THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE LEARNERS
IN LIFELONG LEARNING PROGRAMS PROVIDED
BY LIFELONG LEARNING CENTERS IN GREECE

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Abstract:
The objective of this research is to explore the expectations of adult learners who participate in Lifelong Learning programs provided by Centers for Education and Lifelong Learning (KEDIVIM) in Greece. The research was implemented using a qualitative approach, with the participation of 20 adult learners who attended or had completed educational programs during the research period; the research data were collected through interviews. The research explored the expectations of the learners regarding the outcomes of the program, the learning process, and the educator. The findings of the research revealed that expectations in relation to program outcomes prevailed over the other two expectation groups. Adult learners mainly expect to meet professional needs, followed by meeting personal needs, as well as financial and social expectations. Expectations in relation to the learning process were limited, while those regarding the educator were even more limited.

Keywords: lifelong learning, adult education, lifelong learning centers, expectations, adult learner, educator, learning process

1. Introduction

The concepts of Lifelong Education (LLE) and Lifelong Learning (LLL) are nowadays at the core of many national and international research studies. In addition, they are often featured as leading elements in the texts of national and international institutions and organizations. The literature presents a discussion on the definition, content, aims, and dimensions of LLE and LLL. According to Jarvis (2005, p. 60), education is defined as

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"*any planned series of incidents, having a humanistic basis, directed towards the participants' learning and understanding*", while learning is defined as "*the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, beliefs, emotions, senses, etc.*" (Jarvis, ibid., p. 117). It is often wrongly presented as a concept synonymous with that of education, replacing it in the educational vocabulary (Jarvis, 2005).

LLE is the umbrella term that encompasses formal, non-formal, and informal learning[ii] (Dunn, 2003; Karalis, 2003). In a 1983 report of the Education Committee in Eire the term LLL was introduced. From then on, it gradually began to replace the term LLE, as its meaning was considered to be broader and to include that of Adult Education (AE) (Jarvis, 2004; Leftheriotou, 2012). The coexistence of the two terms resulted in conceptual confusion, as initially there was no clear distinction between them (Jarvis, 2004). The Ministers of Education of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) adopted the goal of "*lifelong learning for all in 1996*", a year dedicated to LLL. (O.E.C.D., 2001; Leftheriotou, 2012). "*This goal covers all purposeful learning activity, from the cradle to the grave, that aims to improve knowledge and competencies for all individuals who wish to participate in learning activities.*" (O.E.C.D., 2001, p. 2). The aim is to provide equal learning opportunities for the whole population throughout their lives. However, it is up to the target population to decide whether to take advantage of the learning opportunities offered to them (O.E.C.D., 2001). Due to globalization and ever-changing financial literacy, it is important that adults upgrade their skills to meet the modern demands of their professional and personal lives (O.E.C.D., 2007). Lifelong learning is important for the development of both society itself and the individual (Feinstein, Hammond, Woods, Preston, & Bynner, 2003; Hammond, 2004; Horrigan, 2016; Tuckett, 2017). Research has revealed that there are significant inequalities in access to learning opportunities between countries. Those who are better off, with more stable jobs and stronger educational backgrounds tend to integrate lifelong learning into their lives (Biesta, 2006; Field, 2006; Goldthorpe, 2016; O.E.C.D., 2019).

Among the providers of LLL and AE services in Greece are the Lifelong Learning Centers (KEDIVIM or LLLCs) under study. In the framework of non-formal education, the providers offer Continuing Vocational Training (CVT), Reskilling, Upskilling, General Adult Education (G.A.E.), and Vocational Guidance and Counselling (V.G.C.) services. The aim of their activities is to provide equal learning opportunities for all, to help increase opportunities for access to the labor market and to make the most of leisure time. They are addressed to all adults regardless of gender, religious beliefs, or social class.

However, adult learning is not a smooth and seamless process. It is determined by a number of interdependent factors that make it unpredictable, with no guaranteed outcome. Among these factors are the expectations of learners in relation to the training programs they attend. Therefore, in this research, we focused on the exploration of the expectations of adult learners who participate in LLL programs. LLLCs were chosen as

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[ii] For further details on the typology of educational activities, see Coombs & Ahmed, 1974.

the framework for the empirical research. The exploration of expectations was facilitated by the information that emerged regarding their quality, whether they were fulfilled or not, as well as their relation to motivation.

