

CORVINUS UNIVERSITY OF BUDAPEST

Landscape-Architecture and Decision Support Systems Doctoral School

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**INNOVATION AND ADULT EDUCATION IN RURAL
DEVELOPMENT**

Theses of the doctoral dissertation



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Introduction, aim of research

The aim of our research is analyzing the importance and spread of innovations and defining the role of adult education concerning rural areas. Our main objectives were to find out more about the birth of a new innovative idea in rural areas and the process of its implementation. An important aspect of this research was to evaluate the economic sustainability and viability of the innovation after implementation. According to our opinion, the importance of rural development (RD) in Hungarian agriculture cannot be queried in these days. At the same time, it seems that RD is still a “fashionable” subject but not really applied in practice.

I first met the subject of RD during my university studies, when I joined the Department of Farm Management and Marketing (Corvinus University of Budapest, Faculty of Horticultural Science). At that time, rural development has already been a major research issue at the department. I wrote my master thesis on rural tourism and continued the research of RD during my PhD studies. Our work at the Department connected to advisory aid and adult education projects. I happily accepted the challenge to join the Department’s transborder education and I worked with young adults as a volunteer in the Association of Folk High Schools in the Surroundings of Budapest. With the experiences I collected by being a volunteer helped me to participate in a short fellowship program at Silkeborg Folk High School in Denmark. The atmosphere and the intellectuality of the Scandinavian folk high schools have significantly affected research work thus I decided to put more emphasis on adult education in my doctoral dissertation. Unfortunately, my experiences concerning Hungarian adult education were not really promising. Based on our research, we believe that the role of adult education in the development of rural areas is notably underestimated. During the research work, I tried to define the points of an innovation process when adult education can play an important role.

These are the questions that have been raised at the beginning of our research. Our main objective was to find answers to them therefore we formulated our hypotheses on the basis of these questions.

- How did RD policy develop in the European Union and in Hungary?
- Do adult education and innovation appear in RD policy?
- What does multifunctional agriculture mean?
- What are the possibilities to change from traditional agricultural production to a multifunctional agricultural model?

- How is innovation present in rural areas?
- What does innovation mean in the practice in local and micro-regional level?
- What is the link between economy and education?
- Is adult education present at all in RD?
- What is the role of adult education in the rural development practice?

We had some preconceptions and intuitions at the beginning of the research, but we did not want to turn these to hypotheses. We tried to formulate our statements on the basis of arguments and counter-arguments in each chapter.

The hypotheses of the dissertation are:

1. Hypothesis: The innovation and the education are present in the Hungarian RD policy as an aim of support.
2. Hypothesis: The multifunctional agriculture model is a new paradigm in Hungary and in the European Union. Both RD policy and RD in practice have adapted the multifunctional agriculture model.
3. Hypothesis: Special form of innovation has already appeared in rural practice and the process of innovation has already begun.
4. Hypothesis: Education and adult education have an important role in rural development processes.
5. Hypothesis: Different institutions with diverse educational methods can offer educational programs for rural communities.

Conclusions and achievements

Rural development (RD) has appeared in the European and Hungarian agricultural policy in the last ten years. It seems that RD was only a theory in agricultural policy at the beginning, but later in the process, it became reality at the policy level as well. According to the European regulation, RD plays an important role in the Hungarian agricultural policy in the period of 2007-2013. Although supporting agricultural competitiveness is still the most important tool of the EU regulation as financial allocation figures show, but the role of the RD became emphatic, too. We believe that the importance of RD is already recognized by politics as well as professionals.

The traditional agricultural production system has been transformed. In one hand, intensive production, supported by modern technologies, predominates among competitive agricultural systems. On the hand, traditional agriculture in rural areas preferably developed to meet the requirements of a multifunctional agricultural model. In our study we show three possible ways of changing traditional agriculture to a multifunctional model. One possible solution is to “broaden” agricultural activity which means the reorganization of the production system, such as installing a new and innovative product processing method, landscape management activities, or the development of agrotourism. Traditional agriculture system can be “deepened” through the transformation of existing activities to effective, environmentally friendly, sustainable production and to the development of marketing, for example organic production, direct marketing. The usage and mobilization of traditional resources should be reorganized by the “re-grounding” processes, for example supplementary income by part time job farm activities or the exploitation of new business models such as the energy production capacity of agriculture.

Certainly, to get these necessary changes realized, a successful innovation process is needed. In our study we discussed the main factors of successful rural innovations. We put an important role on the personality of the leader (innovator). According to our findings, a leader person with high valued innovation skill is essential in every successful rural initiative. It means that the leaders are open-minded, creative, initiative and have the skills of cooperation, organization and persuasion. The critical point of every innovation is the sustainability which is the most important requirement of a successful innovation. Innovative ideas can be realized by subsidies or tenders but without fulfilling the requirement of sustainability, i.e. the project needs ‘outside the system’- support, it does not favor the development of the area. Most of these rural initiations will fail, no matter how innovative the original idea was. Usually the failure of rural initiatives correlates with the interpretation of sustainability especially because it is not analyzed in its complexity. Sustainability is often defined from an economical or an ecological approach, but exclusively technological or organizational readings are neither right. In each case maximization is required. Otherwise, the harmonization of these different factors of sustainability is absolute necessary and an optimal combination of these factors should be realized in each case.

