

ADULT EDUCATION IN CYPRUS

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Trends In Cyprus Education

It is generally recognized that Cyprus education is highly developed. Persianis identified the following favourable factors in its development:

The small population as well as the lack of natural resources has contributed to the collective expectation of education, as people have consciously striven to substitute human resources and intellectual and technical achievements. The future of this country is, according to social and political norms, considered to be in the hands of the people, especially its youth. Therefore the support of education is needed to assist these expectations.

The highest authority in educational policy-making is the Council of Ministers. The Ministry of Education is responsible for the administration of education, the enforcement of educational laws, and the preparation of Bills.

The Ministry of Education identifies the general aims of education as:

The development of free and democratic citizenship with a fully developed personality who will contribute to social, scientific, economic and cultural progress and to the promotion of co-operation and mutual understanding among people for the prevalence of freedom, justice and peace.

Currently the following priorities in education are:

- to increase the proportion of vocational and technical education students to 25%;
- to improve the quality of secondary education;
- to link more closely with the world of work and society in general;
- to develop qualitatively the educational system in such a way as to catch up with the fast changing patterns of social, cultural, scientific and technological aspects of contemporary society;
- to develop quantitatively education in those areas that need further expansion, such as pre-school, university and lifelong education;
- to change the structure and administration of the educational system so as to secure coherence and internal collaboration;
- to respond to the changing needs of the educational system in terms of buildings and equipment;

- to develop programmes that help Cyprus orient itself within Europe, and to improve its technological status.

During recent years there has been a special effort to improve the quality of education by increasing the number of in-service training courses offered to teachers, to modernise the curriculum, and to develop computer science. Government expenditure on both public and private education has risen significantly since independence in 1960, and stood at 14.8% of the country's budget and 5.3% of Gross National Product. The pedagogical Institute and the various Departmental Committees carry out educational research. However, it is limited due to the restricted resources of the Island and the lack of tradition in this field.

Adult Education in Cyprus

The political instability of the last quarter of a century has contributed to the lack of a comprehensive and coherent policy and to the absence of a structure which would allow existing provision to be looked at as a whole and co-ordinated appropriately.

Nevertheless, Adult Education has the possible prerequisites for further development. Adults show great interest in learning and, on the other hand, the government and all those involved in the education of adults are willing to fulfil those needs. Programmes currently provided for adults have the following characteristics.

- There are a great number of providers in both the statutory, private and voluntary sectors. Their programmes run independently of one another because there is no co-ordinating mechanism for bringing together the various providers. This results in fragmentation and incoherence.
- Almost all programmes follow the formal school model in content and methods. They suffer from curricular limitations.
- Most of the institutions are in the cities and the rural population has little access to learning opportunities.
- Unsurprisingly, people attending the programmes are often the most active members of their age group, with a sound initial education.
- Vocational adult education has been expanded rapidly (as a consequence of Law 21/74) in contrast to general adult education that does not have similar legislation.
- Voluntary bodies involved in adult education provision are given very little technical and financial assistance, and their success is limited despite their potential.
- At present, very few of those working at administrative and organisational levels, who also act as tutors, are qualified adult educators.
- The new University of Cyprus has not yet developed research or programmes for adults

Current Provision of Adult Education

The following section contains a brief overview of the current provision, starting with the third level.

Third Level Education

About 60% of the total secondary school leavers continue their studies beyond the secondary level. Of these, about a half attend higher education institutions in Cyprus and the other half abroad. The University of Cyprus, and other public and private institutions provide higher education.

The University of Cyprus

The University has reached its full operational level with 6000 students. Up to 20% of its student intake might be from abroad. The establishment of the University of Applied Sciences, and the Open University will develop adult education.

Other Public Institutions

There are also five public third level institutions, all offering courses at the sub-degree level in various fields of study: Cyprus Forestry College; Higher Technical Institute; Hotel and Catering Institute; Mediterranean Institute of Management; School of Nursing.

