series of challenges, including those related to academic staff, programmatic, procedural challenges and the like. The universities in BiH operate under a legal framework that is characterised by a notable lack of flexibility and adaptability to emerging demands.

The rationale for initiating a study program in andragogy, according to the obtained results, stems primarily from the fact that ALE issues cannot be adequately addressed by andragogy as a single course within the curriculum of another discipline. The challenges of contemporary ALE demand a faster development of andragogy. There is a wide spectrum of research topics that are yet to be addressed and currently remain unrecognised and neglected (e.g. expertise in ALE curricula development is currently much needed). Adults have various needs for personal, civic, and social development, especially with regard to emerging digital and “green” skills. Moreover, there is a need for competent action in non-formal education aimed at improving personal well-being and life in a diverse global world (civic education, media literacy, combating transgenerational trauma transmission, peace education, intercultural education, etc.). It should not be overlooked that the ALE sector currently faces a number of challenges related to quality assurance, which require qualified professionals. As noted by a representative from one of the ministries of education: “Misuses and lack of professionalism in some adult education centres tarnish the reputation of the entire sector.”<sup>20</sup>

Launching an andragogy study program, according to Professor Cerić,<sup>21</sup> could also be justified by the long-standing tradition of separate study programs in andragogy in neighbouring countries (Slovenia, Serbia) and further afield (e.g. Germany), as well as the provision of ALE laws in BiH that impose the need for andragogical workers, i.e., experts in adult education programs. Other participants<sup>22</sup> pointed to the current demographic situation and the fact that the population is becoming increasingly older, partly due to the migration of young people and partly due to the extension of human life. That is why education for the third age should be affirmed, and thus new employment opportunities could be created.

### **Findings from the survey with ALE providers**

The survey was conducted with 10 ALE providers in BiH using open-ended questions to determine whether they recognised the need for an andragogy study program to improve competencies in ALE practice.

---

19 Survey A08.

20 Survey M08.

21 Survey A08.

22 E.g. Prof. dr. Mirjana Mavrak, survey A06.

None of the ALE providers surveyed employed a qualified andragogue or an adult education professional. Wider research based on interviews and surveys conducted with 75 representatives from ALE providers revealed that more than 70% of adult education teachers had no prior andragagogical training (Isanović Hadžiomerović et al., 2022). It was also interesting to note that positions of ALE coordinators were often filled by persons with qualifications in economy, law, political sciences, social work, etc. One survey response that illustrates this is the following: "I don't see that completion of a study program in andragogy is a necessary prerequisite for a successful practice in the ALE sector, but it can give it more structure and informed action."<sup>23</sup>

**Table 4**  
*Summary of results from surveys with ALE providers*

Category	Assessment/description
Assessment of the intensity of the need for an andragogy study program	M=3.0
The most appropriate model for an andragogy study program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MA program (max. 2 semesters)</li> <li>• Practice oriented program</li> <li>• Part-time studies</li> </ul>
Necessary prerequisites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusion of experts from practice</li> <li>• Innovative curriculum</li> <li>• Adaptations of the National Qualifications Framework</li> <li>• Recognition of informal and self-directed learning</li> </ul>

The development of a sustained and well-organised education system is generally believed to hinge on teacher training, and adult education is no exception. In line with this, all laws of adult education in BiH stipulate that ALE providers must furnish proof of their staff's andragagogical competencies with respective certificates in order to obtain official accreditation. However, the fact that there are currently no opportunities for obtaining a formal university diploma in andragogy and a competency framework for teachers in ALE has yet to be established raise a number of questions. Licensing and further professional development requirements in ALE remain unclear, and even practitioners' awareness of andragogy remains ambiguous: "Andragogical skills are required, but we are more in demand for professionals in subject areas such as design, IT, project management, etc."<sup>24</sup>

The legal provision noted earlier does not specify any recognised form of andragagogical education and training, which leaves space for providers to organise short seminars for their trainers in order to fill the legal requirement for a minimum of andragagogical competencies. Meanwhile, essential competencies are often acquired through self-learning and work experience:

