Cultural awareness concept and content in adult self-education

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Abstract: *The paper seeks to explore adults' attitude to cultural awareness and its self-education through theatre arts. Theatre arts present unique way for the development of cultural awareness in the self-education of adults through the provision of the mutual culture space and interactivity, as well as by reavealing the harmony of the world that surrounds us, to perceive environment using all senses, to become a sensitive, considerate, attentive, curious, merciful, balanced and creating person. Quantitative survey of adults executed in Lithuania disclosed increasing attention of people to their cultural erudition, i.e. they indicated at least one way of cultural development. The results also show that cultural erudition development is statistically significantly related to theatre arts: watching performances at the theatre, recreation centres or via means of telecommunication.*

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1   INTRODUCTION

Culture is of utmost importance in the context of lifelong learning where adult education receives a priority attention. It is continuous adult learning, development of personal and professional knowledge and competences that provides exceptional importance to culture in person's and societal life. This idea is particularly relevant to an adult person who has considerable amount of life experience, knowledge and is able to choose ways and methods of self-education. Such a way of self-education for each person is an individual process which manifests itself, first, by self-integration or reintegration into the society and expansion of his/her opportunities in personal life and professional activity.

Art as part of culture has always been an important aspect of societal life. During various historical periods art has been the means of conveying and disseminating ideology; it helped to educate and develop a spectator, his/her awareness, patriotism, loyalty and other important features. Artistic means create a possibility to play any life situation without doing harm to a person. It means art is an instrument for the society to know itself under various even extreme conditions (Clayton, Fisher, Harris, Bateman, & Brown,2008).

If participation at the theatre performance is considered to be education of adult-spectator's awareness, it is worth remembering G. Foley's (2007) approach to adult education where he discusses learning from four different perspectives. First, learning as acquisition, where competence, understanding, awareness, wisdom, and etc. are acquired by a person through his/her learning experience. Second, learning as reflection, where learners actively construct their knowledge which creates new meanings and realities. Third, learning as participation, where attention is devoted to human's ability to meaningfully participate in everyday work of a concrete community. Fourth, learning which emerges during common physical process, which challenges the current person's understanding and is expressed as a change process, emerging from relations between people and everything that participates in a concrete situation: people, special layout, movement, tools and things (Foley, 2007, p. 69). These four perspectives are merged into one universal definition of learning which speaks about learning as a change process that brings adult person's attitudes into question, develops his/her professional competences, and allows acquisition of new knowledge.

Research aim is to reveal adults' attitude to cultural awareness and its self-education through theatre arts.

Research methods
Theoretical and empirical analysis methods: scientific literature and document analysis and quantitative research. Questionnaire survey method was applied using semi-structured questionnaire. Statistical data analysis methods were used to process the obtained empirical research data. Research population: The study participated 3302 adult respondents.

2   THEORETICAL FRAMEFORK

Cultural awareness concept and content
We are aware of our reality as we have knowledge about it, we perceive it as we have cognitive abilities to do that. The concept of consciousness is more often expressed by the term self-consciousness (conscience, being conscious, understanding, perception, sensation) which is more related to your inner being and giving sense to himself/herself and environment.

It follows that awareness should be strengthened by values such as responsibility, commitment, in other words, a person himself or herself assumes individual responsibility to consider, analyze, evaluate, accept or reject the essence of certain phenomena and on this basis they form their approaches and actions in the future (Fu & Kapiki, 2016; Kolbergytė & Indrašienė, 2012).

Cultural awareness can be defined as perception of the importance of expression of various creative ideas, experience and emotions in various modes, including music, stage art, literature, visual art (European Commission, 2007). The importance of awareness education is to learn to think critically and critically question assumptions which learners' beliefs are based on. When the origin and consequences of beliefs are clarified, opportunities are created for meaningful transformation. In other words, changes happen only while questions are asked for himself or herself and environment and discovering a new perception of the world independently. While making decisions the self-educating person should be free from epistemic, sociocultural and psychic deteriorations of his/her meaning perspectives, overcoming of which is very important for personal development, human transforming learning and self-education to happen (Bulajeva, 2007).

