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Abstract of Diploma Thesis

Lifelong learning – taking a degree in later years

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Summary

This diploma thesis, Lifelong learning – taking a degree in later years, is aimed at adult learners that lived under the communist regime in the Czech Republic and experienced the impact of communism on education. It also takes into consideration the views of today's learners on the educational system and the work environment. The theoretical part gives us an insight on the concept of lifelong learning, the position of the EU and the Czech Republic on this case, defines the basis of HR management and its policies, states the main motivation theories and gives us an insight on the economic and political situation before 1989.

The practical part analyses the reasons why adults could not continue with their studies after secondary school, their motivations for returning to university in later years to obtain a university degree and their overall view on today's importance of having university degrees and the job market. It also analyses the reactions of today's learners and their motivations to education and the importance of university degrees in today's world.

Keywords: Lifelong learning, adult education in the Czech Republic, motivation, 1989, communism, today's learners

Introduction

In today's world the society is surrounded by innovations, technological development, globalisation and market enlargement. The society needs to keep up with the modernization and streamline and develop accordingly. The demands are set high and will keep growing for the new generations. Education, as the tool of gaining knowledge, is vital in all stages of our lives. If we are deprived from the possibility to study, then we stagnate on the same position and our growth – personal and intellectual, is much slower. We need to be motivated from all sides in order keep up the pace of changes.

Before the Velvet Revolution in 1989, the Czech Republic was under the pressure of the communist regime. It was up to the communists to decide if an individual was allowed to attend a school of his choice or not. The reasons for not being given the permission are mainly due to the wrong ideology, persecution in the family and any other activities that were not in line with those of communists. Therefore, after the fall of the communist regime adults had the possibility to get their university degree in later years. The motivations behind that can be both personal and work related. On the other hand, today's learners have free access to tertiary education and can choose freely to attend any university of their choice. But their motivations to attend university and get a degree are slightly different. Examining these motivations and the overall views on education and the job market for both generations is essential for realising the importance of how the surrounding environment and society influence university education and education as a whole in today's world.

Aims

The aim of the diploma thesis is to evaluate the reasons and motivations as to why adults in later years, that is 30 and higher, have not gained their university degree straight after secondary school and have decided to return to university to get it now. In addition, this thesis will identify the motivations behind commencing their studies in later years, both personal and work-related issues. The thesis will also evaluate the situation of today's graduates regarding their motivations to study and get a university degree and their views and motivations towards the work environment.

Methodology

It is essential to discover the basic features of lifelong learning in the Czech Republic, concentrating on the possibilities that adults have available. Many sources from books and research papers were used to clarify lifelong practices, motivations, human resource management and especially the situation before 1989, which was an essential time regarding education. The practical part is based on questionnaires and interviews with respondents. Questionnaires were given to adult students finishing their degree in later years, to students studying university of third life and also to today's students. They were aimed at discovering the motivation behind attending university, the reasons why adults could not continue with their studies and the connection between the education and work environment. Questionnaires and interviews were processed anonymously.

Conclusion

For the Czech Republic it is essential to maintain a high level of education to have a strong labour force. Institutions should concentrate on the ageing population and adjust their curriculum to the needs of the population. The concentration should of course start at initial education, but it should also work as a motivation force to get more students educated in the tertiary sector. The courses should however be tailored to teach what is really needed and important in today's world. There are many study programs which consist of courses that are irrelevant for the student. Combined studies are the best solution for adult students getting their degree in later years. The amount of study programs offered in this sphere is large. In most cases it does not necessarily matter from what field the degree is from as long as the individual has one.

Without education, the country would be on a completely different economic level and the style of life, the society would live, would bring us back many years. Thanks to the constant growth of markets, globalisation and technological developments, persons want to keep up with the growth and grow themselves. We are looking at a society that will perhaps one day become overeducated.

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