

**FUNCTIONING AND DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN ADULT EDUCATION SYSTEMS: A COMPARATIVE ASPECT**

*FUNCIONAMENTO E DESENVOLVIMENTO DE SISTEMAS NACIONAIS E EUROPEUS DE EDUCAÇÃO DE ADULTOS: UM ASPECTO COMPARATIVO*

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### ABSTRACT

In the imminent future, an accelerated aging trend is anticipated in certain professions, concomitant with the swift emergence of novel occupational domains. Consequently, there will be a heightened demand for fresh knowledge across diverse age cohorts. Adult education emerges as a pivotal mechanism capable of adeptly addressing this exigency. This study examines the evolving adult education frameworks in both Ukraine and Europe, delineating primary commonalities and distinctive attributes. Additionally, an evaluation of the impact of the European adult education system on the maturation of the national counterpart is undertaken. The findings reveal that the adult education system in Ukraine is grounded in the guidance provided by European counterparts in its developmental trajectory, concurrently aspiring towards autonomous and congruent rejuvenation. The delineated legislative and regulatory framework governing the operation of adult education within our nation underscores the imperative for enhancements in this educational domain. The necessity for the advancement of lifelong learning in Ukraine is underscored through a thorough examination of a sociological survey. The outcomes of this analysis substantiate the exigency to elevate public awareness concerning the phenomenon of adult education and to foster an appreciation for the systematic nature of its operation. The potential for the development of adult education in Ukraine appears promising; however, due to objective constraints, this potential has yet to be fully realized.

**Keywords:** Adult education. Continuous education. Formal education. Informal education. Non-formal education.

### RESUMO

Num futuro iminente, prevê-se uma tendência de envelhecimento acelerado em certas profissões, concomitante com a rápida emergência de novos domínios profissionais. Conseqüentemente, haverá uma maior procura por novos conhecimentos em diversas faixas etárias. A educação de adultos surge como um mecanismo fundamental capaz de responder habilmente a esta exigência. Este estudo examina a evolução dos quadros de educação de adultos na Ucrânia e na Europa, delineando pontos comuns primários e atributos distintivos. Além disso, é realizada uma avaliação do impacto do sistema europeu de educação de adultos na maturação da contraparte nacional. As conclusões revelam que o sistema de educação de adultos na Ucrânia se baseia na orientação fornecida pelos homólogos europeus na sua trajetória de desenvolvimento, aspirando simultaneamente a um rejuvenescimento autônomo e congruente. O quadro legislativo e regulamentar delineado que rege o funcionamento da educação de adultos na nossa nação sublinha a necessidade imperativa de melhorias neste domínio educativo. A necessidade do avanço da aprendizagem ao longo da vida na Ucrânia é sublinhada através de um exame aprofundado de um inquérito sociológico. Os resultados desta análise substanciam a exigência de aumentar a consciência pública sobre o fenômeno da educação de adultos e de promover uma apreciação da natureza sistemática do seu funcionamento. O potencial para o desenvolvimento da educação de adultos na Ucrânia parece promissor; no entanto, devido a restrições objectivas, este potencial ainda não foi plenamente realizado.

**Palavras-chave:** Educação de adultos. Educação continuada. Educação formal. Educação informal. Educação não formal.

## Introduction

The distinctiveness of adult education within a comprehensive educational framework lies in its focus on the needs, motives, and values of adults. The global significance of adult education has gained acknowledgment from member states of the United Nations (UN), the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union (EU), and the Institute for Lifelong Learning of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The latter institution is actively engaged in overseeing the development of adult education worldwide, scrutinizing the accessibility of quality and continuous lifelong learning for various demographic categories, and investigating learning opportunities for all. Despite the widespread attention accorded to this matter, UNESCO's statistics (2019) indicate that merely 15.0% of countries exhibit an increase in adult education participation. This disparity is, in part, attributable to the inaccessibility of lifelong learning for vulnerable groups, immigrants, individuals with disabilities, the elderly, and residents of rural areas.