It is possible to state that critical self-awareness formation begins from preparation to dissociate oneself from the present knowing, not tying oneself to previously created meanings of the world perception, moving towards open and free exchange, preparation for personality transformation.

Cultural awareness development aims at helping adults to acquire cultural knowledge, develop skills, participate in a transmitting cultural value. Cultural awareness formation is one of important aspects which define intercultural competence as ability to communicate with people from other cultures (Forrest, 2003; Lyons & Branston, 2006; Valachis et al., 2008; Sigala & Christou, 2009).

Cultural awareness education equals to creativity which is an omnipresent and all-embracing peculiarity of a human, an unusual talent, especially for artistic area. It is impossible to develop one's cultural awareness without developing one's creativity (Christou, 1999; Kim, 2005).

Educational activities based on the idea of theatre arts develop creative personality in the mutual culture space where creative process, are more important than the result of the activity (Landy, 2007; Nair & George, 2016). Means of theatre arts are used to reveal the harmony of the world that surrounds us, to perceive environment using all senses, to become a sensitive, considerate, attentive, curious, merciful, balanced and creating person.

Elements of the adult learning environment for the development of cultural awareness
It should be noted that to properly design the learning environment determines many of the reasons. In the learning process to enhance a positive adult's attitude to the learning, strengthen responsibility for self-education learning and self-motivation. In order to create the learning-oriented environment, it is necessary to guarantee safe conditions and cooperation. If we aim at creating the learning environment which helps the adult learner to reveal his/her internal potential and intellect, the learning environment should be activating, motivating, enhancing to assume responsibility, ensuring decision making and purposeful learning. Favorable learning environment encompasses the following features (Fig. 1):

1.   Orientation to the learner. Such learning environment creates opportunities for the adult learner to pursue individual goals. Also such learning environment fosters the adult to construct new knowledge, on the basis of his/her individual needs.

2.   Importance of authentic contexts existing under certain conditions. It is evident that learning it proceeds in the open environment, but each learning environment enhances acquisition of knowledge in a different way. Some environments presuppose inert acquisition of knowledge which is useless in practice; others create conditions for conscientious and meaningful learning, - knowledge and skills acquired in such an environment can successfully be applied in practical activity. It can be presumed then that authentic contexts determined by certain conditions allow learners to feel and recognize the practical value of the acquired knowledge and also the need to use it by interpreting, analyzing and solving real life problems.

3.   Interpretation of personal beliefs and various perspectives and sharing opinions. In order to form the basis for new knowledge the learners have to evaluate different understandings and approaches expressed by their teachers - andragogues, experts or colleagues. It means that the learners do not receive unambiguous responses to the set questions or problems. Aiming at finding the answers they have to interpret and explain the problem on the basis of their experience, until they highlight it and form their own opinion about it. Then each expresses his/her opinion and listens to the opinions and approaches of others, compares them and evaluates if these approaches support their opinion or contradict it. When adult learners listen and consider all opinions, align all differences that emerged, then they develop and enrich their understanding. Thus, this environment enhances deeper, more exceptional and flexible thinking processes.

