

OKSANA CHUGAI**LEGISLATIVE HISTORY OF ADULT EDUCATION IN THE USA****Abstract**

In the article the involvement of Federal government into adult education is analyzed; the nature and extent of legislative measures taken in order to improve the quality of adult education in the USA is investigated.

Keywords: adult education, educational policy, adult learners, vocational skills, federal funding, one-stop delivery system, accountability requirement

Introduction

The combined impact of demographic, social, and technological change on society is enormous, and it encourages the spreading of education to people regardless of their age which means the growth of the knowledge society (Cross, 1982). In a contemporary world where education matters more than ever before, the social and economic demands for education grow, connecting success in education with employment and participation in society (Darling-Hammond, 2006). The goal is to establish, encourage, and expand effective programs to assist adults in productive and responsible participation in the life of society.

Progress in any social field, and especially in education, is possible only with a clear understanding of the factors that have influenced the present situation. That implies that the forces must be analyzed in order to construct a new philosophy or a new body of principles. Historical analysis contributes to resolving contemporary problems (Kandel, 1930). Therefore, investigation of the nature and extent of legislative measures taken in order to improve the quality of adult education leads to a deeper understanding of future perspectives in US educational policy.

Legislative History and Discussion

The earliest nation's founding document, the Declaration of Independence (1776), contains the following statement as its first article: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." This is a truly remarkable statement and Barnes (1984) starts investigating its meaning with the phrase "all men". It is not quite clear whom Thomas Jefferson, the author, was referring to considering the American Indians, black slaves or women. Yet the spirit of the statement has always been interpreted by Americans liberally. Therefore, "all men" means, morally and legally, multiracial men, women, and children. The phrase "created equal" does not mean "born equal" or "are equal". With the words "created equal" Thomas Jefferson established a political philosophy that influenced educational policy in the future. The implication for education is that as far as schooling was established, everyone has access to it. Implicit in the statement "the pursuit of Happiness" is the notion that education was not to be limited to people of a certain age and to a certain time and place. Adults as well as children could continue their education if further education increased their

“happiness”. Finally, Barnes comes to the conclusion that in spite of saying nothing directly about education, the Declaration of Independence, as earliest nation’s founding document, is an important educational statement (Barnes, 1984).

There has been a rich history of educational reforms throughout the history of the USA. President Thomas Jefferson was the first American leader to suggest the establishment of an educational system that was controlled by the government, free from religious biases, and available to all people regardless of their status in society. Horace Mann and Henry Barnard were early education reformers who believed that education is the great equalizer of the people (Williams, 2006).

State histories give evidence of organized adult education in the USA as early as the 18th century. Evening schools for adults, part-time education, citizenship or Americanization classes for immigrants were forerunners of the State and Federal adult education movement. Particularly important forces which influenced American adult education are the notion of self-improvement, liberal and progressive education. The notion of self-improvement is connected with Benjamin Franklin – inventor, statesman, signer of the Declaration of Independence, founder of the Janto, a voluntary association for self-improvement. Liberal adult education for middle class seeking for mental refinement, as well as programs for the retired, are also concerned with quality of life issues. The core of progressive education movement is that governments exist to help people with resolving social and economic problems, thus society can improve and renew itself through education. The most visible manifestation of this connection was “Wisconsin Idea” combining research, teaching and real world problem solving, ground for which was established by the Morrill Act (Edelson, 2000).

The Morrill Act is often referred to as Bill of Educational Rights which granted public lands to colleges offering agriculture and mechanical arts. The Morrill, or Land Grant College Act of 1862, embraced the principle of colleges as “popular” institutions. Their failure to attract sufficient numbers of undergraduate students caused them to turn to the adult market. This continues to be true for the vast majority of traditionally focused colleges serving adults (Pulliam, 1994).

Among the earlier efforts of the Congress to aid education were acts designed to fill the need for industrial and vocational education. Farmers Institutes started in 1854 and led to an interest in agricultural education on the high school and college levels. The Hatch Act of 1887 provided federal funds for agricultural experiments, and the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 created agricultural extension programs for farmers. The vocational school movement received its greatest boost when the federal Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 was passed. This law provided federal aid for the states by paying vocational teachers’ salaries in the high schools and aiding teacher training institutions. New interest in psychology led to the beginning of professional guidance which developed into counselling services (Pulliam, 1994). The Congress promoted vocational education also through the George-Reed Act (1929), and the George-Dean Act (1937). During the First World War, the government found it necessary to train many technicians, but industrial inactivity during the depression resulted in a great shortage of trained technicians and engineers. The National Defense Training Program of 1940 provided courses for more than seven million workers during World War II. Vocational training also benefited from the National

Defense Educational Act of 1958; the Vocational Educational Act extended previous legislation to cover any skilled, technical, or semiskilled occupation.