It is noteworthy that European nations have intricately formulated policies for the implementation of adult education, aligning them with specific economic, political, and social requirements of the state and its populace through legislative frameworks. Examples of such legislative provisions include the Act on Assistance in Adult Education in Denmark, the Decree on Government Subsidies for Adult Education in Sweden, and the Act on Non-formal Adult Education in Finland (Ukrainian Association of Adult Education, 2021).

In recent times, the educational landscape in Ukraine has witnessed substantial reforms attributable to alterations in the legislative and regulatory framework. Concurrently, the educational market has experienced heightened activity aligning with European standards. Amidst the legislative enactments such as "On Higher Education," "On General Secondary Education," "On Out-of-School Learning," and "On Professional Higher Education," the inclusion of adult education in Ukrainian legislation in 2017 has imbued it with renewed significance.

Considering that adult education constitutes an integral component of the educational system and plays a pivotal role in facilitating a systematic elevation of the population's educational attainment, it is imperative to underscore *the primary objective* of this study. The aim is to delineate the development of adult education in both Ukraine and European countries, undertaking a comparative analysis of these educational systems.

Research Objectives:

- To provide a comprehensive characterization of the development of adult education in both Ukraine and Europe.
- To execute a sociological survey encompassing diverse age categories of respondents, aimed at gauging awareness regarding the principal trends in adult education development and assessing the understanding of the significance of their implementation.
- To undertake a consolidated comparative analysis, elucidating the operational dynamics of the adult education system in Ukraine and European countries.
- To formulate actionable recommendations geared towards ensuring the quality development of the adult education system in Ukraine.

## Literature Review

Adult education constitutes a system that ensures the ongoing self-development, self-education, and self-improvement of individuals not only throughout their professional lives but also extending into the entirety of their lifespans. Continuous learning fosters a sense of fulfillment, and indispensability, opens new opportunities in the labor market, and augments individual potential. Consequently, adult education serves as a subject of inquiry across various scientific disciplines, including pedagogy, psychology, philosophy, and sociology. In the realm of German pedagogical scientific thought, the exploration of adult education extends beyond popularization and the innovation of practices; it encompasses a keen interest in the quality control of educational services tailored for the adult

population, as articulated by Brödel R. (2015). Presently, Germany stands as a vanguard in the effective functioning of the adult education system. The educational platform "Study in Germany" currently offers 36 programs for adult education across 31 universities in the country. These programs are designed to cater to international students as well as students of diverse ages and academic profiles. Social research conducted by Heimlich and Behr (2011) in Germany substantiates that the implementation of adult education is judicious and efficacious when executed on an individualized basis. This approach enhances access to lifelong learning for inclusive groups and older individuals. Additionally, as asserted by Trotsko A. and Bojars'ka-Homenko A. (2018), the engagement of a substantial number of educators, trainers, facilitators, and managers is integral to the process of adult education, with the involvement of more than 90 thousand individuals. It is noteworthy that Germany hosts approximately 1,000 educational centers, laboratories, institutes, and private institutions, collectively contributing to the seamless continuity of education for the population. Notably, these centers extend their operations to enterprises, factories, and institutions encompassing various production profiles, where they not only facilitate the professional development of employees but also attend to their cultural enrichment and recreational needs. This pattern is also characteristic of Ukraine. For instance, Ukrainian enterprises such as Volodarka, Eva Lab, and "LCF" Svitoch" LLC are exemplary in organizing specialized training and psychological counseling for their employees, as well as coordinating excursions and themed holidays, thereby aligning with the multifaceted approach observed in the German educational context.