In the first part of this article, a literature review on Lifelong Learning, Adult Education and the expectations of adult learners from Lifelong Learning programs, which is the main purpose of this research, is attempted. In the second part of this article, the results of the research and the conclusions drawn are presented and discussed.

2. Literature Review

Until the late 1970s, the term Adult Education (AE) was mistakenly almost equated with Lifelong Education (LLE) and Lifelong Learning (LLL), a phenomenon that is still sometimes observed today (Karalis, 2003). Perhaps this synonymity is due to the fact that, in order for the policies of the LLL to be implemented, apart from formal education, the two other categories of educational activity, i.e., non-formal and informal, should also be developed (Karalis, 2003). A European Union Communication (Com 2006/614) explicitly states that adult learning is a vital component of LLL (Vergidis, Karalis & Koulaouzidis, 2010). In fact, it constitutes a genuine subset of LLL activity (Karalis, 2003). AE is divided into subcategories, namely initial and continuing vocational training, general adult education and informal adult learning (Vergidis, Karalis & Koulaouzidis, 2010). The national executive body in Greece in the field of LLL and AE is the General Secretariat for Vocational Education, Training, Lifelong Learning and Youth, which is under the authority of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs.

When adults participate in an educational program, they have certain expectations. When success is part of these expectations, they are called success expectations and have a positive connotation, whereas when there is a fear of failure, they are called negative expectations with a clearly negative connotation. In the first case, individuals may improve their performance, while, in the second case, they may become weaker, making wrong choices (Georgogiannis, 2010; Koutelekos & Chaliasos, 2014). There are many different factors that influence and shape expectations (Sofitsi, 2016). There is not much-published research on adult learners' expectations of training programs, unlike those on incentives. That is why the present research attempts to shed light on this topic. According to the literature, the concepts of "incentive" and "expectations" interact with each other (Sofitsi, 2016), and incentives can influence and modify the behaviour of individuals (Georgogiannis, 2010). This means that the quality of the expectations of individuals can affect their motivation. In particular, positive expectations can encourage the individual to act, while negative expectations can demotivate the individual and stop any kind of action (Georgogiannis, 2010). According to Hubackova and Semradova (2014) some external expectations translated as pressures, perhaps coming from employers, friends, or mentors, are incentives for learning.

Through the review of the literature, some areas emerged on which the trainees focus their expectations, such as the educator, the learning process, and the results they

expect after the end of each learning program. As mentioned above, it is important to make the expectations of the learners known from the beginning in order to formulate structured and purposeful "*learning episodes*" (Rogers, 2002) that are consistent with the goals, interests and desires of adult learners.

Expectations related to the educator are the most widespread in the international literature. Donaldson, Flannery and Ross-Gordon (1993, as cited in Imel, 1995) have presented some expectations of adult learners related to the role of the educator. These expectations appear to be related to the educator's attitude towards both learners and teaching. In particular, they expect the educator to be knowledgeable about the subject matter, to present the relevant material in a clear way, to be interested in students' learning, to motivate them and to be enthusiastic. Regarding their expectations about the educator's attitude towards teaching, they responded that they want them to create an intimate learning environment (Rogers, 2007), to use a variety of learning techniques, to be interested in meeting the different needs of learners and to be dedicated to teaching. Gelen (2019) adds some elements regarding the behaviour of instructors towards learners to the expectations concerning the educator. The learners expect polite treatment without rudeness, ignoring and humiliation. They do not wish educators to behave in a prejudiced or imposing manner or to give constant advice. In addition, they do not like to treat learners as if they were underage students by instructing them, as well as by disregarding their knowledge of a particular subject. They wish that educators would let learners personalize their learning experiences to some extent (Doyle, 2020). Finally, they expect an honest and fair treatment by educators. Gelen argues that ignoring these expectations negatively affects the learning process of adult learners. The expectation of working in collaboration with the educator is added to these expectations (Doyle, 2020). The learners want their educators to act as mentors and inspirers and to support their development (Gelen, 2019).

