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IN THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE****Резюме**

Статья посвящена актуальной проблеме непрерывного образования в Соединенных Штатах Америки. Целью статьи является анализ исторических факторов, способствовавших формированию американского подхода к проблеме непрерывного образования, и обзор его форм, существующих в этой стране. В статье делаются выводы о роли и месте непрерывного образования в системе образования Соединенных Штатов Америки на современном этапе развития страны.

Резюме

Статтю присвячено актуальній проблемі безперервної освіти в Сполучених Штатах Америки. Метою статті є аналіз історичних чинників, що сприяли формуванню американського підходу до безперервної освіти, та огляд її форм, існуючих у цій країні. У статті зроблено висновки про роль та місце безперервної освіти в системі освіти Сполучених Штатів Америки на сучасному етапі розвитку країни.

Key words: adult and continuing education, professional development, personal development, business training, certification programs, certificate programs, corporate training, evening classes, night schools, workplace training, e-learning.

Definition

Continuing education (CE) (called *further education* in the United Kingdom and Ireland) is a term mainly used in connection with education in the United States and Canada. It is a nationally-colored term and in various national contexts can acquire additional meanings. However, the common ideas conveyed in reference literature [3; 4; 7; 8; 10; 12] on CE share 3 characteristics which transform 'education and training' into the concept of 'continuing education'.

The first characteristic of CE is that it is post-compulsory education provided for adult learners, especially those beyond traditional undergraduate

college or university age. It is additional to that received at secondary school and is distinct from the education offered in universities.

The second common idea is that CE consists typically of short or part-time courses in a variety of subjects, most of which are practical, not academic [1].

Format is the third shared characteristic of CE. It encompasses both formal and non-formal types of education and training and varies from basic literacy training and casual, incidental learning to formal college credit courses.

Given the national context, CE is very similar to adult learning, the two sharing a significant overlap in termbase and major concepts. Unlike other types of education, they are both aimed at adult learners and are defined by the student population rather than by the content or complexity of a learning program [4]. The two concepts are, therefore, closely blended in the American context which is evidenced in the names of special Adult and Continuing Education Units set up at more than 3000 major colleges and universities across the United States [13–15; 18].

Historical Background

Americans have always maintained informal channels for learning well into adulthood which has consequently shaped into a long-standing national habit of self-improvement [5]. Adult and continuing education (ACE) is credited to be oldest school in the United States and it passed through several stages [6; 9; 16; 18] from the early 1800s to the present. The time and circumstances have affected programs, teaching methods, tools, audience, but the purpose has remained the same. ACE has always been tailored at helping adults learn how to solve their daily problems or reach targeted goals.

The history of ACE can be traced within seven periods:

1. Until the middle of the 1800s, higher education focused on educating the young in traditional, classical curricula. Although adult education (AE) was not a primary objective, it was important [6]. AE activities, however, were limited to providing for such simple needs as reading and writing, therefore many early programs were started by churches to teach people to read the Bible.

The largest early program in the United States, The Lyceum, founded in 1826 in Massachusetts by Josiah Holbrook, was the largest and the best-known early program in the United States aimed at expanding own education of the founders and establishing a public school system [6].

2. By the mid 1800s when the original purposes of AE were met, it began to take on an organized format with an emphasis on «enlightened citizenry». The federal legislation contributed greatly to the process by initiating a number of structures such as The Federal Department of Education (established in 1862), The US Agricultural Society (formed in 1852) and land-grant colleges offering training in agriculture and the mechanical arts.

A training center for Sunday school teachers, Chautauqua Institution, was founded in New York in 1874. Started as a summer training program, Chautauqua evolved into the prototype of institutions primarily designed for AE [11]. By 1876, universities started offering extension programs that brought education directly to the public.

3. By the mid-19th century the United States took advantage of the postal system and introduced correspondence study offering educational opportunities to those for a variety of reasons unable to attend conventional schools: people with physical disabilities, women not allowed to enroll in educational institutions at those times open only to men, people having jobs during normal school hours, and those living in remote areas where schools did not exist.

