

## ADULT AND CONTINUING TEACHER TRAINING EDUCATION IN THE USA

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### ABSTRACT

The system of adult and continuing education plays an important role in highly qualified staff training. The US educational system is considered to be one of the well-developed in the world. Numerous reforms in educational policy of the country brought changes to the curriculum. New academic programs became available for adults, that is why the standard of national literacy raised to play an important role in the improvement of social and economic well-being of the country.

The article deals with the analysis of continuing educational system development. The authors provide an overview of continuing education development in the USA through the XX-XXI c. to point out the main achievements in the development of the federal educational policy in the country. They give a profound review of teachers' continuing educational programs diversity, revealing the most popular types that are maintained by the government to motivate the teachers' self-development.

The authors conclude that distant continuing education programs and e-learning programs with *Massive Open Online Course* are of high demand in the area of adult and continuing education because of their availability. Post-graduate program of coaching plays an important role in young teachers training activity. Teacher training continuing education courses are aimed at bridging the gaps in a multicultural class.

The article can be of interest for municipal, regional, national state and non-state parties and individual educators and researchers involved in improving the quality of adult and continuing education worldwide.

**Keywords:** education, teacher, learning, the XXI century, university, continuing/continuing education, student.

### INTRODUCTION

The XXI century is an era of progress in science and technology. The development of the world put forward new requirements for specialists. Knowledge gained at university has a tendency to depreciate and professional competencies diminish. For this reason, a worker should be retrained. This period varies from job to job. Due to this the system of adult and continuing education comes into existence.

Professor at the University of Georgia Sharan B. Merriam understands "adult education" as in-service or out-of-service adults self-educating activities in which a person attains new knowledge, skills and values [1].

The forms of adult education activities can be different. The main principle is based on the assumption of adults to be educated and literate. So, the government tries to do everything to respond to the needs of adults.

The concept of 'continuing education' is quiet recent in education theory. It appeared in the second half of the XX century and was first mentioned in the UNESCO report (1968). In 1972 E. Fore mentioned it in his work *Learn to Be*. According to E. Fore, that is because of education a man can easily socialize. Education supports a man throughout his life and contributes to economic development of countries [2].

In modern pedagogics, 'continuing education' is understood as a system of educational institutions, including the organizational and content components of education, which are in constant relationship with

the development of personality [3, 4]. As N.G. Miloradova says: “continuing education is the process of lifelong educational growth (general and professional), organized by state and public institutions. It should satisfy individual needs and the needs of a society” [5, 6].

## **BACKGROUND**

The step forward in the history of adult and continuing education was made by the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) in the 1930s to avoid the consequences of the Great Depression. At the end of World War II, in 1944, *the Servicemen's Readjustment Act* was issued, and veterans were granted tuition to study at a college or upgrade their skills. The information about other reforms of the 1930s in the area of continuing education is missing.

In 1960s the government of the United States held the Great Society social program, the implementation of which was caused by social disruption. Educational policy of those days has changed. Thus, in 1964 *the Adult Education Act* provided literacy project for all the citizens who had no education, could not read at all or only a little, and were to study the English language as their second one in order to bring up educated and qualified society [7].

According to *the Higher Education Act* of 1965, some points in financial aid programs for students and post-secondary education programs were altered. *The Vocational and Technical Educations Act* of 1984 by Karl D. Perkins regulated financial support for technical and community colleges. Vocational educational programs became popular. They certified students with a diploma with a lower record than a baccalaureate degree.

All the shifts in the educational policy of the 1980-1990s may be characterized by a slogan “*welfare-to-work*”. The government, being not too conservative in this matter, gained common approval that led to success. So, in 1991 *the Adult Education Act* of 1964 was repealed by *the National Literacy Act* and brought more changes in the program of making the nation more literate. Later, it was replaced by *the Workforce Investment Act* in 1998 which concerned continuing adult education programs.

According to the Workforce Investment Act, adults were obliged to obtain minimum a post-secondary diploma to ensure their ability to read and write. Adults were to study to get necessary skills to improve the standard of their life and life of their children.

There were no great shifts in adult and continuing educational policy of the USA during George W. Bush's and Barak Obama's presidency. In 2006 George W. Bush put forward some amendments to *the first Perkin's Act*. They mainly concerned the way secondary educational institutions (vocational and community colleges) were classified. Vocational educational programs were overviewed.

In 2013, the amendments to the Higher Education Act of 1965 were made. The government was concerned with the development of higher education and the level of its nation's literacy, so it subsidized educational programs (occupational certificate programs) from the federal funds. Despite numerous debates over the Act, it was proven, that the amendments made by the government had a great impact on the improved standard of life of the workforce [7].

In 2014, Republicans and Democrats agreed to change the Workforce Investment Act. Thus, *the Workforce and Innovation Opportunity Act* was signed.

Alongside with professional skills acquisition, this Act provides an opportunity to learn English. In order to raise the level of linguistic competence, the government worked out an educational program for people deprived of their liberty, and the program of second language acquisition for non-native speakers. The programs of civic education were also of high demand.

For those, who attended the program, the government guaranteed job placement and promotion in their career. According to the Act the state is responsible for choosing occupational skills acquisition programs. The content of a post-secondary program should coincide with the common core standards for K-12. This ‘bridge’ has been made for those who wished to continue their studies and apply for the university.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

To provide well-grounded conclusions on the status of the problem of adult and continuing education in the USA, the following theoretical and practical methods were applied to achieve the solution of the research problem:

- a descriptive method for observation and classification of the investigated material;
- a system oriented analysis of literature as well as government and non-government official papers, codes, plans and reports on the problem.