Adult learners' expectations of educators seem to coincide to a certain extent with the proper role of an educator based on the principles of adult education. After searching the relevant literature (Jarvis, 2007; Rogers, 2002; Rogers & Horrocks, 2010), the main characteristics of the adult educator are to care for and accept learners, i.e., to take into account their expectations, their individual characteristics and their experience, to communicate clearly and effectively, fostering dialogue and mutual respect. Moreover, the educator should be interested in and properly organize the teaching process (teaching material and teaching modules), as well as to apply a variety of techniques that promote critical thinking, interaction, and engagement and to link the learning content with the demand and requirements of the labor market and society. In addition, the educator needs to take on the role of coordinator, supporter, mediator, learning guide and catalyst that activates the learning process. On a personal level, they need to be self-aware, to know their strengths and weaknesses and, at the same time, to be capable of self-evaluation and self-development.

As far as the expectations that adults have of the educational process are concerned, some of them coincide with certain expectations that they have of educators

and their teaching role, which were discussed above, as educators themselves constitute an important part of the educational process. According to Weinrauch (1984), adults participate in the learning process by adopting an individualized, goal-oriented, and problem-focused approach. They expect clear learning objectives with real examples, while using and drawing on their personal experiences and knowledge. They prefer a familiar, welcoming environment where good communication and friendly relationships with the educator are essential. They have personal beliefs about learning, either positive or negative, which are fixed and not easily changed, and they are driven by a desire for success and reward, and welcome learning activities in small chunks as a preparation for more complex material. The expectation of external learning experiences and the use of technology are also added to these (Doyle, 2020). Education and learning should not be confined to the classroom. Adult learners prefer the practical application of the knowledge they receive in practical experiences outside the classroom, such as internships which in turn help students to network in a social and professional circle. Moreover, regardless of what they choose to study, adults want technology to be integrated into their courses. Learners wish to be actively engaged with technology and want to be taught how to use programs and applications that they can incorporate into their work so as to become more productive and efficient (Doyle, 2020).

The educational techniques that educators apply in order to ensure the effective acquisition of knowledge by learners are an integral part of the learning process. The effectiveness of the learning process does not only depend on the educators, but also on the means by which learning is achieved, which should foster their active participation in the process as much as possible. The importance of active participation as well as the learners' experiences has been highlighted by scholars such as Knowles (1998), who argues that learners themselves expect to play an active role in the learning process and to have their previous experiences and expertise taken into account, i.e. they wish for experiential learning. There is no specific formula for choosing educational techniques, but there should be a combination of different ones that serve the needs of educators and learners and are in line with their individual characteristics (Rogers, 2002). Active and participatory educational techniques are favored, because it has been proven that the more active the learners are, the more fruitful the learning process is (Leftheriotou, 2012; Rogers, 2002). After a review of the relevant literature, the most widespread of these are question-and-answer, discussion, brainstorming, "snowball", case study, working groups, demonstration, exercises, role-play, educational visits, quizzes (Leftheriotou, 2012; Rogers, 2002). Therefore, both educator characteristics and effective educational techniques can be considered as potential expectations of adult learners regarding the learning process.

The expectations of adult learners are also oriented towards the outcome of the learning process. According to the Venables Committee of the Open University (1976), adult learners expect to meet personal, professional-economic, and social needs (Karalis, 2002, as cited in Vergidis, 2005). After completing the educational program, they expect to have fulfilled their objectives and extended their formal education. In addition, they

expect their professional orientation, the acquisition of professional qualifications, the development and updating of their knowledge and skills, while in terms of social life, they expect the development of their social skills, the assumption of social roles and the adaptation to new social conditions (Karalis, 2002, as cited in Vergidis, 2005; Sofitsi, 2016). They expect to develop their communication and collaboration skills and to understand how to pursue knowledge on their own in order to survive in a competitive workplace (Sofitsi, 2016).

3. Material and Methods

In order to explore the expectations of adult learners who participate in Lifelong Learning programs provided by Lifelong Learning Centres in Greece, based on the theoretical framework of the research, the research questions were formulated and were the main axes of the interviews:

1) What are the expectations of adult learners in relation to the results of their participation in LLL programs?
2) What are the expectations of adult learners in relation to the educational process in LLL programs?
3) What are the expectations of adult learners in relation to the educators in LLL programs?

