



# The Necessity of Audio Visuals in Adult Education - An empirical study in Second Chance Schools in Greece

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## Abstract

Starting from the basic principles and theories of Adult Education, the specific characteristics of adult learners, as well as the conditions for their effective education, the present study will attempt to present the importance of the use of audiovisual material (television, educational and non-educational, video, multimedia, etc.) in Adult Education in Second Chance Schools. For the effectiveness of education in adult population, it is useful to follow some prerequisites. The connection of learning with the needs of learners, as well as its voluntary nature are considered necessary elements. Still, for learning to be effective, careful structuring of the educational programme is needed, with clear reference of the educational objectives to the trainees. Also, personalisation in learning is considered particularly useful by incorporating the ways and pace of learning desired by the learners. Audiovisual media can be an important facilitator for adults in order to enable their active participation and overcome any obstacles on the path to the acquisition of new knowledge, since knowledge is made tangible through them. The use of audiovisual media, in contrast to traditional teaching methods, therefore, enhances adult learners' motivation to learn, since the combination of image and sound, as well as the charm of the codes of spectacle, make these media attractive, while at the same time allowing observation and enhancing group or practical exercises, they also contribute significantly to the process of self-education. Audiovisual media also promote self-activity, with an attempt to personalise teaching. The present research examined via a project the results of the use of audiovisual materials in an adult class of a second chance school in the suburbs of Athens. The results show the importance of use of audiovisual material in adult classrooms, not only for the new knowledge acquisition but also for the students' satisfaction and motivation for the learning process.

**Keywords:** adult education, audiovisual material, lifelong learning

## **1. Introduction**

This study will attempt to demonstrate the significance of the use of audiovisual material in Adult Education by examining the fundamental principles and theories of Adult Education, the specific characteristics of adult learners, and the conditions for their effective education. Proper implementation of Educational Technology delivers quality education and equal learning opportunities, merges numerous fields with contemporary communication tools, and teaches students the significance of lifelong education (Merriam & Bierema, 2013).

Nowadays, the use of audiovisual media communications as Information Communication Technologies in education contributes to educational effectiveness in technology-enhanced learning as well as the provision of knowledge or specific or/and combined skills that create a new streamlined digital era and experience for generational cohorts (Lopez-Lopez et al., 2012). Additionally, audiovisual media interaction plays an equally important role in our contemporary, visually-focused way of life. Because of this, it is necessary for everyone who uses them for work purposes (not just educators) to possess multiple-multimodal skills and abilities in order to have a successful professional practice on the job and a successful professional career. The use of modern technologies plays a significant part in adult education and is a factor in the growing number of people taking part in this type of education. The learner self-selects the type of learning that represents him or her and is thus at the centre of the learning process. The awareness and utilization of learning through information and communication technologies unquestionably contributes to the learner's self-esteem and, with the goal of self-improvement, efficiently covers the acquisition of skills in order to be able to fulfill the ever-increasing demands of work, society, and other spheres of influence (Turkalj et al., 2020).

New technologies enhance the quality of the education provided and at the same time help and facilitate the learning process. In recent years, lifelong learning has become a means of dealing with the ever-increasing problems created by new labour market conditions. With new knowledge, needs for skills and new specialisations created by inputs from new technology are met (Tomlinson, 2012).

### **1.1 Adult Education**

Training is an additional educational process whereby an adult acquires further knowledge and skills, usually in the subjects of his or her studies and profession. In other words, it adds knowledge and cultivates existing knowledge in order to develop the adult socially, cognitively and emotionally. It is obvious that adult education is of great importance, because it tends towards the fulfilment of the individual spiritually and emotionally. It is a conscious learning process and its decision has specific objectives that have been studied. These goals may be related to the acquisition of skill, refining their abilities so that they perform to the best of their ability in their work environment, enriching their knowledge, specialization in conjunction with their mental and emotional behavior and the range of experiences gained so far (Furlong & Maynard, 2012).