Attempts to improve the national welfare and increase equality of opportunity were made through the New Deal legislation passed during the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt. It made possible subsidizing teachers' salaries for programs in the training of adults and providing loans for building schools and libraries. This trend has been continued in legislation such as the Economic Opportunity Act (EOA) of 1964 Title II of which authorized aid to adult education (Pulliam, 1994). With the passage of EOA the first Adult Basic Education program was created as a state grant. The 1964 Federal legislation established a state and Federal partnership to focus on the most basic educational skills for adults who had not completed secondary education allowing them to enroll in what is known as ABE (Adult Basic Education) (Tate, 2011).

Another important measure was taken in an effort to meet the needs of veterans. The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (G.I. Bill) provided subsistence and school cost allowances for those veterans who wanted to continue their education, and it resulted in the expansion of colleges to accommodate them (Pulliam, 1994). According to Drucker (1994), the G.I. Bill "signalled the shift to the knowledge society... the most important event of the twentieth century" (Drucker, 1994). In Edelson's view, the G.I. Bill had more to do with fears that the returning American servicemen would cause a large scale domestic instability. At the same time there was resistance to a governmental presence in American education which led to the belief that government control should be avoided. For this reason, in the case of the G.I. Bill the aid was directed to veterans. Thus, the adult education community came to see the success of the G.I. Bill as a vindication of adults as learners (Edelson, 2000). Veterans flocked to colleges in large numbers after the war. Consequently, by 1947, nearly half of the people attending college were veterans (Appleby, 2008). The importance of the G.I. Bill is proved by the fact, that it was revived for veterans of the Korean War and the benefits were increased for Vietnam veterans in 1972.

A new period of federal activity in education started with the cold war and the Soviet success in launching Sputnik satellite (Pulliam, 1994). Many Americans felt that the nation had fallen behind and explained that by a lack of technical education. In the wave of the Sputnik launches, efforts began to improve math and science education (Appleby, 2008). Emphasis shifted from life adjustment to excellence which led to the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958. This Act was designed giving aid to education as a means of strengthening the nation (Pulliam, 1994).

Another development in American education began when in January 1964 President Lyndon Johnson announced his War on Poverty. He envisioned a society without poverty or discrimination in which all Americans enjoyed equal job and educational opportunities. Consequently, reforms were enacted including the Higher Educational Act of 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), and the Educational Opportunity Act of 1968. The passage of these acts represented an unprecedented commitment on the part of the federal government to ensure that all Americans had an equal opportunity to quality public education (Present, 2010). Since 1965, the Higher Education Act, which includes the Education Professions Development Act of 1967, has provided large sums of money

for the acquisition of library materials in colleges, for improving and extending teacher education programs, for strengthening programs related to community problems (Pulliam, 1994). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act targeted aid to students and also funded related activities such as adult education and education counselling.

One notable measure changed the composition of the American population: the Immigration Act of 1965. This Act eliminated the national origins system established in the 1920s and opened the door to newcomers from all parts of Europe, Asia and Africa. In addition to those arriving through traditional immigration channels, some newcomers arrived in the United States as refugees (Appleby, 2008). As a result of increased awareness and valuing of the rights of racial and ethnic minorities to have an adequate education, the 1964 Civil Rights Act (Title VI) was passed. The Bilingual and Education Act (BEA) of 1968 was the beginning of grant funding that was designated to help the poor and those with limited English proficiency (Present, 2010).

Obvious physical and mental disabilities were understood and dealt with in education before. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 boosted building new facilities for the disabled. Moreover, the Americans with Disabilities Act (IDEA) of 1990 mandated full availability to special telecommunications systems. The Older Workers Protection Act of 1990 barred age discrimination in employee benefits coverage as well as employment. The Civil Rights Act of 1991 provides regulations for compelling companies to accommodate the disabled. It also includes a section dealing with Civil Rights and Women's Equity in Employment and The Glass Ceiling Act or Women's Equal Opportunity Act, which encourage businesses to create opportunities for women and minorities (Pulliam, 1994).

In 1983 the National Commission on Excellence in Education released the report "A Nation at Risk". The report created a movement to improve education throughout the United States with many states passing laws in order to prepare students for the competitive global economy (Present, 2010). The Educate America Act of 1994 (The Goals 2000) approved a framework to establish national accreditation standards and assessments, and to provide the support to meet these standards. The Act codified in law the key education goals, one of them targeted adults – every American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. President Clinton acknowledged the plight that illiterate adults experienced when they could not assist their children nor advance themselves in the workplace. Consequently, the Educate America Act addressed universal adult literacy by encouraging businesses, schools and libraries to support quality literacy programs through trainings and lifelong learning opportunities (Present, 2010).

