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Training and accreditation of trainers in Greece

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Introduction

Nowadays, the radical development in the field of adult education is a global phenomenon and the adult educator is an important factor in the lifelong learning process. To even respond to its complex task, it is essential a certified trainer to have understood the philosophy of adult education and be aware of its role in society, making himself a model of continuous learning. Through the training and certification of the adult educator both is ensured the technical and pedagogical competency to offer expert and scientifically-based educational services, and the recognition of its expertise is implemented.

The necessity for training of trainers emerges through the texts of the European Union. In March 2001, the European Council upheld three important strategic objectives and thirteen targets, so that educational and training systems of member states of the EU combine quality, access and openness to the world*. The first strategic objective is to improve the quality and efficiency of education and training in the EU, while the first target, which is part of the above objective is to improve education and training for teachers and trainers (Ευρωπαϊκή Επιτροπή, 2003). Specifically, it is imperative to improve the ways in which teachers and trainers are prepared and supported for their role, so that their skills respond both to changes in society and the expectations of various educational groups (Ευρωπαϊκό Συμβούλιο, 2002) (European Commission – Directorate General for Education and Culture, 2002) (Ευρωπαϊκή Επιτροπή, 2001).

The subject of this presentation is the training of trainers' programs that were implemented by institutions of lifelong education and training, the postgraduate programs of adult education and the registers of adult educators existing in Greece.

Training of trainers educational programs

The programs are examined in terms of six sectors: the identity of the program, the themes, the teaching methodology, the learners, the trainers and the evaluation of the trainees.

The program “Training Trainers of Continuing Vocational Training” by National Accreditation Centre for Continuing Vocational Training (EKEPIS)

In 2006-2007, the National Accreditation Centre for Continuing Vocational Training implemented the program “Training Trainers of Continuing Vocational Training”, while in 2003 had been completed the initial phase of the National Program of Training Adult Trainers (Κάραλης, 2005: 9-14).

The main goal of this program was the development of a group of educators of continuing vocational training, who would combine professional knowledge, abilities and competencies and would be able to impart them, to communicate effectively with the trainees and to contribute to the planning and the implementation of the educational objectives.

* In 2002, the European Council approved a detailed work plan to achieve these objectives, which became known under the title “Education and Training 2010”.

The training trainers program was divided into two categories: 1) for the trainers of theoretical training, graduates of higher education, and 2) for the non-graduate trainers of practical training.

The themes of the program were: socio-economical and political dimensions of adult education, European policy and institutional framework, theories of adult learning, features of adult learners and preconditions of effective learning, educational techniques, educational means and space, planning of teaching sections, connection of training with the labour market and the local community, communication and dynamic of the group in adult education, educational evaluation, and the role of the contemporary adult trainer.

The program, which lasted 300 hours, was carried out in Centres of Vocational Training (KEK) with a mixed method of teaching, that included 69 hours of face to face teaching that promoted the active and experiential learning and 231 hours of individual distance study by the trainees (www.ekepis.gr . Accessed in 26/09/08).

Finally, the evaluation of the learners took place both during and at the end of the program, and 9825 persons were certified as adult trainers of theoretical training and 287 as adult trainers of practical training (Κόκκος, 2008: 207).

The program “Training Adult Trainers” by University of Macedonia

The self-financing program “Training Adult Trainers” by University of Macedonia was carried out for the first time in the academic year 2006-2007 and thereafter continues every year to upgrade the qualifications of the people who intend to deal with the adult education and training.

The program includes the following themes: basic principles of adult education, psychological preconditions of adult learning, methodological approaches of adult education and training, programs of adult education, target-groups of adult education programs and activities, the adult trainer, and program evaluation.

The educators of the program were professors and managers with long experience and relative specialized and theoretical knowledge.

The duration of the program was 124 hours, the number of the participants is open, while at the three first years of the program implementation were trained 65 persons. The program was conducted in the University of Macedonia, while the form of teaching was lectures using modern teaching aids and alternative educational techniques and methods.

The evaluation of the trainees was carried out at the end of the program and those who succeeded received certificate of specialization (www.uom.gr . Accessed in 26/09/08).

The program “Educating Adult Educators” by the Institute of Continuing Adult Education (IDEKE)

The Institute of Continuing Adult Education implemented in 2007-2008 the program “Educating Adult Educators”, which basic goal was to update knowledge of its employees – both executives and trainers – of its structures on methodology in adult education. Specific objectives were the training of educators of different disciplines on detecting adult training needs, planning lessons, producing standard training materials, evaluating educational programs and trainees, understanding the process and the development of the educational group (www.ideke.edu.gr . Accessed in 26/09/08).