In the present research, a qualitative method (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017; Sukamolson, 2007; Watson, 2015) was used through semi-structured interviews with twenty adult learners who attended or had attended in the past a Lifelong Learning program in Lifelong Learning Centres (LLLCs) in Greece. Nineteen of them were female and one of them was male. Almost all of them (18/20) reported Higher Educational Institute (AEI) as their highest level of education, while only two reported Technological Educational Institute (TEI) as their highest level of education. In terms of age groups, most of the sample members belong to the 25-30 age group (10/20), followed by the 31-35 age group (5/20), and the 36-40 age group (3/20). The 36-40 and 18-24 age groups are the smallest ones, with one interviewee per group. Sampling was based on three sampling techniques. Initially, convenience sampling was used, followed by a snowball or chain sampling. Finally, purposeful sampling was also used (Mason, 1996). It was intended that half of the sample would consist of adult learners attending programs during the research period and the other half would consist of adult learners who had attended and completed Lifelong Learning programs in the past. Therefore, two interview guides were developed, the first one to be used in the case of the 11 learners who were attending a LLL program at the time of the research and the second one to be used in the case of the 9 learners who had previously completed a LLL program. The aim of this approach was to investigate whether or not learners attending the programs during the research period believed that their expectations would be fulfilled and whether or not the expectations of learners who had attended similar programs in the past were ultimately fulfilled and to achieve triangulation with respect to the sample (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 1999). The

unequal proportion of the two groups was due to the limitations and difficulties created by the pandemic, which made it difficult to find and assemble the desired sample.

The processing of the data collected from the interviews was carried out through the method of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Mantzoukas, 2007; Mason, 1996; Tsiolis, 2018).

4. Results and Discussion

This section will present and discuss the findings of the research for each research question:

Regarding the 1st research question, which concerns expectations in relation to the results of the educational program, it was found that the dominant expectations were professional expectations. Regarding professional expectations, most of them were related to the development and update of knowledge (*"I4: as an expectation, I could mention the extra specialization that the program's subject matter offers me concerning my own job, so that I can gain more knowledge", "I1: Well, to enrich my knowledge and be able to better cater for the clients who come to my office"*) followed, in ascending order, by the acquisition of professional qualifications (*"I13:… and the expectation of getting a job...because it's a very important asset for my CV", "I14: … and to obtain an additional certificate, to perhaps get a job more easily"*) and finding a job (*"I12: Finding any job for a while, until I can get a job in my field again, I thought of it as a temporary solution, mainly", "I6: Of course, I expect to be able to teach at a LLLC in the future and I wonder if it would also help me teach at an Institute of Vocational Training (IVT) later on. So, finding a job is my main expectation as well"*). These expectations are consistent with and confirmed by the literature on which the theoretical framework of her research on expectations was based. Karalis (2002, as cited in Vergidis, 2005) and Sofitsi (2016) confirm that adult learners expect educational programs to meet professional needs, including those mentioned above. The findings on the "popularity" of professional expectations can also be justified by the fact that, according to the findings of the research, all interviewees chose to attend continuing vocational training programs. In addition, a little more than half of the research participants claimed that the subject matter of the program was directly related to their profession, while those who did not mention a direct relationship also stated that they were seeking a change of career orientation or temporary professional employment through the program.

According to the participants' preferences, the ranking is based on personal expectations, which include, in order of preference, personal learning and enrichment of knowledge in the subject matter of the program, the achievement of a personal goal, personal development through learning, the writing of scientific papers and the acquisition of the skills needed to engage with the subject matter of the program at postgraduate level. In particular, it was stated: "I2: *Yes, of course! First of all, my dream is to work in a school, so I would say that I expect to achieve a personal goal", "I4: I also want to attend this program because I like it, so that I can gain more knowledge", "I3: I would say that my personal expectation is to gain knowledge to grow both as a professional and as a person...", "I8:*

Well, this program basically gives me some skills and paves the way for a master's degree in Special Education…". It seems that the research findings on personal expectations are confirmed by the literature review with the only difference being that, in this research, the researcher was able to delve deeper into the expectations belonging to this category (Karalis, 2002, as cited in Vergidis, 2005; Sofitsi, 2016). Adult learners roughly expect to meet personal needs, whether these are related to the realization of objectives or the pursuit of personal knowledge (ibid.).

