

CONCEPTS AND SCOPE OF UNIVERSITY ADULT EDUCATION

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“He who graduated yesterday and stops learning today is uneducated tomorrow”

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Why Adult Education?

The yearning to increase knowledge reaches back to the fount of man's early civilized existence; to the individual who first intelligently pondered the question, “I, why?”. For centuries great teachers have demonstrated and advocated life lived to its full potentiality. In a more recent day, Immanuel Kant held that man of reason has need to ask and answer three questions throughout life -- “What can I know? What ought I to do? What may I hope?” Kant's questions suggest the rationale supporting life-long education.

In our generation, where science and the humanities appear often to be at odds, men of thought have sought to enlighten society on the kind and forms of education that would prepare adults to live in a world of growing complexity.

The need for adult education has special significance for the new and developing societies. The basic wants of man are the same everywhere but the situation requires new approaches. As Lawrence Durrell observes, “We live lives based upon selected fictions. Our view of reality is conditioned by our position in time and space -- not by our personality as we like to think. Thus, every interpretation of reality is

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based upon a unique position, Two paces east or west and the whole picture is changed."

Hence, the strategy in national planning involves the total developmental process. One cannot merely give progress a good shove in a single direction and expect "that the whole historical ball of twine will unravel itself". We have to face the situation in macrocosm; this involves industrialization, social strata, values, politics, economics, ideology -- the entire gamut of human thought and activities.

This challenge provokes the familiar debate as to the order in which capital investment is to be made. Is it in industrialization or in education? Obviously, both needs have to be met. But it is interesting to reflect that the investment in overall education, which includes the training of manpower, may actually reap higher dividends in the long run than any other capital outlay. (*)

Today the education of the young is a universal concern in all development plans. What importance, however, do nations attach to educating grown-ups? One convincing conclusion was reached by delegates from a host of countries who met in 1960 in Montreal under UNESCO auspices. They approved the following declaration: "We believe that Adult Education has become of such importance for man's survival and happiness that a new attitude towards it is needed. Nothing less will suffice than that people everywhere should come to accept Adult Education as a normal part, and that governments should treat it as a necessary part of the educational provision of every country."

Concepts of General Adult Education

It is understandable that there will be great variety in national concepts of adult education. Let us look at a few random examples. Lyman Bryson, an American, holds that adult education entails "all activities with an educational purpose that are carried on by people engaged in the ordinary business of life". Denmark's Bishop Grundtvig, founder of the folk high-schools in Scandinavia, warns that "without gentle and salutary enlightenment, the people will rise like wild

(*) In his study, "The Sources of Economic Growth in the United States," Edward F. Denison calculated that the rising education level of the labor force (including managerial and technical personnel) was responsible for 23 per cent. of the growth in real national income between 1929 and 1957. In contrast, the increase in physical capital accounted for only 15 per cent, while the general "advance of knowledge" was seen as contributing 20 per cent.

beasts and rend asunder all that is human". A Japanese comments that "the objective of workers' education is to train them as sound national and good citizens, as well as excellent industrial men". An Englishman, Josiah Stamp, believes that "the purpose of adult education is to help people earn a living, to live a life and to mould a world -- and in that order of importance". A Turkish educator, Dr. Turhan Oğuzkan, looks at the broad spectrum and appropriately concludes: "It is difficult to generalize in fields such as adult education, which have numerous objectives, functions, programs, and methods. Adult education includes a whole range of activities, from providing opportunities to those who have not had a chance for formal education, to supplying the latest information and knowledge to those who have had university education; from simple reading and writing or simple physical dexterities to advanced theoretical applications." (*)

Dr. A. A. Liveright suggested that universities, as regards their activities in adult education, might be compared with reference to four continua:

1) The university conceives of itself as an instrument of social change, or as a repository of knowledge and as a stabilizing force.

2) The university feels responsibility for the education of the masses, either directly or indirectly, or is concerned primarily with the education of the elite.

3) The university feels that the entire state or nation is its appropriate campus and area of operation, or that its appropriate limits are its own campus and that students must come to the university rather than vice versa.

4) The university believes that teaching and service are just as important as research, or it believes its primary responsibility is for conducting research. (**)

In many Western and some other universities, the choice between the foregoing has swung strongly to the first set of alternatives. Universities there have long engaged in adult education, both on campus and through correspondence education, by utilizing the mass media, and in many other ways. The institution and the adult student

(*) The Place and the Function of Adult Education in Manpower Training and Economic Development", Turhan Oğuzkan, 1966.