4. The end of the 19th century witness the «multiplication» period in ACE development. Numerous institutions of AE were set up across the country: evening schools, correspondence schools, summer schools, community colleges, extension schools, junior colleges, social service agencies, park and recreation centers. Those structures expanded both the scope of traditional education to embrace scientific and technical subjects, vocational education, and problem-solving correspondence courses through continuing education and the range of learners.

Government in this period greatly participated in the development of AE by providing financial aid and establishing, in the departments of education, special programs for adult learners.

5. The surge of immigration into the United States during the early 20th century resulted in the establishment of numerous «Americanization» [4] programs including citizenship classes for immigrants and English programs later evolving into language schools.

The period of the Great Depression of the 1930s witnessed establishing by the federal government public evening classes, a new means of ACE, allowing people to combine work and pursuit of their individual intellectual and vocational needs.

6. In the mid and late 20th ACE in the United States received a major stimulus with the passage by the federal government of the Adult Education Act (1966), the Higher Education Acts (1966, 1986), the Lifelong Learning Amendment (1976), and other act of legislation, reflecting the growing importance of ACE.

Establishment of new educational units such as Adult and Continuing Education Units, Extension Divisions, Executive Education Programs, Schools of Professional Study, and Distance Learning Units enabled the traditional institution to expand the diversity of their degree-credit courses with a variety of adult, continuing, and executive education programs, both for- and non-credit.

7. The early 21st century launched the era of globalization in ACE. The advance of modern technologies and the introduction of the Internet have brought in new educational and learning techniques: online, blended, and e-learning. In an attempt to meet the constantly growing demand of the economic environment and challenged workforce and keep pace with the changing world, local education institutions across the United States have begun to expand both nationwide and outside the country entering the global competition for better educational services. The challenged national and international economic environment coupled with budget allocation cuts have put a great pressure on education institutions setting a new stage in ACE development to meet the diverse needs of today's adult learners.

Method and format of CE

Since ACE programs are aimed at students that are already professional in certain areas, they are usually quite flexible and offer a wide variety of options as to their methods and format of presentation. The method of

delivery of such type of programs include both traditional (classroom lectures and laboratories) and modern type methods. ACE providers make heavy use of distance and online learning which can include videotaped / CD-ROM / pod cast material, broadcast programming, online / Internet delivery and online interactive courses, the use of conference-type group study, online study networks, seminars, and workshops. A combination of traditional, distance and online study is used to facilitate the learning process.

The major areas in the domain of ACE in the Unites States include:

1. *Professional development* aimed at acquiring skills and knowledge for both personal development and career advancement. It is represented by all types of approaches to facilitated learning including college degrees, formal coursework, conferences, consultation, coaching, and informal learning in practice [12].

2. *Personal development* including activities that improve self-awareness, self-knowledge, social abilities and potential; build employability, human capital and identity; develop strengths or talents; enhance lifestyle or the quality of life; initiate a life enterprise or personal autonomy [12].

3. *Business training* usually initiated by the business itself to bring education and training to the business or workplace.

Recognized forms of post-compulsory learning in the United States include: degree credit courses for non-traditional students, non-degree career training, workforce training, formal personal enrichment courses (both on-campus and online) self-directed learning (such as through Internet interest groups, clubs or personal research activities), and experiential learning as applied to problem solving.

Certification programs are designed for people seeking to assure qualification to perform a job or task. Most certification programs are created, sponsored, or affiliated with professional associations or trade organizations interested in raising standards of professional performance. Certifications are common in secondary (aviation, construction, technology) and tertiary industries (business, finance, health care). The three types of certification are: corporate, product-specific, and profession-wide. Corporate certifications are made by a corporation for internal purposes and have limited portability. Product-specific certifications are intended to be referenced to a product across all applications and are portable across

locations (for example, different corporations that use the same product), but not across other products. Profession-wide certifications are established by professional organizations seeking to apply professional standards or increase the level of practice. They are offered by particular specialties and are portable across all locations a certified professional might work at [12].

Certificate programs are educational programs resulting in a certificate of completion rather than a degree. Certificate programs don't require learners to study traditional liberal arts but either prepare them to complete a specific task or educate them about one particular aspect of work in their field, such as computer programming, auto repair or medical technology. The length of these programs varies from a year to a much shorter period. Certificate programs are offered through vocational schools, trade schools, community colleges, and online [12].