The ranking of expectations in relation to the findings is followed by economic expectations, the percentage of which is very low (15%) (*"I11: All in all, I can say that my expectations are, again, finding a job and increasing my income in the future"*). Economic expectations are confirmed by Karalis (2002, as cited in Vergidis, 2005), who places them in the same category as professional expectations. Based on the data collected, we concluded that financial expectations are related to financial recovery and, more specifically, to the receipt of education allowance after the end of the program and the future increase of their income. Social expectations are the lowest-ranked expectation in the 1st research question, as only one adult learner seems to expect socialization through participation in the program. The expectation of establishing social relationships is confirmed by Karalis (2002, as cited in Vergidis, 2005) and Sofitsi (2016). In the present research, however, some people spoke about the absence of the expectation of socialization due to the use of asynchronous distance learning (I11: *"…as the program is offered through distance learning, there are no special opportunities for socializing, the learning process is more impersonal and there are so many learners from so many different disciplines that it is not feasible…"*). Therefore, the inhibiting factor of asynchronous distance learning is identified, which seems to have influenced the creation or lack of social expectations from the educational program (Pavlis-Korres, 2020).

Figure 1 presents the learners' expectations regarding the learning outcomes as they emerged from the thematic analysis of the interview data:
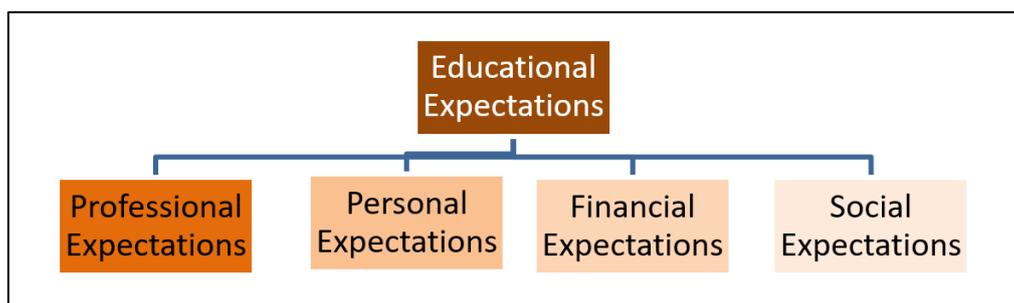

Figure 1: Learners' expectations of the learning process

Regarding the 2nd research question, which concerns expectations in relation to the educational process, it was found that the majority of adult learners had not created expectations in relation to the educational process. As a result, research evidence regarding this question was relatively scarce. On the basis of what was reported in the interviews, we concluded that the absence of relevant expectations was due to seven

reasons. These include asynchronous distance learning which makes the educational process more impersonal, the fact that this was the first time they had experienced distance learning and the absence of previous experience which creates a feeling of unknown, the fact that they were informed about the process beforehand, but also the lack of prior information, the abundance of similar educational programs, the lack of knowledge about the subject matter of the program and, finally, the absence of previous experience in LLL programs. According to the literature, in distance learning environments there are difficulties for learners related to access and familiarity with the online learning environment (Hill, 2002), the isolation that the learner may feel (Morgan & Tam, 1999; Karalis & Koutsonikos, 2003; Berge & Huang, 2004), the delay in learners' feedback and the lack of immediacy (Petrides, 2002; Vonderwell, 2003; Schullo, Barron, Kromrey, Venable, Hohlfeld, & Hogarty, 2005) as well as being part of a learning community (Song, Sigleton, Hill & Koh, 2004; Shea, 2006; Shea, Li, & Pickett, 2006). Therefore, it seems once again that the distance education factor has influenced the expectations that adult learners have regarding the programs they participate in (*"I3: Not really, because there are many similar programs and I know that they are asynchronous and there is no face-to-face communication or attendance, so I have no particular expectations", "I4: The truth is that it's still very early, I am not quite familiar with the program yet. However, as it's a distance education, asynchronous program, I don't have any expectations regarding the educational process…"*). At the same time, however, there were also adult learners (7/20) who had expectations regarding the educational process. In ascending order, there were expectations with regard to the practical application of knowledge in external contexts, such as internships, expectations for a face-to-face learning process where there is interaction, expectations for experiential learning through the use of relevant experiential techniques, active and participative educational techniques, the expectation for personalized learning, the expectation for a well-organized educational process that provides appropriate knowledge, the expectation for a more accessible educational process with a flexible and less demanding task schedule, and the expectation for the implementation of the study guide. The expectations for internships, experiential learning, the implementation of participative and active teaching and personalized learning are consistent with what is reported in the relevant literature (Doyle, 2020; Knowles, 1998; Κόκκος, 2005, as cited in Sofitsi, 2016; Leftheriotou, 2012; Rogers, 1999; Weinrauch, 1984). The need for an interesting teaching process without a scientific-academic style, an element that was indirectly identified by the researcher in the conditions for effective adult learning is added to the above expectations, as it emerged from the thematic analysis. It is important that the subject matter is of interest to them.