Peter R., Riddel Sh., Markowitsch J., and Weedon E. (2012) underscore that decentralization stands out as a defining characteristic of adult education in Hungary. The continuous provision of adult education is facilitated by out-of-school education institutions, as well as other educational entities, specifically those with the capacity to offer licensed educational services. In Ukraine, however, there exist several unlicensed organizations that provide professional development opportunities, including for educators. This contrasts with the stipulation in the Law of Ukraine "On Education," which mandates that teachers, educators,

methodologists, heads of preschool and general secondary education institutions, and other educational professionals must enhance their professional competencies at local In-Service Training Institutes for Teachers or other licensed entities authorized to deliver such services.

Schreiber-Barsch S. (2015) highlights the significance of the GRETA (GRoupements d'ETAbissements) system in the professional development and vocational training of the adult population in France.

Daniele, L., Franzosi, C., and Nobili, D. (2017) center their attention on specialized territorial centers (Centri Territoriali Permanenti) and evening learning programs for adults implemented at Italian universities. These programs are offered through territorial, regional, and oblast centers of lifelong learning, systematically organized based on levels, methodologies, and designated working hours. Additionally, Kristopchuk T. (2021) highlights the initiation of the national project "EDUFINCPA" in Italy, designed to cultivate basic financial literacy skills among the adult population.

Examining the regulatory and legislative framework of the Bulgarian adult education system reveals notable similarities with the Ukrainian system. Indeed, both in Bulgaria and Ukraine, there exists a guarantee for all individuals to access general secondary and postgraduate education, with the latter in Bulgaria being classified as adult education.

Savenko O., Kajtanovs'ka O., and Shnyukova I. (2022) analyze the qualitative European practice in the development of adult education. They characterize the program dedicated to altering approaches to adult education known as the New Adult Learning Movement (NALM) - a Movement for the Renewal of Adult Education. This program is founded on the works of the Dutch educator and sociologist Conrad van Hoyten, emphasizing the stimulation of human will toward learning. The NALM program in Ukraine encompasses seminars, training sessions, and lectures, primarily targeting educators.

An examination of the Law of Ukraine "On Education" (2017) enables the identification of the following components within the educational structure:

- Preschool education and general secondary education
- Out-of-school learning
- Specialized education
- Professional (vocational) education
- Professional higher education
- Higher education
- Adult education, encompassing postgraduate education.

As evident, since 2017, the notion of "adult education" has been incorporated into Ukrainian legislation, albeit not in the form of a distinct law.

On October 27, 2016, the Board of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine endorsed the Conceptual Framework for reforming general secondary education, known as the New Ukrainian School (NUS), with the reform's implementation slated until 2029. We contend that the profound and foundational changes introduced in general secondary education in Ukraine through NUS will significantly contribute to the advancement and quality operation of adult education. The primary objective of the NUS Concept is to cultivate an innovative personality – a person capable of swift decision-making, adaptability to changes, resilience in critical situations, mobility, creativity, diplomacy, and a human-centered approach, coupled with emotional intelligence, critical thinking, and a disposition for acquiring soft skills. According to scholars, such a personality is poised to be competitive in the labor market. Consequently, adult education is oriented towards systematic learning, the pursuit of new knowledge, and the exploration of opportunities to ensure individuals remain professionally adept, empowering them to effect change in their surroundings, fortify the state's economy, and influence the development of culture, art, and other domains.

It is noteworthy to underscore the contributions of scholars such as Prokopiv L., Stins'ka V., Bilavich G., Saliga N., Dovbenko S., Bandura L., Paska T. (2022), whose studies on the national policy of development and implementation of adult education in Ukraine stand out as particularly comprehensive and pertinent in the current context. These researchers delve into a range of psychophysiological

features, innovative models, and technologies for organizing education tailored to diverse age and social groups.