According to the European Commission (2015), Adult Education is defined as 'General or vocational education and training provided to adults after initial education and training for professional and/or personal purposes'. Adult Education is an essential pillar of European education policy (European Commission, 2011). An adult must possess the characteristic of adulthood; an adult, according to Alan Rogers (2001), is one who sees himself as such, i.e.

characterised by maturity, a sense of perspective (gregariousness) and responsibility - autonomy, but the social system sees them in the same way. Learning is defined as a process through which a person changes and evolves. The outcome of learning is a change in any of the individual's characteristics, e.g. knowledge (i.e. personal synthesis of information/data and beliefs about the world), professional responsibility (the ability to perform one's duties), behaviour, way of thinking, identity - as perceived by oneself, identity - as perceived by others, or a combination of the above.

Lifelong learning enables each individual to acquire additional skills, knowledge, experiences in order to improve his/her professional or personal entity. According to the above, it is therefore clear that education does not end at a certain age. It starts with basic compulsory education and for many individuals it continues afterwards in various fields (Jarvis, 2014), which can last throughout their life.

Adults have specific objectives (professional, social, personal development, etc.) when they wish to follow a learning programme, they possess an abundance of experiences, and they support specific ways of learning that they consider to be appropriate to their character, interests and abilities and they tend to be actively involved. However, they face barriers on their way to the learning process, which may be external, related, for example, to the organisation of an educational programme or the social routine and obligations of learners, or internal. Internal barriers are more difficult to see: they are related to learners' established beliefs and values, as well as psychological factors, such as reduced self-esteem and self-confidence, or anxiety (may be due, for example, to fear of failure). Finally, trainees, due to their internal barriers, are likely to develop defence mechanisms or even resignation - defence as a refusal to accept the new knowledge proposed by the trainer that may clash with their established views, or resignation from the training process so that this 'battle' with the trainer does not manifest itself (Rogers & Kramer, 2020).

For education to be effective in an adult population, it is useful to have some conditions in place. The link between learning and the needs of the learners, as well as its voluntary nature, are considered essential elements. Still, for learning to be effective, careful organization of the educational programme is needed, with clear reference of the educational objectives to the trainees. In addition, personalisation of learning as far as possible is considered particularly useful, incorporating the learners' preferred learning styles and pace. Active participation is an essential element in Adult Education and it is useful to encourage it, by involving learners in all stages of the educational process (from the design of teaching materials, teaching space, to active participation in learning new knowledge). In addition, the learning climate must be characterised by the possibility of communication, cooperation and respect. Finally, it is crucial to take into account the obstacles that hinder learners' progress and to make efforts to overcome them (Jarvis & Wilson, 2004).

### **1.1.1 Audiovisual material in Adult education**

Based on the criterion of interaction or non-interaction with the user, audiovisual media can be classified as interactive and non-interactive (Yahia, 2018). Based on the criterion of educational technology, they can be divided into devices with mechanical equipment (hardware) and software or recordings in hardware (software). In terms of the experience offered by each medium, there is the classification proposed by Edgar Dale, where he distinguishes three levels: learning by action, learning by observation and learning by

explanation. Dale argued that it is good for the learner to initially participate in the actual experience and later to be an 'observer' of an actual event through a medium, and stated that as learners move towards more abstract experiences, more information can be compressed into a shorter period of time (Smaldino et al., 2010).

Active participation denotes the act of engaging learners in the process of acquiring knowledge through diverse activities, dialogues, and practical encounters. The pedagogical approach emphasizes active learner participation, whereby learners are prompted to engage in critical thinking, inquiry, and practical application of acquired knowledge, as opposed to a passive reception of information. This methodology fosters the development of critical thinking abilities, problem-solving proficiencies, and a more profound comprehension of the subject matter. Various methods can be employed to encourage active participation among learners, including but not limited to group discussions, case studies, role-playing, simulations, group projects, and practical exercises. The approach fosters a pedagogical setting that prioritizes the learner, enabling them to assume an active role in the creation of knowledge as opposed to being passive recipients (Tesfaye & Berhanu, 2015). Audiovisual media can be an important help for adults, aiming at their active participation and the overcoming of any obstacles on the path to the acquisition of new knowledge, since knowledge is made tangible through them. Teaching that relies exclusively on the verbal transmission of information is certainly of questionable effectiveness. The use of audiovisual media, therefore, in contrast to traditional teaching methods, enhances the motivation of adult learners to learn, since the combination of image and sound, as well as the attractiveness of the codes of spectacle, make these media attractive, while at the same time allowing observation and reinforcing group or practical exercises, also contribute significantly to the process of self-education, i.e. personalised learning (Romi & Schmida, 2009).