## **RESULTS**

### *Adult and Continuing Education Programs Classification*

Adult and continuing educational programs in the USA can be of the following types: certification, corporate training, part-time study, in-service education, e-learning and distance learning [8].

*Certification* is a program for adults who would like to attain professional skills but do not have a Bachelor’s or Master’s degree. The duration of a course usually varies from six months to two years.

If a company wants to educate the staff, *corporate training* programs are what they need. The program represents qualification courses for members of one company. The courses are held by an agency, specialized in them.

For those, who work and want to upgrade their skills up to a Bachelor’s or Master’s degree *part-time study* is offered by institutions. A student attends classes twice or thrice a week. An academic year is divided into trimesters.

*In-service education* concerns practical acquisition of professional skills. A highly qualified member of the company trains an employee.

*E-learning* program is a program involving the use of different electronic devices. It is considered to be the handiest way to hold a qualification course, because a student can study it any time he/she will be able to do it.

One of the most popular types of continuing educational programs are *distant-learning programs*. The percent of students, who signed up for the distant program raised from 18% in 2009 to 64% in 2014 [9, 10]. The innovation in this area of education is *Massive Open Online Course* (MOOC) which may be characterized as massive (more than 100 000 students), available and open. The author of one of the first MOOCs is an Indiana University professor – Daniel Hickey (2008). The aim of the course is to educate those, who are not able to enter college because of their financial capacities, and for those, who have less spare time that is needed for usual course. Authors of MOOCs consider them to be informative, convenient (you may exchange the experience with students all over the world if they are signed up); however, the draw-back of the course is that it is only partially controlled by the tutor. Credits, received for the course, are equal to those of the off-line courses, and are admitted at every university.

Many educational institutions in the USA have a department specialized in adult and continuing education. For example, at Harvard University there is *Harvard Division of Continuing Education*. It

contains Harvard Summer School, Harvard Extension School, Harvard Institute for Learning in Retirement, Harvard Executive Education [11; 53].

### *Standards and Challenges of Continuing Teacher Training Education*

Standards for school teacher qualification vary from state to state. Common requirements for teacher's level of proficiency are:

- A teacher must have minimum Bachelor's degree diploma;
- a candidate to a teacher must attend a course in Pedagogics;
- a teacher is to obtain a certificate from state, which will allow him/her to give classes [12; 78].

*Princeton University* (New Jersey) is one of the most popular US universities, which train teachers. A student of this university, who wants to be a teacher has to:

- attend Major courses and pass the exam;
- attend Elective courses (Arts, Science, General Studies, STEM Disciplines) and be attested;
- attend seminars in Pedagogics (theoretical course is studied here);
- attend classes in Methodology (students, consulted by a tutor, practice their skills in teaching a subject at one of the local schools. Usually two lessons must be taught);
- have practice at school, guided by a tutor during a semester [13].

Students may choose more than one Major course to study and should get an excellent mark (A-mark) on the points that were mentioned above. Otherwise they won't be certified.

If a certified teacher wants to attend a course of continuing education at Princeton University, he/she should sign up a 32-credit-hours-course on a subject. For example, if a teacher of English wants to have a professional retraining he/she needs to attend classes on the English language theory; English, American and world literature and write down an essay. A teacher of foreign language has to attend classes on Grammar, Communication Culture, Literature, Foreign Language culture, Methodology, pass a Second Language Acquisition exam worked out by the Department of Education in New Jersey.

As for continuing teachers of English training education among the leading courses are the School of Continuing Education at University of Phoenix which holds a course for bilingual teachers *Instruction and Assessment of English Language Learners* to provide for the world-class education of the XXI century teacher. For a three-weeks course a teacher receives 3 credits [14].

The program of the course involves studying the following topics:

- Language and Culture interrelation;
- Second Language Acquisition;
- Students Performance Analysis;
- Assessment of Students;
- Standards for Language Acquisition;
- The Concepts of *Family, Home, School* Interaction;
- A Review Course of History of the English Language Study;
- Language Immersion Program Methodology.

The course program is emphasized on language and culture interrelation, teachers study the way the lesson should be organized, and how to teach and assess students of different ethnic groups.

Texas, being a state that is densely populated with migrants, is very interesting to study. The common requirements for US teachers are enlarged. A teacher of English in Texas must be certified by the *National Board for Professional Teaching Standards*. It is necessary to have no less than 3 years of successful teaching experience.

Texas is a state, where foreign language teachers' competitiveness is very high. That is why requirements for specialists are strict. If a teacher can speak several foreign languages it will be easier for him/her to find a job, because in a multicultural class an educator has to use different skills and methods to teach a pupil [15]. The effectiveness of the studying process depends on it.

Teachers of foreign languages in Texas are supposed to:

- have a Bachelor's or Master's degree;
- have knowledge in basic disciplines;
- be certified on a subject;
- pass an exam on a foreign language and English as the second language.

Varieties of post-graduate programs motivate young teachers on their professional development. The *coaching* is considered to be one of the most effective programs. If a young teacher needs help a tutor will assist him/her any moment [16]. A young teacher and a tutor analyze the lesson in the form of discussion. The coaching system is very flexible and allows finding out a most preferable methodology for the teacher of the XXI century.

## CONCLUSION

The results of the study allow the authors to conclude that in the USA:

1. Distant continuing education programs and e-learning programs are of high demand because of their availability. Massive Open Online Course is a breakthrough in the area of adult and continuing education.
2. Post-graduate program of coaching plays an important role in young teachers training activity.
3. Teachers training continuing education courses are aimed at bridging the gaps in a multicultural class.

## DISCUSSION

In Discussion we would like to say that because of a great experience and leading position of the USA in the field of education, other countries might adopt the ways of continuing education system improvement in order to develop their own educational path.

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