The key themes that emerged from the thematic analysis of the data in relation to the second research question are presented in Figure 2:
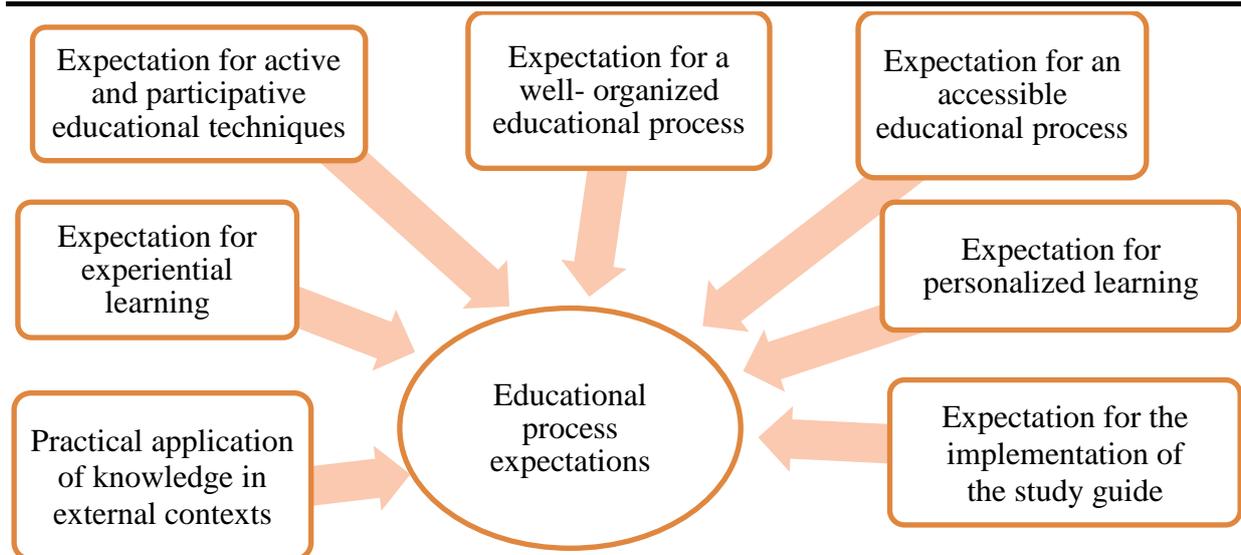
Figure 2: Learners' expectations of the educational process