Interactive learning tools refer to technological or resourceful aids that enable learners to engage and interact with the learning materials. The tools in question may take the form of either digital or physical entities, and are specifically intended to facilitate active learning while simultaneously furnishing prompt feedback. Interactive learning tools encompass a wide range of technological resources that facilitate engagement and participation in the learning process. These tools may include, but are not limited to, online platforms, learning management systems, educational applications, virtual reality or augmented reality simulations, gamified learning experiences, clickers for polling and quizzes, and interactive whiteboards. The aforementioned tools facilitate learner engagement by promoting active participation, conceptual exploration, skill practice, and tailored feedback, thereby cultivating a dynamic and captivating learning milieu (Haleem et al., 2022). The utilization of auditory and visual components, including but not limited to videos, animations, graphics, and presentations, is a fundamental aspect of audiovisual media, which serves as a vehicle for dispensing educational material. The present approach acknowledges the heterogeneity of learners in terms of their preferences and learning styles, and posits that the integration of multimedia components can augment comprehension and retention of information. The utilization of audiovisual media has the potential to elucidate intricate concepts, depict tangible instances, showcase empirical analyses, and captivate learners through the art of visual storytelling. The incorporation of sensory stimuli in the learning process enhances the immersive and memorable nature of the experience for learners. The integration of audiovisual media with interactive learning tools and active participation can foster a comprehensive and captivating educational experience (Shabiralyani et al., 2015).

The advantages of utilizing audiovisual media technologies, such as mass media (e.g., radio and television), in educational settings, particularly in adult education, have been well-established for over 50 years. In contemporary times, educational practices have incorporated audiovisual media technologies as pedagogical instruments, as evidenced by their integration into lesson plans (Nicolaou et al., 2019). This is due to their significant contribution to the improvement of learning outcomes, as well as their crucial role in the efficacy of teaching (Nicolaou & Kalliris, 2020). Furthermore, audiovisual media technologies have been found to play a significant role in psychological well-being, primarily through the consumption of non-verbal content (Kurniawan, 2016). According to extant literature, the utilization of audiovisual media technologies necessitates novel pedagogical approaches that are efficacious (Sakat et al., 2012). Additionally, it mandates that educators across all levels and fields of education demonstrate a high degree of proficiency in various advanced skills and competencies. In order to attain this objective, it is recommended that educators employ these tools through a process of critical analysis and discourse surrounding the conveyed messages, in addition to fostering self-directed learning among students. It has been established that there exists a variance in the learning styles of individuals. This phenomenon is also observed among adult learners in the context of adult education (Nicolaou et al., 2019).

At this point it should be emphasised that audiovisual media alone do not constitute active teaching methods. The knowledge of their appropriate use in combination with other activities (e.g. group work) includes them in active teaching methods. Speaking about Adult Education, Buskey (1984) states that emphasis should be placed on human interaction because the success of programmes depends on human interaction. In the choice of media, he continues, the range of experiences provided and the promotion of active participation among participants must be taken into account, and it is suggested that a combination of media should be used to achieve the optimum result.

In conclusion, the objectives, experiences and the disposition for active participation in the programmes of adult learners are taken into account by the use of audiovisual media, since the conditions for the effectiveness of adult learning apply: audiovisual media are linked to the needs of the learners and, as far as possible, personalised in learning, activating the disposition for active participation in the learning process.

### **1.1.2 The role of the adult educator**

The educators play an integral role in Adult Education. They are not omniscient; they act more as coordinators of learning or animators of the educational process, they are supportive to the learner and help the learner to master the way of autonomous, creative learning through the discovery of knowledge, providing self-confidence; they feel part of the group, learning together with the trainees, but at the same time they promote the active participation of all trainees, constantly giving them feedback and praising them in order to keep their motivation high (Rogers, 2001). They maintain respect for the individual, not behaving in an authoritarian manner, but by constantly communicating and respecting their fellow learners in the learning process. In other words, they create an appropriate learning environment, a safe classroom, by creating a sense of community, they lay the foundations for a creative dialogue, they remain open to different opinions, they favour cooperation and equality, they are open to differences; they therefore operate with democratic reflexes.