Nowadays, ‘knowledge’ and the level of education have greater importance than ever in the development of rural areas (e.g. through innovations), their economical and social role depends on it. ‘Lifelong learning’ is a crucial factor of personal, economical and social welfare in our knowledge-based and, so called, information society. It has become insufficient for individuals to

learn things only once in their life. Continuous education is necessary to be able to adapt to technological and social changes. Hungarian educational institutions are trying to capitalize from this trend and a lot of adult education programs have been initiated lately. Courses for rural population have been successfully started so that people with propose of developing their environment can fulfill the requirement of lifelong-learning.

According to our hypotheses we would like to summarize our conclusions and achievements:

1. Hypothesis: The innovation and the education are present in the Hungarian RD policy as an aim of support.

We accept that RD plays an important role in agricultural policy in spite of the fact that financial allocation shows that supporting system favors agriculture development and competitiveness. The situation analysis of “New Hungary Rural Development Program” (NHRD) emphasizes the low level of skills, innovations and the lack of modern knowledge. These are the weaknesses and problems with which the Hungarian agriculture has to cope. However, the program does not bring out the fact that farmers with official agricultural education do not have up-to-date information/knowledge. The NHRD offers some actions to solve these problems, but the effects of actions have to be evaluated in the near future (e.g. “Measure: 1.1.1. Vocational training and information action”, the expenditure of the measure is about 113,7 m Euro for the whole 7 years period; “Measure: 3.3.1.: Training and information”, the expenditure of the measure is about 46,8 m Euro for the whole 7 years period).

2. Hypothesis: The multifunctional agriculture model is a new paradigm in Hungary and in the European Union. Both RD policy and RD in practice have adapted the multifunctional agriculture model.

Beside the traditional roles of agricultural production, the agriculture also plays an important role in the conservation of rural population and it has agro-environmental and landscape management functions as well. Our opinion is that the multifunctional agriculture is a good chance to some farmers for survival. There already are examples of reaching an effective and profitable multifunctional agricultural model through diversification and transformation. We believe that intensive, big-scale agricultural systems and multifunctional agricultural systems (which do not mean small-scale

farming) can both be presented in Hungary. Multifunctional models may satisfy special demands and fill market gaps.

3. Hypothesis: Special form of innovation has already appeared in rural practice and the process of innovation has already begun.

In our study we show the innovation realization process through two case studies. We emphasized the role of leader person (innovator) and the steps of innovation process in both cases. According to our observation, the first step in the innovative action is clarifying the local circumstances (1) and the evaluation of the environment. It follows by the birth of an innovative idea (2), which gradually becomes a project (3) or rather an action. The project then enters an implementation phase (4) and finally it turns into economically sustainable and becomes viable (5). If the leader person has a strong local relation network, thus has formal or informal power, the innovation will be adopted easily and the innovation process will spread rapidly, the effect of it will be permanent and sustainable. Successful innovation project (which can fulfill sustainability) can be a starting point of new innovation and development and it can restart the whole process. None of our investigated cases could reach the last step of innovation (sustainability), in these micro-regions (case studies) the main problem is always connected to the lack of financial liquidity, the uneasy administration (e. g. tender settlement) and the unpredictable market conditions. At the same time parallel innovations are emerged in both cases, which indicate the economical and social development. The final aim is find solutions to the most important problem of depopulating and aging villages.

4. Hypothesis: Education and adult education have role on rural development processes.

Lifelong learning (LLL) is a key question of the 21th century. We believe that the development of a region or country and its economical and social function depend on the “knowledge” and the level of continuous professional education. We can state that the general tendency on the education market is that new claims appear on both demand and supply side of the market. We have less experience in Hungary about the phenomena when education (mainly adult education) determines community life in rural area. This phenomena comes to existence due to the connection of education

system and social upbringing, the school became a part of local social, political, cultural life.

5. Hypothesis: Different institutions with diverse educational methods can offer educational programs for rural communities.

The number of the adult education institutions has significantly decreased in the last 15 years. It seems naturally to conventional educational institutions to join the market of adult education because they have the necessary educational infrastructure and tutorial base thus they can supply local educational demands. Educational institutions were formed after privatization from the former state continuing professional education institutions and these organizations are also presented with educational programs on labor market. New enterprises and civil organizations are attended in adult education. The beneficiaries of adult education programs are the participants (individual effect), although it has an indirect effect called “spill over” which means that “intellectual emanation” can initiate positive changes in rural areas.

According to our study we formulated new scientific results:

1. Despite of unbalanced financial allocation, rural development plays an important role in the European and Hungarian agricultural policy, innovation and education are one of the favourable aims of the program.
2. Multifunctional agriculture system has already appeared in agriculture, we believe that intensive, big-scale agricultural system can live beside multifunctional (doesn't mean small-scale farming) systems in Hungary.
3. We showed the most important phases of innovation process in rural development practice through case studies, in which we emphasized the role of leader person (innovator) and the importance of sustainability.
4. We found out that there is less experience in Hungary about the phenomena when education (mainly adult education) determines community life in rural area.
5. Conventional institutions and new organizations are presented in the market of adult education. The beneficiaries of adult education programs are the participants (individual

effect), although it has an indirect effect called “spill over” which means that “intellectual emanation” can initiate positive changes in rural areas

In our study we tried to present the connection between rural development, innovation and adult education. During the investigations, we found out some solution for our questions and we tried to support these with practical examples. At the same time, new questions have been raised:

What will be the effects of supporting strategies of the rural development policy?

Which part of the society will be interested in lifelong learning (LLL)?

How can we establish significant demand for changes and innovation in disadvantaged social stratum?

How can we transfer successful innovations to other regions?

Hopefully these questions inspire more investigation and new research projects.

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2. Awards

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