Figure 1: Elements Which Comprise Favorable Learning Environment
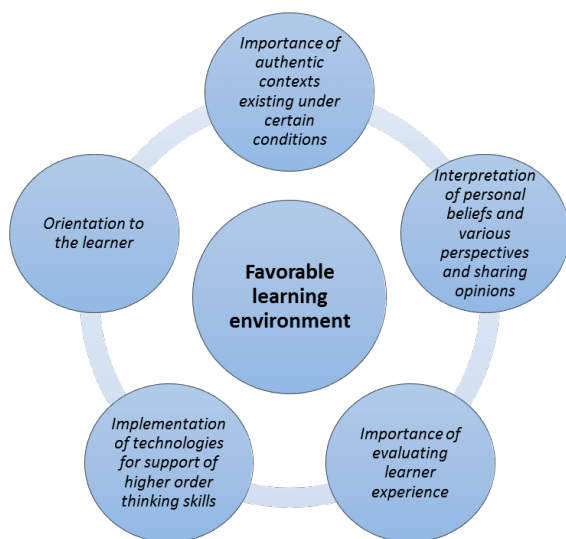
4.   Importance of evaluating learner experience. Integration of new knowledge with the present experience allows to guarantee more meaningful learning. Although the present knowledge is very often hidden, latent, intangible, still it is the foundation on the basis of which the learner interprets and explains both every day and formal scientific events and phenomena. In the constructive learning environment latent knowledge is "discovered", manifests itself and is formalized so that it can be tested.

5.   Implementation of technologies for support of higher order thinking skills. To deepen our understanding we employ thinking and action. When it is difficult to rely only on our own means, we apply technologies which allow to construct various objects or models in microspace or virtual environments, test their parameters and manage them. Technologies allow learners to represent their thinking by concrete methods and see as well as test the consequences of thinking. Technologies, means and resources are used seeking to expand and increase thinking skills rather than change integral cognitive processes and operations (Jonassen, & Easter, 2012).

Thus, it has emerged that the learning environment is driven by a variety of elements that help adult learners to develop cultural awareness. It is possible to state that the learning depends at education environment and on how it affects learners.

Importance of cultural awareness pursuits

Cultural awareness questionnaire consisted of 12 questions on concrete pursuits or hobbies related to cultural awareness. Each pursuit was evaluated according to its importance by a four-category scale from "very important" (1) to "not important at all" (4). The fifth possible response option was "not aware". Table 1 presents the results of assessment of importance of cultural pursuits.

The majority of the respondents assess these hobbies as important: reading books in leisure time (76.3 perc.), watching performances at the theatre (70.0 perc.), reading newspapers and magazines in leisure time (67.5 perc.), watching movies at the cinema (59.4 perc.), watching

performances in recreation centers (58.5 perc.), watching movies on TV (56.8 perc.), attending pop music concerts or listening to pop music in other ways (55.55 perc.), visiting museums (50.7 perc.), and attending art exhibitions (50.2 perc.).

Table 1: Assessment of Cultural Pursuits

Pursuits	Very important		Important		Not very important		Unimportant at all	
	N	perc.	N	perc.	N	perc.	N	perc.
Reading books in leisure time	204	35.3	237	41.0	109	18.9	28	4.8
Reading newspapers and magazines in leisure time	146	25.3	244	42.2	151	26.1	37	6.4
Visiting art exhibitions	81	14.4	201	35.8	209	37.3	70	12.3
Visiting museums	81	14.4	205	36.3	217	38.5	61	10.8
Attending classical music concerts or listening to classical music in other ways	64	11.7	179	32.7	222	40.5	83	15.1
Attending pop music concerts or listening to pop music in other ways	74	13.1	240	42.4	198	35.0	54	9.5
Attending folk music concerts or listening to folk music in other ways	55	10.0	156	28.5	236	43.1	101	18.4
Attending performances at the theatre	123	21.7	274	48.3	133	23.5	37	6.5
Attending performances in recreation centers	86	15.5	239	43.0	175	31.5	56	10.1
Watching performances on TV	53	9.7	156	28.7	252	46.3	83	15.3
Watching movies at the cinema	96	17.1	237	42.3	184	32.9	43	7.7
Watching movies on TV	110	19.4	269	47.4	156	27.5	32	5.6

The least important leisure pursuits are the following: attending classical music concerts or listening to classical music in other ways (44.4 perc.), attending folk music concerts or listening to folk music in other ways (38.5 perc.), and watching performances on TV (38.4 perc.). It is interesting to note that in the research sample, watching performances at the theatre surrounded by importance only to reading books; however, it surpassed such popular and frequent leisure pursuits as reading newspapers and magazines, watching movies, attending pop music concerts or listening to such music in other ways.