The program included four modules, each lasting 25 hours: introduction to adult education, group process, training and support of vulnerable groups, planning modules and evaluation in adult education.

The program lasted 100 hours, of which 24 hours were in person, while the remaining 76 hours were carried out in the form of distance education. The total number of trainees was 1377 executives and 846 trainers, and there were 70 seminars for 30 people across the country. The educators of the program were university graduates, with postgraduate studies, and relevant work or teaching experience in adult education.

Finally, the evaluation of the trainees was carried out according to their performances in the modules and was awarded certificate of lifelong learning.

The program “Training of Trainers in E-Learning” by National Centre for Public Administration and Local Government (E.K.D.D.A.)

The Training Institute of the National Centre for Public Administration and Local Government carried out the program “Training of Trainers in E-Learning”, aiming to train a sufficient number of trainers for the implementation of distance education activities in public institutions. The trainees were employees of the public sector, members of the registry of trainers of E.K.D.D.A. (www.ekdd.gr . Accessed in 26/09/08).

The themes of the program were: teleconference, asynchronous and synchronous e-learning programs, blended learning, combination of technologies and teaching practices, management of personal profiles and curricula, creation of teaching material, communication and cooperation via computer and text, management of e-learning programs, and practice in the management of classes through specific e-learning tools.

The program was 70 hours, and in 2008, 240 people were trained.

Post-graduate Programs of Adult Education

The five post-graduate programs of Adult Education offered in the Greek Universities are presented in chronological order, according to the year they started.

The Post-graduate Program “Applications in School Pedagogic and Lifelong Education” by the Department of Philosophy and Pedagogy of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (1993-1994)

This post-graduate program aims at the education of scientists for research and teaching activities in the field of education and for adult training activities. The program lasts for four academic semesters (www.auth.gr . Accessed in 26/09/08).

Despite the single qualification, the program differentiates and so the students choose in the second semester a main and two secondary sectors, among the 19 ones offered. Two of them, “education and training of trainers” and “continuing education” come under the field of adult education.

The Post-graduate Program “Educational Policy and Social Exclusion: Educating executives and adult educators” by the Pedagogic Department of Primary Education of the University of Patras (1993-1994)

The subject of this post-graduate program is the specialization of graduates and the research on Educational science. Among the objectives of the program is the training of adults in education and training of special social and cultural groups (www.upatras.gr . Accessed in 26/09/08).

The duration of attendance is four academic semesters, during which the participants have to choose amongst seven specializations, one of which, called “educational policy and social exclusion”, includes in its sub-specializations “training executives and adult educators”.

The Post-graduate Program “Applied Pedagogic: Adult Education – Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning” by the Pedagogic Department of Primary Education of the University of Athens (1994-1995)

Main goal of this post-graduate program is the education of graduates in six cognitive and research fields, so that is ensured both the specialization and contribution to the cultivation and growth of primary scientific research and the formulation and promotion of scientific thinking (www.uoa.gr . Accessed in 26/09/08).

The program is formed since 2001 in five sectors and eight majors. A sector, “science education” includes a major “applied pedagogic”, in which there is the scientific subject of “adult education – continuing education and lifelong learning”.

The Post-graduate Program “Adult Education” by the Hellenic Open University (2003-2004)

Main goal of the program is to provide specialized knowledge and skills so that graduates are able to plan, organize, and evaluate adult education programs and have a teaching role, using contemporary educational methods. The program’s duration is 2 years and consists of 4 modules: methodology of adult education, open and distance education, planning, management and evaluation of adult education programs and educational research in practice (www.eap.gr . Accessed in 26/09/08).

The Post-graduate Program “Continuing Education” by the Department of Educational and Social Policy of the University of Macedonia (2005-2006)

This post-graduate program’s goals is the graduates’ specialization in order to contribute to the promotion of the field of adult education, and the creation of executives able to promote the development of research and applications of lifelong education, by developing educational programs, managing institutes of vocational education and training, teaching on the and the exercise of adult vocational counselling. The program’s duration is four academic semesters (www.uom.gr . Accessed in 26/09/08).

The Registries of Adult Trainers

In this part are presented the three registries of adult trainers that exist in Greece.

The Registries of Trainers of Continuing Vocational Training of EKEPIS

The National Accreditation Centre for Continuing Vocational Training, recognising the importance of ensuring quality of training, attempts to set the criteria and pre-conditions for the establishment of a registry of trainers.