To achieve maximum effectiveness in the allotted time, the educator must possess knowledge of their subject area as well as skills in the design of the educational program (in accordance with the learning objectives and the needs of the learners) and in its implementation, selecting the most appropriate educational techniques and tools in accordance with the circumstances and needs of the learners. The educator must also be able to evaluate the entire design and implementation. The educator's emotional skills are a further competence: awareness and control of emotions, but also the ability to be empathetic. Their communication skills are also considered important. Freire and McCarthy (2014), referring to the qualities of the teacher, mention humility, love, courage, tolerance, determination, self-confidence, fairness, verbal sparseness and enjoyment of life, which should distinguish a Progressive Teacher.

The learners are the instructor's 'coworkers', since they co-construct the educational programme with them at all stages (planning, target setting, path to learning, assessment), including the teaching process (Rogers, 2001). Another name given to the educator was facilitator of learning. Finally, to summarize, let us mention the four main roles of the adult educator, according to Rogers (2001): group leader, change agent, group member, "audience" (outside the group, evaluator of learners' new knowledge).

### **1.1.3 Adult Education and the Arts**

Knowledge acquisition can come from an alternative and non-traditional way, through art, often through an emotional process. In the following we will present Perkins' technique for processing - observation of artworks by adult learners.

The observation of works of art helps the observer to cultivate creative and critical thinking. It consists of four phases:

In the first phase, careful, slow, observation of the artwork is carried out, prompting the observer to express their first reactions and feelings, their possible questions, observing and documenting the interesting elements of the artwork. In the second phase there is a more broad, "open" and creative observation; the observer looks for "surprises" caused by the observation of the work. He is pushed in search of the "message" that the artist wants to convey. In this phase the instructor can provide some information about the artwork. In the third phase, an immersion in the work is carried out, with detailed observation. The observers focuses on how certain elements give particular meaning to the work and consider whether the information about the artist, his other works, the historical context contributed to shaping their interpretation. Still, the observers try to provide informed responses to the questions raised by their observation of the work in the previous phases. In the last phase (fourth), a synthetic observation of the work is made, with reflection, taking into account all the previous phases and noting possible transformations of the observers' thoughts about the artwork (Perkins, 1994).

## **2. Method**

### **2.1 Aim**

The purpose of this research is to highlight the necessity and usefulness of audiovisual media in adult education. In order to put theory into practice, empirical research was conducted through observation in a second chance school to demonstrate the effects of the use of audiovisual media and its application in teaching.

### **2.2 Tools**

Empirical research is defined as any research in which the conclusions of the study are derived strictly from specific empirical and therefore "verifiable" evidence. This empirical evidence can be obtained by means of quantitative research and qualitative research methods. Qualitative research methods are used in empirical research to collect non-numerical data. They are used to find meanings, opinions or underlying causes from the subjects. These methods are unstructured or semi-structured. The sample size for such a survey is usually small and is a kind of conversational method to provide more information or detailed information about the problem. The observational method is a process of observation and data collection. Since it is a qualitative method, it is time-consuming and very personal. One could say that the observation method is part of ethnographic research which is also used to collect empirical data.

### **2.3 Participants**

The participants for the first part of the study, where the audiovisual materials were used, were 12 students in a second chance school in the southern suburbs of Athens. Their ages ranged from 23 to 52 years old and in terms of gender, half were male and half were female. The participants for the second part of the study, where no audiovisual materials were used, were also 12 students of the same school, of similar age group and mixed gender.