The mid-1990s are characterised by a policy approach called the New Federalism which includes passing policy responsibilities from the federal government to state and local governments. The assumption is that state and local governments can be more responsive and effective at meeting the needs of their constituencies than the federal government. Several federal legislative acts that embody New Federalism established new requirements for welfare receipt, placed restrictions on recipients' educational participation affecting the funding,

coordination, and evaluation of federally funded adult literacy programs. In particular, the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 includes Title II the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act as a basis for federal funding and oversight of adult literacy programs. A significant element of Title II is the specification of three core performance indicators used to evaluate state and local programs: demonstrated improvements in literacy skill levels; placement in, retention in, or completion of postsecondary education, training, career advancement; receipt of a secondary school diploma or its equivalent. The overall Workforce Investment Act promotes the collaboration of literacy providers with other educational agencies and employment services through the creation of one-stop delivery systems that give participants access to a wide range of programs (Hayes, 1999). The services are accessed through a nationwide network of one-stop centers administered by state and local Workforce Investment Boards. This Act provides funding to the states for adult literacy programs such as the basic adult education programs of local educational agencies, community-based organizations, volunteer literacy organizations, higher education institutions, libraries, public housing authorities, and correctional institutions (Tate, 2011).

An era of accountability that was designed to improve student achievement was ushered by amending ESEA and reauthorizing it as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2002. The focal point of the law was to close student achievement gaps by providing a fair, equal and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education. NCLB requires each state to establish state academic standards and a state testing system that meet federal requirements (Jones-Clinton, 2011). On the one hand, the NCLB act violates conservative principles by federalizing education and setting a precedent for further erosion of state and local control. On the other hand, with the passing of the NCLB the overall awareness of education and outcomes has increased dramatically. Closing the achievement gap is essential to the USA economy, social stability, and the overall moral health of the nation (Present, 2010).

Conclusion

This investigation of the US legislative history allows allocating the factors that influenced American adult education. From the early beliefs that education is the great equalizer of people, the notion of self-improvement, liberal and progressive education, the need for industrial and vocational education, popularization of colleges, the New Deal legislation and the G.I. Bill, Sputnik era and War on Poverty, to establishing national standards, the New Federalism policy and an era of accountability the federal government built up a society without discrimination in which all Americans could have equal job and educational opportunities.

One of the major issues in the USA determined by its historical roots and cultural values concerns the location of authority and the source of financial support in education. The role of the central government becomes larger when it provides federal aid. However, the dominant pattern is decentralization when state and local governments can be more effective than the federal government. On the whole, federal efforts sometimes were disjointed; sometimes they overlapped with other programs focused on adult education. The USA continues its focus on education

reforms because education is the major force which will help the United States to retain the position as a world leader.

Subsequent research work may include the comparative analysis of legislative history of adult education in the USA and other countries and its impact on establishing, encouraging, and expanding effective programs for adults.

References

- Adult Education and Family Literacy Act of 1998*. <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/adulted/leg/legis.html>. Accessed 07 February 2014.
- Appleby, J., Brinkley, A., Broussard, A., McPherson, J., Richie, D. (Eds.) (2008): *The American Vision*. Columbus: McGraw-Hill.
- Barnes, G. (1984): *The American University: A World Guide*. The USA: ISI Press.
- Cross, K. P. (1982): *Adults as learners*. San-Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2006): *Powerful teacher education: lessons from exemplary programs*. San-Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Drucker, P. (1994): *Post - Capitalist Society*. New York: Harper-Business.
- Edelson, P. (2000): *Adult education in the USA. Issues and trends*. www.stonybrook.edu/spd/dean_papers/edelson_monograph.pdf. Accessed January 2014.
- Hayes, E. (1999): Policy Issues That Drive the Transformation of Adult Literacy. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 83, 3-7.
- Jones-Clinton, T. J. (2011): *Principals as facilitators of professional development with teachers as adult learners*. University of Missouri: St. Louis.
- Kandel, I. L. (1930): *History of Secondary Education*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Pulliam, J. (1994): *History of education in America*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Present, W. (2010): *Education Reform in the United States and the Impact of the No Child Left Behind Act*. State University of New York: ProQuest.
- Tate, P., Klein-Collins, R., Steinberg, K. (2011): Lifelong learning in the USA: A focus on innovation and efficiency for the 21st century learner. *International Journal of Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning*, 4 (1), 5.
- Williams, A. (2006): *No Child Left Behind Policy: is reform still necessary?* Carlisle Barracks: U.S. Army War College.

Oksana Chugai
 PhD student
 Department of Comparative Vocational Training
 Institute for Education Studies & Adult Education
 National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine
 Kiev, Ukraine
 ochugai@meta.ua