With regard to the 3rd research question, which concerns the expectations of adult learners regarding the educator, there were not enough data from the interviews, as opposed to the literature review which provided a lot of information on this topic. According to Donaldson, Flannery and Ross-Gordon (1993, as cited in Imel, 1995), expectations in relation to the educator relate to the attitude the educator has towards both learners and teaching. Concerning the expectations of the sample with regard to the attitude of the educators towards the learners, it emerged that they expect a direct relationship and interaction with the educator (*"I6: Let's just say that I would like a more direct contact with the educator, so that I can talk with them about the program, but unfortunately it is asynchronous...", "I9: … I prefer face-to-face education, because now there is no interaction, there is nothing at all"*), while in terms of educators' attitudes towards teaching, they seemed to expect an educator who is interested in the learners' progress and creates a friendly learning environment (*"I12: …they should also make us feel at ease..."*), confirming what is reported by Donaldson, Flannery and Ross-Gordon (1993, as cited in Imel, 1995) and Rogers (2007). Furthermore, participants expect an educator who is good at transmitting knowledge, communicative and caring, which is in line with what is pointed out by Donaldson, Flannery and Ross-Gordon (1993, as cited in Imel, 1995), to meet the different needs of learners in terms of resolving questions, explaining what learners have not fully understood and adopting a more pedagogical approach. They want a polite and approachable educator who creates a pleasant environment, as confirmed by Gelen (2019), but also an educator who gives advice on the practical application of the knowledge learners receive from the program in order to put it into practice in their work. As pointed out in the theoretical framework of the research, the expectations of the educator and the educational process are to some extent overlapping, since the educator is also an integral part of the educational process. The absence of abundant research data in relation to the expectations of the educators may be due to the attendance of the programs via asynchronous distance learning, as was the case in most of the interviewees'

cases. This topic needs further research and could be the subject of a completely new research, as indicated in the section on suggestions for further research (see Section 5 for details).

Figure 3 presents the learners' expectations of the educator as they emerged from the thematic analysis of the interview data:
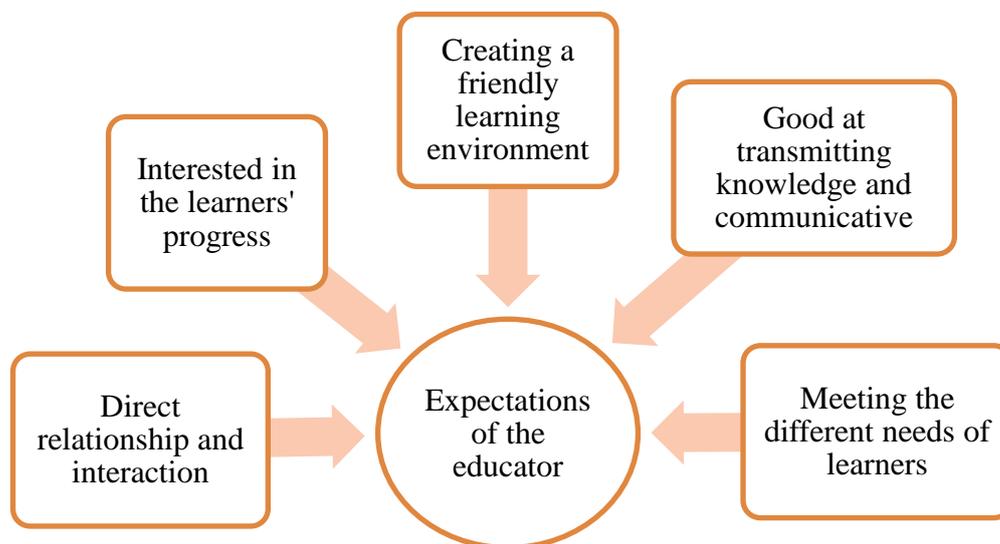

Figure 3: Learners' expectations of the educator

According to Georgogiannis (2010), Koutelekos and Chaliasos (2014), there are different expectations in terms of quality, which can be divided into positive and negative ones. The first category includes those who hope for success, while the second category includes those who are fearful of success. As the findings of the present research revealed, all the expectations of the interviewees, regardless of the categorization attempted in this research in order for them to be explored, were positive and were expectations for success, without any fear of failure. Regarding their fulfillment, the responses of the eleven interviewees who were attending an ongoing educational program, as expected, did not provide much important information, since they had not yet completed their program and did not have an overall picture of the program they were attending. However, the majority of them stated that they were optimistic about their future fulfillment, while a smaller proportion claimed either that some expectations had been fulfilled so far or that they were awaiting their fulfillment. Those that were fulfilled fall into the category of professional, personal and educational process-related expectations. They felt that it was too early to make assumptions and indeed some appeared to be very unsure of what they were claiming. The responses of the remaining nine adult learners in the sample, which included those who had previously attended a LLL program, were interesting. The majority of them responded that their expectations were unfortunately unfulfilled. The unfulfilled expectations are mainly professional, personal and those related to the educational process. Only a small percentage, that is, 35% of adult learners mentioned fulfilled expectations, which were mainly professional, social, and financial.