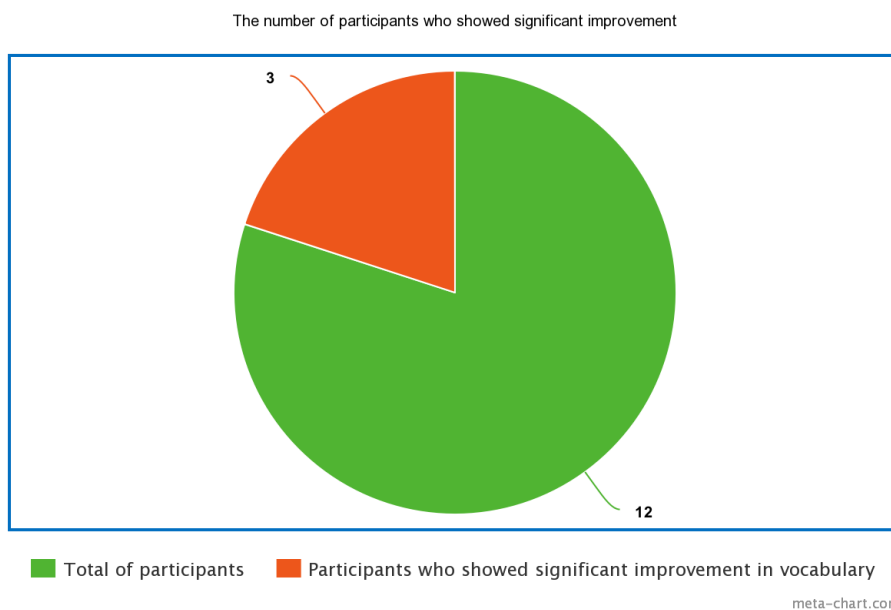
### **2.4 Project**

Throughout the school year 2021-2022, the students of the class selected for the research were given lessons in the context of the subjects of language and literature, enriched with audiovisual material. In each lesson, the material was presented either in the form of video or pictures and the active participation of students and collaboration in groups was encouraged. Homework exercises included searching and gathering material from the internet, which was easy and enjoyable for learners who were working and did not have the time or energy to read and memorise any material. Participants completed two short tests to test their knowledge in the subjects of language and literature, in order to get an overview of the general knowledge of the department. One test was multiple choice and the second one was short essay so that a picture could also be formed about the learners' mode of expression. The same test structure was used at the end of the year to compare the progress of the trainees. At the end of the school year, in addition to the knowledge tests, an evaluation test was used so that the trainees could express how much they were helped by this course structure. For the control group, where the students participated in the classes where no audiovisual materials were used, the same process of assessment was used.

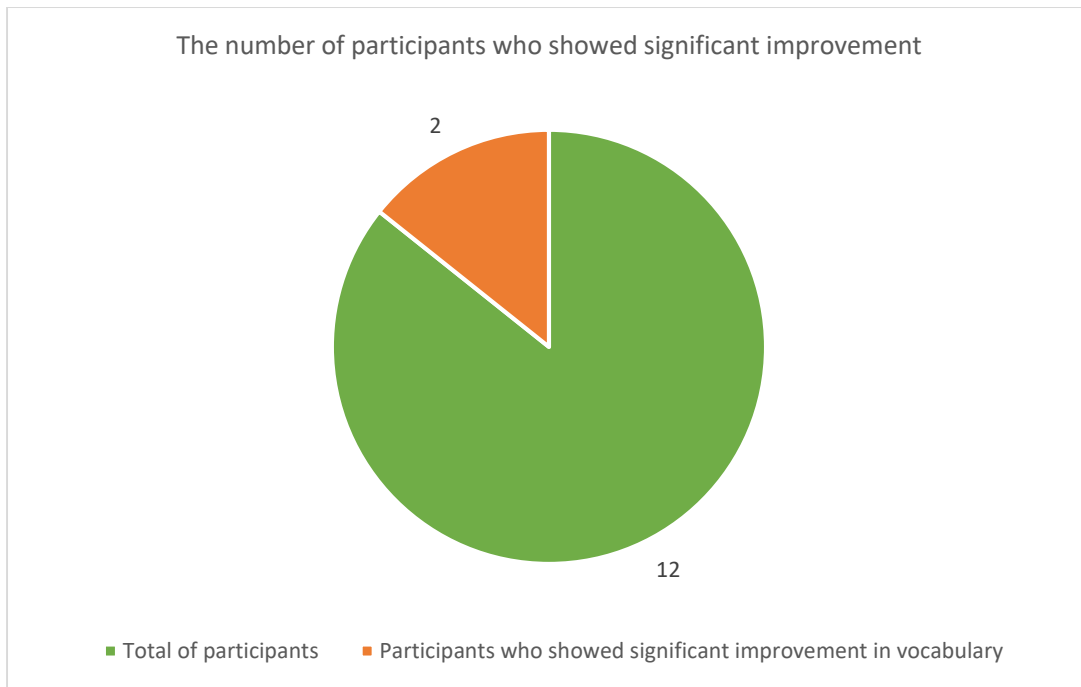
### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Results regarding the learning outcome

In the first group, where audiovisual materials were used, no significant differences were observed in the knowledge tests. The trainees had several gaps, both expressive and spelling and knowledge gaps related to the tested items. A total of three learners showed significant improvement in their use of spelling in the end-of-year essay test. All learners in the essay showed considerable effort to express themselves, using longer sentences and to some extent more sophisticated vocabulary.