23 Survey P03.

24 Survey P10.

At the beginning, it would have been very useful for us to have a person on our team who had completed a degree in andragogy. That way, we wouldn't have to learn by doing, but rather we would know from the start how to do things properly. However, now, after all these years of experience, I can say that studying andragogy is not essential for us. I would prefer to send team members to a short training course on a topic that is important to us.<sup>25</sup>

The survey results show reliance on *informal practitioner knowledge* which tends to disregard the discipline model on the grounds of its claim to objectivity and its generalised and universal character (Usher, 1989), which does not apply to various ALE practical issues. This partially explains the indifference of ALE providers towards the need for an andragogy study program ( $M=3.0$ ). According to the results, if such a program were to be launched, it should be shorter in duration, practice-oriented, include self-learning and practical work hours, as well as experts from the field. This resembles work-integrated study the most, which is not academic in nature, and does not contribute to disciplinary development. This kind of perspective may present potential threats as it might nurture the perception of andragogy as a semi-profession or even non-profession.

### **Findings from the survey with representatives from education authorities**

There is relative congruence in the results obtained from surveys with employers of ALE providers and representatives of education authorities. The latter also show a tendency towards an indifferent value when it comes to the perception of the need for an andragogy study program in BiH ( $M=3.2$ ). The representatives of education authorities think that a study program should be organised both on the BA and MA levels. However, the necessary prerequisites, according to them, entail defining legal regulations concerning andragogical professionals and defining their position in the labour market. Some raised concerns about a decreased interest in studying social sciences and humanities observed recently: "The question is whether there will be interested applicants. For several years now, we have been recording a decreasing number of interested candidates for teacher training programs. Some study programs had no enrolled candidates in the last year."<sup>26</sup>

In BiH, adult education is commonly categorised in the same sector as vocational and technical secondary education. Although this might seem pragmatic due to the presence of vocational education programs for retraining and upgrading, it has limiting implications. Presently, adult education is being encapsulated and restricted instead of being envisaged as a multisectoral entity as outlined in strategic documents.

---

25 Survey P04.

26 Survey M05.

**Table 5***Summary of results from surveys with representatives of education authorities*

Category	Assessment/description
Assessment of the intensity of the need for an andragogy study program	$M=3.2$
The most appropriate model for an andragogy study program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BA and MA program</li> </ul>
Necessary prerequisites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal regulations on the profile of persons working in the field of adult education</li> <li>• Adjustment in the nomenclature of professions</li> <li>• Qualified university teachers</li> <li>• Interested applicants</li> </ul>

Furthermore, although higher education institutions are mandated to offer lifelong learning programs based on their statutes, adult education law does not acknowledge them as legitimate adult education providers unless they undergo an accreditation procedure according to the adult education law, which is incompatible with the operation of a higher education institution:

In order for an ALE provider to be accredited, it has to apply for the extension of its scope of activities so as to include adult education. This is what all accredited providers have to do, and higher education institutions are not an exception.<sup>27</sup>

The right question to ask is how the decision-makers in ALE in BiH are supposed to acquire competencies when a program providing such competencies in a systematised and grounded manner does not exist. With andragogy as a discipline in such a marginal position, the ministries of education act as the main regulatory body in the ALE sector; however, their competencies in the very subject seem to be limited and blurred by the logic of the formal education sectors.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The key findings of this research reveal what Heikkinen et al. (2019) described as an “antagonistic division between practice, research and politics” (p. 84). University professors assume that an andragogy study program would help rethink key issues in the practical domain and enable the acquisition of the professional competencies needed to improve its quality. Additionally, they believe that andragogy in BiH deserves an opportunity for the disciplinary development that launching a study program, establishing research activity and international cooperation with colleagues from abroad would provide. Voices coming from the practical domain and policy makers essentially reveal a lack of problem awareness, the capacity to identify and interpret events and processes so as to bring “old

27 Survey M09.

certainties and securities to the breaking point" (Nowotny, 1991, p. 29). This is where the role of the academic community becomes crucial – to initiate critical reflection and galvanise the collective experience of the issues related to ALE so as to open up avenues for new approaches.