The attendance and the successful completion of the training trainers of continuing vocational training by EKEPIS is a pre-condition for the accreditation of trainers of continuing vocational training. As a result of the accreditation process is the register of certified adult trainers by EKEPIS, which consists of six sub-registers of 7663 certified trainers (www.ekepis.gr . Accessed in 26/09/08).

The accreditation and the entrance in the register of EKEPIS does not imply the endlessly participation of the trainer in the register, since the trainers are required to be evaluated and re-accredited every five years.

The Register of Main Teaching Staff of EKDDA

In order to meet the educational needs of its educational units and to ensure the quality and the effectiveness of the provided training, the National Centre for Public Administration and Local Government has established a register.

The applications for the register are evaluated by the scientific committee of EKDDA, which recommends the inclusion or not in the register, without bounding for compulsory use as trainers of those who join the register. The number of trainers of this register is 4.992 (www.ekdd.gr . Accessed in 26/09/08).

The Register of Trainers of the Employment Agency (OAED)

Among the activities of OAED are the implementation of programs for the vocational training of employed, through the Account for Employment and Vocational Training, in which private companies and public institutions can participate in order to train their personnel. For the implementation of these programs, the Agency has created this register of trainers, and those who wish to teach in them need to be members of the register (www.oaed.gr . Accessed in 26/09/08).

Epilogue

In Greece, since 2000, there has been observed intense mobilization at the implementation of training adult trainers programs, as the Ministry of Labor, through the National Accreditation Centre for Continuing Vocational Training, the Ministry of Education, through the Institute of Continuing Adult Education, the Ministry of Interior, through the National Centre for Public Administration and Local Government, and the University of Macedonia change radically the data on the offer of programs of training adult trainers.

The National Accreditation Centre for Continuing Vocational Training implemented 528 seminars nationwide to train 10.112 trainers, the Institute of Continuing Adult Education 70 seminars nationwide to train 2.223 executives and trainers, the National Centre for Public Administration and Local Government 12 seminars nationwide to train 240 trainers, and the University of Macedonia 3 seminars to train 65 trainers. These programs extend from 70 to 300 hours of training, of which some are implemented with modern techniques of instruction in person and others in the form of distance education.

Regarding these programs one can note the following: in terms of content, all seem to cover the main aspects of the field of adult education, supplying in this manner the participants with updated knowledge and necessary skills and abilities. The three of the programs are funded by the Third Community Support Framework and only the program of University of Macedonia is self-financing. Three of them, the one by National Accreditation Centre for Continuing Vocational Training, by the Institute of Continuing Adult Education and by the National Centre for Public Administration and Local Government are implemented for the employees of the above institutions respectively, whilst the program at the University of Macedonia is open to anyone interested and is repeated annually. Moreover, the educators who teach in these programs have increased academic qualifications, with those of the University of Macedonia preceding considerably over the others.

Furthermore, during the last two decades there has been noticed an increase in the offer of post-graduate programs in adult education. Thus, since the academic year 1993-1994, the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, the University of Patras, the University of Athens, the Hellenic Open University and the University of Macedonia contribute significantly to the training of adult trainers.

These post-graduate programs function in the same way, following the guidelines of the legislative framework, have a duration of four semesters, and the post-graduate students are obliged both to attend classes and to elaborate a major thesis. However, the percentage of the courses that have direct link with the scientific field of adult education ranges from a minimum of three, as the case of the program by University of Patras, up to nine, as the case of the post-graduate program of the University of Macedonia. Therefore, there is a certain differentiation of the level of specialization in adult education in each of the five program.

Regarding to the registries of adult trainers that exist in Greece, the registry of trainers of continuing vocational training by EKEPIS, which has 7.663 accredited trainers, and the registry of main teaching staff by EKDDA which numbers almost 5.000 persons, have significant position among them.

Attempting to configure an overview of the actions for the training of adult trainers in Greece and focusing on institutions of lifelong education and training, one can note the necessity of a more concerted effort by all the institutions, so that a single program of training adult trainers is designed, which will be implemented both by Universities, with proven experience in the field, and other organizations of the public sector.

Finally, it is necessary a single system of accreditation of adult trainers to be established, which will lead to a single registry, with an ultimate goal to establish a National System of Education and Accreditation of Adult Trainers. An effort has already been launched by the Ministry of Education and the General Secretariat of Lifelong Learning to create a Single Registry of Adult Educators.

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