Undoubtedly, contemporary educational reforms, the enactment of new laws, and enhancements to existing ones should ultimately manifest in the quality of the population's education, reflecting a commitment to knowledge acquisition and individual self-development. Nevertheless, we have encountered numerous new challenges arising from the outbreak of the acute respiratory infection COVID-19, subsequent pandemic and quarantine measures, and the subsequent imposition of martial law in Ukraine. Inevitably, under such circumstances, training and the transmission of knowledge and skills were compelled to swiftly transition to an online format, incorporating distance learning, video tutorials, virtual platforms, educational applications, and similar modalities. In pursuit of this objective, educators and researchers, notably Rusakova O., Tamozhska I., Tsoi T., Vyshotravka L., Shvay R., and Kapelista (2023), advocate for the development of tailored models of distance learning designed to adeptly navigate crises and problematic scenarios, thereby enhancing the interaction between educators and learners. The application of distance learning technologies in adult education proves instrumental in reaching a larger audience concurrently, mitigating barriers related to apprehension towards learning, audience diversity, and individual traits such as shyness and insecurity.

## Research Methods

In pursuit of this goal, educators and researchers employed the following methods during the research:

- Theoretical methods, including analysis, synthesis, and generalization, were employed in processing the research base and reviewing other literary sources.
- Empirical methods, encompassing sociological surveys and descriptions, were utilized for analyzing and characterizing the opinions of respondents regarding the development of adult education in Ukraine.



- Generalization was applied as a method to formulate recommendations aimed at ensuring the quality development of the adult education system in Ukraine.

## Results

To obtain a comprehensive understanding of the adult education system in Ukraine, it is imperative to scrutinize the perspectives of various age groups. A sociological survey was conducted using the developed "Questionnaire for different age groups on the functioning of the adult education system in Ukraine" (see Appendix 1), involving 20 respondents from the "adolescents" category (15-17 years old), 20 respondents from the "adults" category (35-40 years old), and an equal number of respondents from the "senior citizens" category (60-65 years old).

The analysis of responses revealed that within the "adolescents" category, 9 out of 20 respondents exhibit a partial lack of comprehension regarding the concept of "adult education." However, 16 express confidence in developing their interests and hobbies throughout their lives, and 17 assert that knowledge acquisition is not confined to the school environment. Contrastingly, in the "adult" category, the majority of respondents perceive adult education as a fashionable trend, particularly amid martial law in Ukraine (17 individuals). Furthermore, 14 respondents express the belief that on-the-job training fails to provide the knowledge and practical skills essential for professional activities, while 15 believe that adult education contributes to life extension. In the "senior citizens" category, the majority of respondents (18 individuals) comprehend the necessity for profound life changes and the pursuit of aspirations. They express interest in various courses, workshops, and training opportunities, albeit lamenting that a significant portion of these activities is exclusively available online (15 individuals). Furthermore, 19 respondents in this category firmly believe that continued learning contributes to a longer life.

The findings from the sociological survey indicate a prevalent consensus among the respondents regarding the importance of cultivating individual hobbies

throughout their lives. This inclination is viewed as a means to continually enhance emotional intelligence, maintain intellectual acuity, and recognize the existence of a diverse educational landscape that extends beyond formal schooling. Respondents acknowledge the presence of public and private educational institutions, centers, and hubs, recognizing them as alternative sources for acquiring knowledge, valuable skills, and the potential to initiate entrepreneurial endeavors in various forms. Notably, some respondents expressed reservations about on-the-job training (advanced training), perceiving such a structure for professional development as an impediment. However, it is noteworthy that a significant number of young employers in Ukraine perceive on-the-job training not solely as a mechanism for professional development but as a means to garner experience, support new hires, and create conducive working conditions. This reflects an acknowledgment of the prevailing employment challenges, where many individuals struggle to secure a job or one that aligns with their preferences due to a lack of experience. The positive perception of learning as a means to extend life is a notable observation from the survey results.

The distinction between the European and Ukrainian adult education systems is delineated in the "Generalized Comparative Analysis of the Development of Adult Education in Ukraine and Europe" (see Table 1).