As expected, they were adult learners who had already completed an educational program.

The relationship between expectations and incentives, as demonstrated by the responses of all but one of the interviewees, is an interactive relationship. These concepts are intertwined and interrelated and affect each other. Sofitsi (2016) came to the same conclusion in her own research conducted in an initial vocational training school for adults in Greece. Positive expectations can provide an incentive for action, while negative expectations can inhibit it (Georgogiannis, 2010). According to Hubackova and Semradova (2014), external expectations can act as incentives at the same time, while Robbins (1983, as cited in McMenemy & Lee, 2007) argues that "expectation" is the most accurate explanation for incentive. Therefore, expectations and incentives are thus related in such a way that one can influence the emergence of the other. In the present research, it was found that almost all adult learners' expectations also became their incentives, i.e., what you expect motivates you and vice versa.

Thus, to summarize the conclusions drawn from this research, we can conclude that all the expectations that were expressed by the sample were positive. In particular, the expectations regarding program outcomes were the predominant ones, with professional expectations prevailing, followed by expectations regarding the educational process and the educator. The majority of learners who were attending a training program at the time of the research were optimistic about the future fulfillment of their expectations, while in some cases, the expectations had already been fulfilled. On the contrary, the majority of those who had attended a LLL program in the past reported that their expectations were unfulfilled. This is why it is important, as Rogers (2002) argues, that educators be informed in advance by learners about any expectations they have, in order for their learning to be effective and for the expectations to be fulfilled. In addition, the interaction between "expectations" and "incentives" was confirmed, as revealed by the literature review. Finally, it is worth noting that in the results of the research regarding expectations, the quarantine factor associated with the COVID-19 pandemic period, during which this research was conducted, was mentioned by some interviewees and prompted suggestions for further research, as presented in the next section.

5. Recommendations

The results of the research revealed that, due to the distance education programs attended by adult learners and especially the impersonal asynchronous nature of some of them, their expectations regarding the educational process and the educator, as well as their social expectations were limited. Thus, in the future, another research could be carried out on whether and how distance education during the time of the pandemic influenced the expectations of adult learners or, more specifically, on the ways in which the online educational environment is inferior or superior to the face-to-face educational environment with regard to the socialization of learners and its impact on the creation of social expectations. Therefore, we could explore the expectations in relation to the

educator in different synchronous and asynchronous distance education programs. In addition, it would be interesting to further explore expectations in relation to the educator in a qualitative study with a sample of adult learners who have participated exclusively in face-to-face educational programs, in order for this category of expectations to be enriched.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, according to the above research, most of the adult learners who participated in the research referred primarily to the expectations regarding the results of the educational program they attended. As expected, the predominant expectations reported in this category were professional expectations. Given the economic crisis that Greece experienced intensely in the 2010-2020 decade, it was evident that people were interested in seeking Adult Education programs that would help them expand their knowledge in their professional field or improve their CV in order to grow as professionals or even change their professional orientation.

The expectations regarding the educator and the educational process were less "popular". The forced distance learning due to the conditions created by COVID-19 was considered a discouraging factor. In some cases, the entirely impersonal form of asynchronous remote learning even had a negative impact on both the expectations of the educator and the educational process, as well as on expectations regarding socialization. The situation created by the emergence of COVID-19 may, in fact, have affected some of the adult learners' expectations of the programs they participated in; however, it gave rise to suggestions for further research.

Conflict of Interest Statement
The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

About the Authors
Eleni Balestravou was born in Komotini in 1995 and graduated from the School of Philology with a specialization in Classical Studies (Faculty of Philosophy, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki) in 2018. She worked as a philologist and in February 2019 was admitted to the "Lifelong Learning and Leadership in Education-Education Sciences" Master's degree program at the School of Early Childhood Education (Faculty of Education, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki). She graduated in 2021, and, in the summer of the same year, she founded her own private tutoring school and has been active in this field ever since.
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