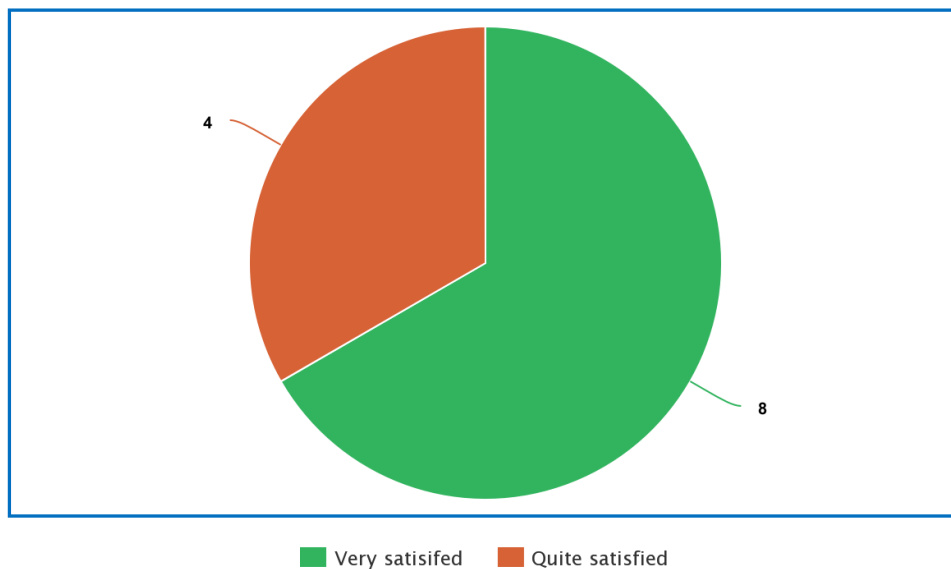
In the second group, where audiovisual materials were not used, a small significant difference was observed in the knowledge tests. The trainees had several gaps, both expressive and spelling and knowledge gaps related to the tested items. A total of two learners showed significant improvement in their use of spelling in the end-of-year essay test. All learners in the essay showed considerable effort to express themselves, using longer sentences and to some extent more sophisticated vocabulary.



### 3.2 Results regarding the learning process

In the first group, the participants who completed the questionnaire all showed satisfaction with the way lessons were conducted using audiovisual media. More specifically, when asked to what extent they were satisfied with the delivery of lessons using audiovisual materials, 8 participants stated 'Very satisfied' and the remaining 4 participants stated 'Quite satisfied'.

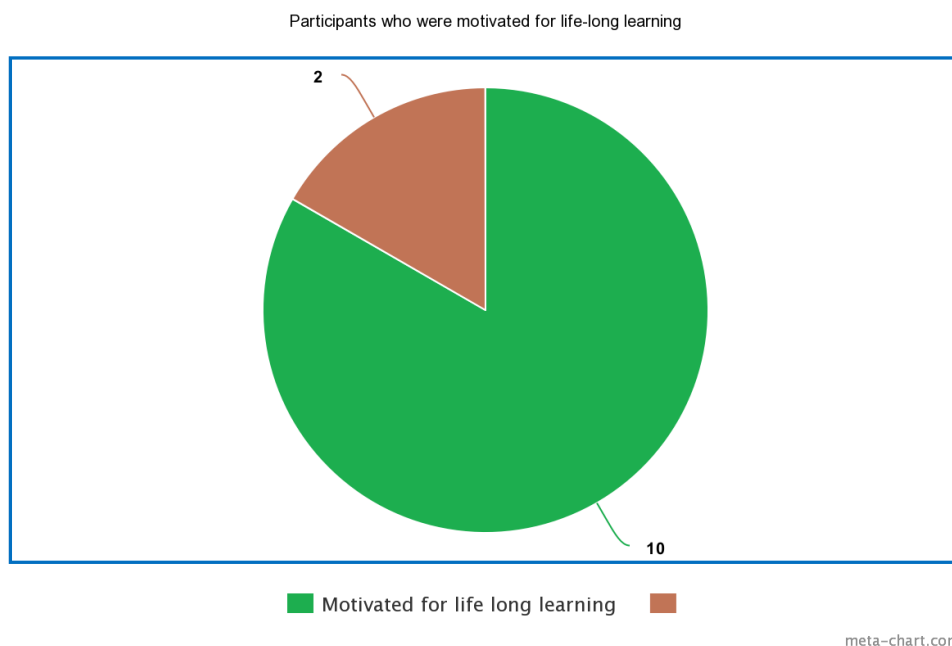
Participants' level of satisfaction with the use of audiovisual material in the learning process