Correlation coefficients and factor analysis performed show that the respondents can be characterized as having a general (often positive) attitude to art and the related leisure pursuits which foster their reading hobbies, attending art events, watching movies, and etc. For instance, those who consider attending art exhibitions as an important leisure time pursuit in most cases also consider attending museums as important τb=90.6 perc., Kendall τb=0.82***. Those who admit that attending art exhibitions is important also consider attending classic music concerts or listening to classic music in other ways to be an important leisure pursuit (67.3 perc., τb=0.56***)..

It was interesting to find out how watching performances is related to other leisure pursuits. Correlations show that those who assess watching performances at the theatre as

important, most often find watching performances in recreation centers important as well (78.6 perc., τb=0.66***); however, the correlation with the leisure pursuit watching performances on TV is considerably weaker: τb=0.29***. It appears that people attend performances not only to satisfy their artistic needs but for other reasons as well, for instance, need to communicate with others.

Kendall τbcorrelations coefficients indicate that the importance of the pursuit watching performances at the theatre or recreation centre is first of all related to the following leisure pursuits: attending art exhibitions (τb=0.49***), visiting museums (τb=0.49***), attending classical music concerts or listening to classical music in other ways (τb= 0.46***). The second group consists of such leisure pursuits as reading books in leisure time (τb=0.40***), attending pop music concerts or listening to pop music in other ways (τb=0.38***), attending folk music concerts or listening to folk music in other ways (τb=0.37***), watching movies at the cinema (τb= 0.36***), watching performances on TV (τb=0.32***), and reading newspapers and magazines in leisure time (τb=0.28***). The importance of the pursuit watching performances at the theatre or recreation centre is related to the importance of the pursuit watching movies on TV; this relationship is considerably weak but statistically significant: τb=0.19***.

Self-education of cultural awareness

Having performed the analysis of the respondents' answers about the place and method of their cultural erudition self-education, it was found out that almost all respondents (97.6 perc.) noted at least one method of education. Most often the respondents listed such ways of self-education as: reading books (73.7 perc.), reading newspapers and magazines (75.5 perc.), watching performances (52.4 perc.), and attending cultural events (50.9 perc.). The least popular ways of self-education are as follows: attending creative evenings (24.3 perc.), reading plays of the watched performances (8.6 perc.), reading theoretical and critical articles (18.4 perc.), performing creative assignments or working independently (24.1 perc.).

Regarding the meaning of questions, the first factor was called self-education by attending art events. Factor two involves everything that is related with books, their reading and attending libraries and bookshops. Factor three expresses more professional and deeper self-education, presumably related with professional activity or maybe with deeper perception and feeling of art. All three directions of self-education are more expressed in the female rather than in the male sample, the difference is statistically significant. As indicated by Spearman correlations coefficient, the older the person is, the higher the attention to these ways of self-education is. They more often develop themselves by attending art events τb=0.16**, reading and attending libraries τb=0.24***, develop "professionally" τb=0.22***. Educational background also positively correlates with the discerned three factors: all three correlation coefficients coincide approximately τb=0.30***.

Table 2: Factors of Cultural Erudition Self-education

Where and how do you develop your cultural erudition?	Factor		
	1. Self-education by attending art events	2. Self-education by attending libraries	3. Professional self-education
Attending exhibitions	.729		
Attending museums	.687	.137	
Watching performances	.386	.212	
Attending culture events	.358	.131	.167
Visiting bookshops		.590	.131
Attending libraries		.521	
Reading books	.145	.496	
Reading newspapers and magazines		.242	
Reading plays of the watched performances			.644
Attending creative social evenings			.575
Reading theoretical critical articles			.444
Performing creative assignments or work independently	.169		.202

Attending theatre is also statistically significantly related to all three ways of self-education: with self-education by attending events (τb=0.53***), with "professional" self-education (τb=0.47***) and self-education by reading (τb=0.46***). Table 2.