While the development of andragogy in BiH might seem to be slower than the actual needs are, a comparison with the wider European context reflects similar incremental processes (Faber, 2006; Heikkinen et al., 2019). This organic and natural sequence of events eventually leads to the conclusion that the development of andragogy as an academic discipline in Germany followed the personal academic trajectories of the professors contributing to the emergence of the field. One of the issues highlighted in the research results is the dearth of clearly profiled and andragogically oriented academics who would advocate for and advance this discipline in BiH.

Karu and Jõgi (2014) note that "implementing and developing curricula for adult educators is an opportunity and a challenge for universities as well as a perspective to ensure systematic and research-based development" (p. 105). The key question here is whether the academic community of BiH has the necessary willingness to face the possible challenges and raise the question of launching an andragogy study program to the level of public debate.

The obtained results confirm the initial assumption showing relative coherence in the attitudes of university professors when it comes to launching an andragogy study program. However, their visions of the most appropriate models are different, which should be further discussed in round tables or thematic symposia. ALE providers' attitudes also show congruence in the moderate intensity of the perceived need for an andragogy study program, and in their proposition of a practice-oriented MA program. Policy makers are more similar to ALE providers in their assessment of the need for an andragogy program. However, their hesitancy is related to the insecurity regarding the systems' needs and capacities to respond to the demands that a new study program might bring. This poses a tangible threat, particularly concerning the fragmented structure of educational administration in BiH, characterised by the dispersion of power and responsibilities across multiple levels.

Based on what has been presented in this paper, it is possible to conclude that ALE in BiH has witnessed dynamic development during the past twenty years, but the domain of research and disciplinary development has remained marginalised. This is visible in the absence of evidence-based decision-making, professionalisation and the scarcity of trained educators to administer processes and implement regulations. The present developments in the ALE domain pose demands and requirements for specialised andragogical knowledge, specifically that related to professionalisation, curricula development, quality assurance, and specific teaching approaches and methodologies, to name the most current ones. Currently, andragogy needs stronger support from academic institutions and developing a study program is one way of achieving that. Given the obtained results, it

seems that the time has not yet come for such a project, but serious debates and research should be initiated, inviting colleagues from the region of south-east Europe and beyond to share their experiences. Focused effort should be also put into bridging the gap between the three social fields (academia, ALE providers and policy makers) and defining their common values.

## REFERENCES

Bertsch, G. K., & Persons, K. L. (1980). Workers' education in socialist Yugoslavia. *Comparative Education Review*, 24(1), 87–97. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1187398>

Bright, B. P. (1989). Introduction: The epistemological imperative. In B. P. Bright (Ed.), *Theory and practice in the study of adult education: The epistemological debate* (pp. 1–12). Routledge.

Centar za cijeloživotno učenje. (2023). *Časopis Obrazovanje odraslih*. <https://ccu.bkc.ba>

Döringer, S. (2021). 'The problem-centred expert interview': Combining qualitative interviewing approaches for investigating implicit expert knowledge. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 24(3), 265–278. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2020.1766777>

Egetenmeyer, R. (2010). Professionalisation in adult education: A European perspective. In R. Egetenmeyer & E. Nuissl (Eds.), *Teachers and Trainers in Adult and Lifelong Learning* (pp. 31–40). Peter Lang.

Faber, W. (2006). *My way to andragogy – Autobiographical reflections* [Paper presented at the Bamberg-Conference 2006 "How to become an Adult Educator"]. <http://andragogy.net/conference-2006papers/Faber.pdf>

Faculty of Philosophy in Banja Luka. (2022). *Педагогија*. <https://ff.unibl.org/pedagogija>

Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo. (1977). *Nastavni plan i program – Studijska grupa: 02 – Pedagogija i psihologija*. Filozofski fakultet.

Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo. (2021). *Treći ciklus studija – doktorski studij iz pedagogije: „Teorije i istraživanja kreativnog odgoja i obrazovanja“*. <https://ff.unsa.ba/files/doktorskiStudiji/21-22/doktorski-studij-pedagogija.pdf>

Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo. (2023). *Oglasna ploča: Odsjek za pedagogiju*. <https://ff.unsa.ba/index.php/bs/oblasna-ploca-ped>

Faculty of Philosophy in Tuzla. (2022). *Nastavni programi*. <http://www.ff.untz.ba/index.php?page=nastavni-programi>

Faculty of Political Science in Sarajevo. (2019). *Studiji*. <https://fpn.unsa.ba>

Faculty of Science and Education in Mostar. (n.d.). *Pedagogija*. <https://fpmoz.sum.ba/pedagogija/>

Heikkinen, A., Päätäri, J., & Teräshade, D. (2019). Disciplinary struggles in and between adult, vocational, and general education in the Academy: Lessons from Finland. In A. Heikkinen, J. Päätäri, & G. Molzberger (Eds.), *Disciplinary Struggles in Education* (pp. 83–115). Tampere University Press.

Isanović Hadžiomerović, A. (2016). *Obrazovanje odraslih u Bosni i Hercegovini: Stanje i perspective*, *Zbornik radova Odsjeka za pedagogiju*, 1(1), 319–331.

Isanović Hadžiomerović, A. (2023a). *Upitnik za članove i članice akademске zajednice*. <https://forms.gle/h1Zjv9N1sYJDAdwj6>

Isanović Hadžiomerović, A. (2023b). *Upitnik za predstavnike organizatora obrazovanja odraslih i obrazovnih politika*. <https://forms.gle/Ch6myE3pGcrLwwmn9>

Isanović Hadžiomerović, A., Pfanzelt, A., & Pfanzelt, H. (2022). *Study on adult learning and education in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. DVV International; DIE.

Karu, K., & Jõgi, L. (2014). From professional studies to learning experiences – creating learning possibilities for adult educators. In S. Lattke & W. Jütte (Eds.), *Professionalisation of Adult Educators: International and Comparative Perspectives* (pp. 105–128). Peter Lang.

Keiner, E. (2002). Education between academic discipline and profession in Germany after World War II. *European Educational Research Journal*, 1(1), 83–98. <https://doi.org/10.2304/eerj.2002.1.1.14>

Martin, J. L. (2003). What is field theory? *American Journal of Sociology*, 109(1), 1–49. <https://doi.org/10.1086/375201>

Mavrak, M. (2004). Odgoj i obrazovanje odraslih u Bosni i Hercegovini. *Obrazovanje odraslih*, 4(2), 64–77.

Mavrak, M. (2018). *Legal socialization program: Adul education manual*. PH International.

Nowotny, H. (1991). Knowledge for certainty: Poverty, welfare institutions and the institutionalization of social science. In P. Wagner, B. Wittrock, & R. Whitley (Eds.), *Discourses on Society: The shaping of the social science disciplines* (pp. 3–22). Kluwer.

Piedmont, R. L. (2014). Social desirability bias. In A. C. Michalos (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Well-Being Research* (pp. 6036–6037). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-0753-5\\_2746](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-0753-5_2746)

Popović, K. (2021). Destruktivan pohod celoživotnog obrazovanja, *Obrazovanje odraslih*, 21(2), 53–78.

Sandelowski, M. (1995). Focus on qualitative methods: Sample size in qualitative research. *Research in Nursing and Health*, 18(2), 179–183. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nur.4770180211>

Teachers's Faculty at Džemal Bijedić University of Mostar. (2022). *Pedagogija*. <https://nf.unmo.ba/studij/i-ciklus/pedagogija.aspx>

University of East Sarajevo. (2017). *O стручном програму наставнице*. <https://ff.ues.rs.ba/o-studij-skom-programu-pedagogija/>

Usher, R. S. (1989). Locating adult education in the practical. In B. P. Bright (Ed.), *Theory and practice in the study of adult education: The epistemological debate* (pp. 65–93). Routledge.

Wagner, P., & Wittrock, B. (1991) States, institutions and discourses: A comparative perspective on the structuration of the social sciences. In P. Wagner, B. Wittrock, & R. Whitley (Eds.), *Discourses on Society: The shaping of the social science disciplines* (pp. 331–358). Kluwer.

Wilkinson, K. P. (1991). *The community in rural America*. Greenwood Press.

Witzel, A., & Reiter, H. (2012). *The problem-centred interview: Principles and Practice*. SAGE Publications Ltd.