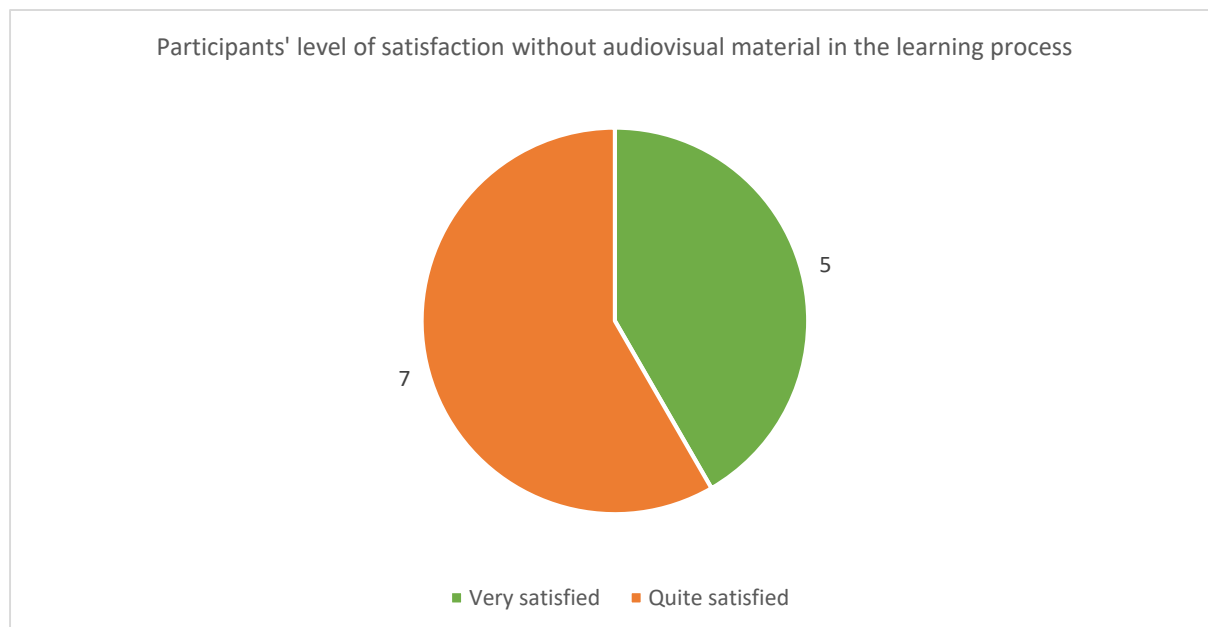
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When the learners were asked if their interest in learning increased with the teaching method applied in the language and literature lessons, 100% of the participants answered positively.