How are the ways of self-education related to cultural leisure pursuits? Applying the factors described above, correlations were obtained which are presented in Table 3:

Table 3: Correlations Between Cultural Awareness Leisure Pursuits Factor and Ways of Self-education Factor by Applying Spearman Correlation Coefficient

F	Attending events	Reading, attending libraries and bookshops	Developing oneself "professionally"
"Classical" leisure pursuits	0.611***	0.526***	0.608***
"Popular" leisure pursuits	0.156**	0.201***	0.202***

Note. Sample size while calculating correlations is 457.

These research findings show that both types of leisure pursuits enhance the use of all types of cultural erudition self-education; however, the respondents' "classical" leisure pursuits have stronger impact upon their cultural awareness self-education.

The analysis of correlations shows that the correlations between the skills assessed by the respondents are statistically significant (p < 0.001), positive and considerably strong: the majority's Kendall tau coefficient is 0.4 and higher; therefore, it was purposeful to analyze them by factor analysis which yielded two obtained factors. Relations of factors with skills are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Factors of Cultural Awareness Skills

How do you assess your skill?	Factor	
	1.	2.
to plan and perform your work creatively?	0.888	-0.113
to plan your time considering cultural events?	0.804	
to communicate and cooperate with people of other cultures?	0.798	
to act independently.	0.747	
to think in an original way.	0.706	
to express your opinion among the specialist of the same area?	0.676	
to take advantage of the emerged opportunities to express yourself?	0.651	0.164
to implement your goals and ideas?	0.603	0.255
to organize your activity according to your hobbies.	0.596	0.188
to assume responsibility for your actions.	0.433	0.289
to solve personal internal problems?		0.876
to formulate your goals and ideas?		0.771
to convince others that you can be as you are?	0.192	0.604
to face challenges and new opportunities for self-expression?	0.291	0.519

These factors have strong mutual correlations (r = 0.70***). Before rotating, the second factor explained only about 5.4 perc. of the dispersion. The factors are difficult to interpret as it is not obvious what is common among the questions that fell into the same factor. This can be explained by the fact that there are no small correlations among the skills, all are at least 0.33. It can be assumed that it was too difficult for the respondents to assess each of the skills rather precisely; therefore, they often assessed them "in block", equally. Only the first factor is used for further analysis as a generalized assessment of respondents' skills. No statistically significant differences were found between skill assessment provided by different gender groups. There is also a weak dependence on age: $\rho = -0.12^*$, with age the assessment of skills decreases slightly. There is no statistically significant relation with the acquired education level, but skill assessment decreases slightly with the decreasing of number of residents in the respondent's place of residence: $\rho=-0.10^*$. The highest assessment of skills was received from the city dwellers and the lowest from respondents living in rural places. Skill assessment positively correlates with the evaluation of the importance of cultural awareness: $\tau b=0.19^{***}$. The frequency of attending a theatre has also a positive correlation with skill assessment: $\tau b=0.15^{***}$.

4   CONCLUSION

Having performed the theoretical analysis it was identified that: cultural awareness is closely related to self-awareness and perception of person's existence, i.e. meaning of life and critical thinking, as it is reasoning about our thinking when we think in order to improve our thinking. This is related not only to certain perception and analysis but also to changes in thinking, adopting of certain attitudes and dispositions.

Having revealed to adult's attitude to cultural awareness and self-education through theatre arts, it emerged that: almost all respondents admitted enhancing their cultural erudition, i.e. they marked at least one way of cultural development. The results also show that cultural erudition development is statistically significantly related to theatre arts: watching performances at the theatre, recreation centres or via means of telecommunication.

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