Corporate training is aimed at enhancing the performance of workforce in organizational settings. It is customized to meet the current needs of employers: to improve employees' skills, teach employees new skills for the same job or different skills in order to advance them into new jobs, or simply to enhance their routine performance. Training could be specific to a company or it could be general. The most popular areas of general corporate training are computer, leadership, and interpersonal skills training. These days corporate training in the United States is rarely based on the traditional classroom activities and applies conference calls, teleclasses, online discussion groups, web-based programs, and other non-traditional forms and formats [12].

Evening classes are geared toward non-traditional students and are attended by people in full-time jobs during the day or those with other commitments (raising a child, attending to an elderly relative). They are non-credit college courses that occur after 5 p.m. The time span of evening classes is around two and a half years, but the number of hours, days and weeks that a student takes can vary greatly. The workload for these classes is the same as in traditional classes. Such classes occur in public places other than college campuses to be easily accessible to nontraditional students. Evening classes are often taught by adjuncts, part-time college staff, rather than full-time professors and instructors [12].

Night schools conduct classes for personal and professional advancement during the evening or on the weekends and are tailored to adult learners who have regular working hours and are unable to attend classes during the day. Unlike evening classes, many night schools are held on college or high school campuses. Night schools can pursue a number of different goals: provide adult literacy services; help adult learners get high school diplomas; or help people learn trades such as nursing, law, cosmetology and others [12].

Workplace training is a form of professional development aimed at improving performance and providing training additional to the basic training required for a profession, occupation or trade. It can be categorized into on-the-job and off-the-job training. On-the-job training takes place in a normal working setting, using the actual tools, equipment, documents, or materials that trainees will use when fully trained while off-the-job training takes place away from normal work situations and in addition to using ‘actual tools’ embraces concepts and ideas [12].

E-learning or *online learning* is offered by a great number of colleges and universities as well as other types of schools as an alternative to attending classes in person. It is especially beneficial for those who do not have the time or means to travel to a physical location. It varies in the length from a few hours spent of a hobby to a greater amount of time allocated for earning a certification or degree [12]. According to the Sloan Foundation reports, the figure of enrollments for fully online learning in the US post-secondary system will rise to 81 percent by 2014 as compared to 12-14 percent increase in 2009 [2].

Harvard Division of Continuing Education

One of the best-known providers of ACE in the United States of America would be Harvard Division of Continuing Education that offers various undergraduate, graduate, and non-degree programs to approximately 20,000 students each year [17]. The Division of Continuing Education comprises five major programs:

1. *The Harvard Summer School* provides seven weeks’ tuition with faculty from Harvard and other major American and foreign universities to more than 5,000 students a year in more than forty disciplines in the

sciences, humanities, writing, economics, computer science, and foreign languages.

2. *The Harvard Extension School* offers online courses and part-time evening classes for personal enrichment, career advancement, or study leading to a degree.

3. *The Harvard Institute for English Language Programs* offers part-time day and evening programs to non-native English speakers during the academic year and intensive daytime programs for international students and evening classes for local students during the summer.

4. *The Harvard Institute for Learning in Retirement* annually offers to approximately 500 retirees and other older adults an opportunity to pursue intellectual interests and explore new areas of knowledge in peer-taught study groups.

5. *The Harvard Summer Secondary School Program* offers high school seniors, juniors, and sophomores a chance to sample college life and take part in a variety of social, recreational, and college preparatory activities.

Conclusion

ACE is credited to be oldest school in the United States of America dating back to the mid 1800s. The concept of CE is closely blended with the concept of AE and refers to any type of post-compulsory education obtained either for personal or professional enrichment. There is no specific format or length for ACE programs: they are a combination of traditional, distance, and online study. Recognized forms of ACE in the United States include: certification programs, certificate programs, corporate training, evening classes, night schools, workplace training, and on-line learning. Major providers of this form of education in the U.S. have special Adult and Continuing Education Units, one typical example being Harvard Division of Continuing Education which is a part of Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Harvard University. ACE is geared to meet the dynamic needs of the adult learner marketplace in early 21st century.

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