Private Institutions

Twenty-one third level institutions have registered with the Ministry of Education to offer 1-4 year courses leading to the awards ranging from Certificate to Post-Graduate qualifications. Among the subjects offered are: secretarial studies; business administration; electrical, civil and mechanical engineering; hotel and catering; banking; accountancy; computer studies.

Government Programmes

The Ministry of Education runs a variety of programmes both non-vocational and vocational.

Non-Vocational

Adult Education Centres

This programme is run throughout the country in more than 300 adult education centres.

There is one inspector for all the centres, assisted by a number of district co-ordinators. In 1992, the Government decided to strengthen the system at local level by appointing part-time local and regional organisers whose primary task is to observe and facilitate the day-to-day functioning of the centres. These co-ordinators are primary school teachers serving on secondment.

There are more than 600 part-time tutors, some of whom are qualified primary education teachers and the remainder subject-oriented. The programme is almost self-supporting, with the fees covering the tutors' remuneration.

In 2005-2006 enrolments reached 18,000 in sixty different subject areas. Women make up almost 75% of the participants, and persons over sixty-five years of age are few in number.

The number of participants and the number of centres is, however, steadily increasing which is quite encouraging since there is a new policy concerned with the organisation of the system and the enrichment in programmes. But there are still limitations of the organisation, administration, teaching and curriculum, which inhibit maximum growth. In addition, partnerships between the centres and other agencies providing adult education are limited.

Vocational Programmes

The Apprenticeship Training Scheme is for young people aged 14-18 working in industry and attending technical schools for 12-14 hours weekly. Evening technical classes seek to provide local industry and commerce with more capable technicians and craftsmen.

Four evening gymnasiums provide 'second chance' opportunities for 'drop-out' adults to complete their secondary education and acquire a leaving certificate.

The Pedagogical Institute is the main institution for educational research. It offers initial professional courses for teachers on contract and on probation, and is responsible for their in-service training.

The Ministry of Agriculture runs an Extension Service helping the rural population with agricultural techniques and home economics. Special broadcasting programmes for the rural population provide an important additional backing.

The Ministry of Health offers many opportunities to both rural and urban populations to become familiar with preventative measures to combat the various diseases they face. It works through a network of district and local health officers and health advisors.

Semi-Governmental Bodies

- The Human Resource Authority is a semi-governmental body working in close co-operation with the Ministry of Labour. Established by Law 21/74 in 1974, it is the major instrument for training and retraining employed and unemployed personnel in the country. The introduction of a system of financing its training programmes, based on a contribution of 0.5% of the total wage bill, contributes to the further development of the activities of the Authority.

- The Cyprus Productivity Centre is a Governmental International labour Organisation (ILO)/United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) joint project. It was established in 1963 to assist private and public enterprises in their maximisation of capital resources.
- The Youth Organisation of Cyprus runs the Youth Centres programme. Centres were established mainly in refugee (families which fled to southern Cyprus in 1974) communities to strengthen the family unit and to foster the well being of children and families. Another objective is to assist individuals, families and communities to achieve their potential.

Programmes provided by Voluntary Bodies

- The Greek Orthodox Church, with a strong tradition in adult education, is a very influential body. Youth leaders, as well as the preachers, offer non-formal adult education for all age groups, often using the study circle method.
- In cooperation with the parent committees that exist in every school, the Pan-Cyprus School for Parents, a non-governmental body, organises lectures and debates on issues concerning parenthood and social life.
- The Cyprus Adult Education Association (C.A.E.A) was established in 1982 and is now a full member of the International Council for Adult Education and the European Association for the Education of Adults. It is developing links with adult education associations in other European countries. It participate in European project.
- The two most important trade union organisations, the Pan-Cyprian Workers Federation (P.E.O) and the Confederation of Cyprus Workers (S.E.K) organise some programmes in the training of their officers, and also a few lectures and cultural activities for their members.

Constraints on the Development of Adult Education

As already mentioned, the following cultural and socio-economic constraints contribute to the delay in the establishment of the system of adult education.