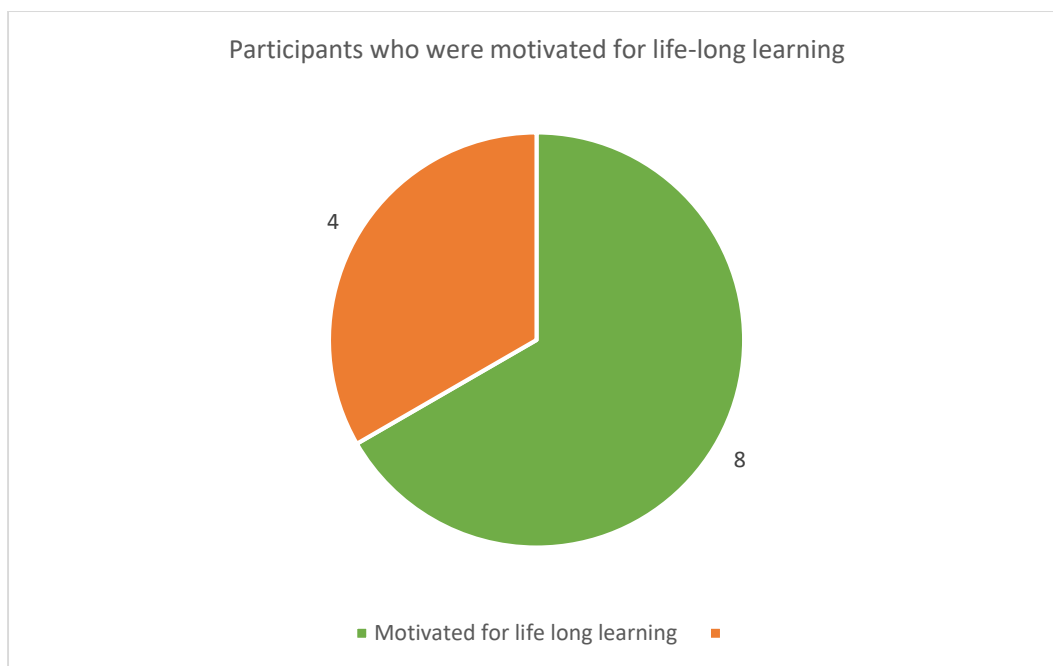
When participants were asked if the use of audiovisual media increased their motivation for lifelong learning, 10 out of 12 participants answered positively.



By the participants who completed the questionnaire in the second group, less than the half of them showed satisfaction with the way lessons were conducted without the use of audiovisual media. More specifically, when asked to what extent they were satisfied with the delivery of lessons using audiovisual materials, 5 participants stated 'Very satisfied' and the remaining 7 participants stated 'Quite satisfied'.



When the learners were asked if their interest in learning increased with the teaching method applied in the language and literature lessons, 78% of the participants answered positively. When participants were asked if the non use of audiovisual media increased their motivation for lifelong learning, 8 out of 12 participants answered positively.



#### 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study of the outcomes of adult education in night classes revealed a minor but substantial change in the knowledge tests, with some students demonstrating progress in their usage of vocabulary and spelling. Without audiovisual stimuli, nevertheless, participant satisfaction was only moderately high. On the other hand, many students who did not use audiovisual media claimed that their interest in learning grew and that they were motivated for lifetime learning. To further understand adult learning, future research might examine the use of other teaching techniques and factors including age and years of experience. The use of audiovisual materials in adult education may increase participants' satisfaction. The comparatively low participant satisfaction without the use of audiovisual media highlights the need to investigate alternative teaching strategies that can enhance the learning process. Although vocabulary use and knowledge only slightly improved, it is encouraging that learners reported higher learning interest and motivation for lifelong learning. To acquire a deeper knowledge of adult learning, future studies should look into the usage of different teaching techniques as well as additional factors like age and years of experience in the workplace.

For the efficient integration of audiovisual media communications into adult education, adult educators with imagination, charisma, distinctiveness, anxiety, patience, and perseverance are necessary. In particular, if they design a lesson plan using audiovisual media communications, they should consider the audiovisual content they will utilize as well as the significance of communication and behavior. Additionally, they should keep in mind that the appropriate selection of instructional approaches employing audiovisual media communications must be tailored to the adult.

This research demonstrates the importance of using audiovisual media in adult education, especially in second-chance schools. The participants in this project may not have shown significant improvement in the knowledge component, but they did show significant improvement in the use of spelling and expressive language. A more significant finding,

however, is the satisfaction expressed by the learners in relation to learning with audiovisual media.

An attempt was made with this literature and empirical research to present the value of audiovisual media with the aim of their use by adult educators to adult learners in the learning process. It is beneficial to follow comparable studies and researches for the study of this issue, as there are few modern studies dealing with the exploitation of audiovisual media and digital repositories databases in the Adult Education learning process. More specifically, it would be interesting to have a similar study in which both educators and learners are interviewed. Also to correlate the answers with other variables besides gender, such as age, years of service / teaching hours of the trainers, variables that were not feasible to be examined in this research, due to the given time of completion of the study. It would also be interesting to have a nationwide similar survey.

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