(**) January, 1966 Journal of International Congress of University Adult Education, "The Role of the University in Adult Education", A.A. Liveright.

have come to realize that he who graduated yesterday and stops learning today is uneducated tomorrow.

The clientele of university adult education consists of three broad groups. The first are professional and quasiprofessional persons, including doctors, lawyers, engineers, architects, teachers, industrial personnel, to name but a few. One of the largest and rapidly increasing groups is the civil service -- directors of literacy programs and rural-urban affairs, vocational supervisors, librarians, agricultural specialists, social workers, family planning and other health personnel, tourist and information officers, community planners, etc. These individuals occupy key positions in society and for them the university can continue to be of continuing benefit.

Secondly, adults seeking degrees, who may be assisted through the campus Evening College or by correspondence courses.

The third and extensive clientele is the literate public, men and women who wish to further their general education for personal growth and in community affairs. It may be a course in learning a new language, or in gaining more understanding of their own cultural heritage. Some wish to improve techniques of organizational leadership, to know more about the changing family, or to consider morality in our nuclear age. In short, the university responds to a wide range of interests that its resources can satisfy.

Quality of the Program

As in its regular program, a university must be selective in its educational offerings to adults. Higher education is not all things to all men. University Extension is not to be confused with, say the promotion of national literacy campaigns,

One can only conclude that the philosophy of adult education is neither constant nor absolute. Its aim for the individual is to achieve excellence in as many areas of life as possible -- in other words, to live life at concert pitch. Applied to society as a whole, this means balanced progress in development. As a great Canadian educator, Dr. M. M. Coady, puts it, the five interests of man are physical, social, economic, cultural and spiritual. That society, he adds, will produce a great civilization which moves farthest on all fronts and observes symmetry in its advancement.

At its best adult or continuing education produces the *learning society*, a term increasingly used to describe the goal for a functionally

literate and democratically activated people; a society in which the signs are shared power and shared respect, and the conditions are economic balance and enlightenment.

In the learning society, the old order with its heritage of out-dated customs is challenged with change. The emerging society renewal --continual self-renewal. It provides a climate in which opportunity, enthusiasm and drive are not only welcomed but expected.

Serving the Larger Campus

Let us now consider one institution, the university, and its role in continuing education for adults. Universities the world over are showing increasing concern as to their involvement in the community. A perhaps over-simplified but still useful comparison was made at the First Conference on Comparative Adult Education held in the United States in June, 1966. social welfare services or the dissemination of information on a mass scale. Other agencies exist to perform these tasks. In surveying the broad need of adults, the university will choose its role with these guidelines in mind: (*)

1) University adult education is selective, concerning itself with the difficult and sophisticated aspects of education and training. It seeks to educate persons in the professions and in the top and upper personnel brackets in public and private employment.

2) It is experimental, having a special interest in pilot projects, and does not undertake programs better conducted by mass agencies.

3) University Extension understands the advantages of residing on the campus, hence affording an ideal climate for dispassionate discussion and learning.

4) The university fosters adult education as a special field of knowledge, a discipline with its body of philosophy, psychology, methodology. (**) It is oriented more to application, and its research has close ties with the social sciences.

(*) see C. O. Houle's paper in "Universities in Adult Education", UNESCO, 1952.

(**) Recommended readings in adult education, as an interdisciplinary field of university study, are the following:

Brunner, Edmund des. et al, *An Overview of Adult Education Research*. Adult Education Association of the U.S.A., 1959.

Jensen G., Liveright, A.A., Hallenbeck, Wilbur, *Adult Education: Outlines of an Emerging Field of University Study*. Adult Education Association of the U.S.A., 1964.

Kidd, J. R., *How Adults Learn*. Association Press, New York, 1959.

Verner, Coolie and Alan Booth, *Adult Education*. Center for Applied Research in Education, Inc., Washington, 1964.

As past experience has shown, continuing higher education is entirely dependent on the cooperation of university faculties and its administration. It is they who mainly staff adult classes and provide the facilities. It is they who make possible and, through their policy-making groups, influence the directions that adult education at their university will pursue.