Cultural factors

The people in Cyprus, as in many countries of the world, wish to retain the *status quo*. They have confidence in initial education and formal qualifications to gain the necessary white-collar employment as a means of social mobility. People do not regard adult education as a means of second chance retraining for those in manual work because they have a conservative orientation to the way society is structured.

Social and economic factors

The policy of the Government in investing its limited resources heavily in initial education in order to prepare the work force for the next generation results in the devaluation of the practice of adult education. To a certain extent this is natural, since technocrats invest in areas where they expect immediate returns.

Recent Developments, Trends and Significant Events

The main trends and recent significant events are

- the establishment of the Youth Agency which brought about a new impetus in organising educational programmes for the young people;
- the organisation of vocational programmes on subjects relating to areas showing increasing demand on working hands;
- the establishment of the University of Cyprus (1992) which promised increased educational and research opportunities on issues relating to Adult Education;
- the establishment of two National Committees (The Committee on the Third Age and the Committee on the Education for All) which gave the initiative of more intensive and organised efforts on Adult Education;
- the participation of Cyprus in several European adult education organisations which help in exchanging knowledge and experience;
- the effort to update and strengthen legislation on Adult Education and establish a mechanism for coordination of the several providers.

Demand for Adult Education has increased in several ways

- more specialised courses are requested;
- more geographic areas (especially rural) ask for adult education opportunities;
- more segments of the adult population (older adults, women) are looking for opportunities to study subjects relating to their area of interest.

The following trends seem likely to become more marked during the next decade

- more specialised courses and further diversification of the actual market of the adult education programmes;
- introduction of an effective mechanism to coordinate the several programmes;

- involvement of the University of Cyprus in an effort to upgrade the status of adult education, especially in the field of training and retraining adult educators.

The priorities of Cypriot adult education policy and orientation are:

- to organise the adult education provision in the general effort to work effectively in the EU . There is, therefore, a significant need to organise programmes in foreign languages and on computing and advanced technology;
- to offer remedial adult education for special groups of the population (minorities, foreign workers etc.)

The major changes that have been made to literacy programmes are:

- the employment of more effective marketing strategies to bring the illiterate to the classes;
- the introduction of a special project to help the functionally illiterate people;

Adult education has played a significant role in making the development process more equitable:

- by offering opportunities for adult education at low cost or even freely;
- by organising educational programmes for all the ages and social levels, including the more remote rural areas.

During the past decade the following legislative and/or administrative measures have been adopted in the field of adult education:

- the Council of Ministers have approved the rules regulating the functioning of the adult education centres;
- the administrative structure of the centres has been strengthened by appointing heads at the district offices as well as regional organisers at the local level;
- national committees on several issues, such as literacy, third age, health etc., have been established in order to help mobilise people and organisations to put the necessary measures into practice;
- a Youth Agency has been established which has already developed a substantial network of providers and programmes offering several educational opportunities to young people.

Prospects and Expectations for the 21st Century

In order to achieve improvement and development on Adult Education in our country, the following suggestions indicate some of the priorities:

- legislation for adult education;
- the establishment of a central authority for adult education to improve the administrative/organisational structures of the system;
- involvement of the University of Cyprus in adult education and the establishment of an adult education research centre;
- more funds should be allocated to adult education;
- continuing professional development for staff and volunteers responsible for the adult education centres' development;
- awareness of lifelong education;
- sharing experience from different countries on policy and technical matters through strengthening relationships between nations and governments;
- formal recognition of adult education as an inseparable part of the educational system;

Conclusion

Our country can undertake an important role in achieving the objectives and aims of adult education both regionally and internationally due to its location and to the advanced telecommunications provided.

Cyprus is located at the crossroads of Europe, Asia and Africa and it can provide opportunities for seminars and meetings for people from many countries from completely different cultures. Indeed, Cyprus could be the bridge between North and South, East and West in many ways.

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