Table 1 – Generalized Comparative Analysis of the Development of Adult Education in Ukraine and Europe

Adult education (European system)	Adult education (Ukrainian system)
It is codified in legislation and functions in adherence to the pertinent regulatory framework.	The existing regulatory framework for adult education is deemed insufficient. Provisions governing the operation of adult education were incorporated into the Law of Ukraine "On Education" as recently as 2017, with the Draft Law "On Adult Education" currently under deliberation in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine.
Adult education occupies a distinct niche within the overall education system.	Priority is accorded to adult education, particularly through postgraduate education and advanced training.
Emphasis is placed on addressing human needs, desires, tastes, capabilities, and personal traits.	The predominant emphasis is on professional development and the acquisition of specialized skills.
This approach aligns with the establishment of national qualification systems, intricately linked to the evolution of the labor market, as exemplified by the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).	The establishment of the national qualifications system is currently in progress, with the draft under consideration by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine.
There is a concurrent emphasis on the development and enhancement of competencies for lifelong learning.	
Adherence to the decisions and recommendations of the European Parliament and the Council of the EU.	Competencies are cultivated to support reforms in general secondary education, as outlined in the New Ukrainian School (NUS Concept), and for the training of teachers to effectively engage with students.
The establishment and growth of centers, hubs, and online platforms, as well as private and public adult education institutions, showcase a balanced operation of both formal and non-formal education.	The development of adult education is informed by the recommendations of the European Parliament and the Council of the EU and entails the construction of a locally adapted system.

Source: development of the authors.

The examination of this table reveals that the adult education system in Ukraine is in its nascent phase of development. Ongoing events within Ukraine and globally contribute to the sluggish progression in the adoption of crucial decisions, legislation, and regulations. In response to the demands of the contemporary era, a considerable number of Ukrainians have access to knowledge through online training, courses, and specialized classes conducted remotely. Nevertheless, a pressing concern lies in the motivation of individuals to actively pursue new knowledge and skills.

## Discussion

Research and analysis of the operational dynamics of adult education systems in Ukraine and several European countries affirm the imperative for their advancement. This involves the introduction of novel forms and methodologies for collaboration with adults, as well as the amplification of the network of institutions and other entities capable of delivering educational services to diverse segments of the population throughout their lifespans.

Presently in our country, there exists unfettered access to non-formal education, characterized by its exemption from the need for a qualification or a licensed educational document and, correspondingly, lacking formal recognition at the legislative level. This form of education is particularly appealing due to its capacity to facilitate swift, cost-effective, and often remote knowledge acquisition, sparing individuals from substantial temporal and financial commitments. The Internet and social media abound with advertisements promoting such educational opportunities. However, it is crucial to dispel the misconception that non-formal education is synonymous with adult education. Adult education represents a much broader phenomenon, encompassing both formal and non-formal education, along with informal education (self-education). In European countries, these distinctions are clearly articulated in legislation.

The legislative proposal "On Adult Education" has been under review in the Verkhovna Rada since February 10, 2022. It can be inferred that its approval is uncertain, a circumstance that could substantially impede the overall progress of education and the educational attainment of the populace. The question of whether it is opportune to advance the development of the adult education system amid martial law is a complex matter. Nevertheless, considering that the reform of general secondary education, embodied in the New Ukrainian School Concept, is slated for completion by 2029 with the overarching goal of nurturing individuals capable of continuous lifelong learning, self-development, self-realization, and self-improvement, along with cognitive flexibility, mobility, and diplomacy, it is

advisable to redouble efforts to expedite the advancement of adult education in Ukraine.

## Conclusions

Adult education encompasses the ongoing acquisition of essential, engaging, and significant knowledge and skills by the populace throughout their lifespans. This assertion is substantiated by the well-established adult education systems prevalent in the majority of European countries. Given the swiftly evolving and changing educational needs of the population, the adaptation of individuals to the demands of contemporary times and progress is facilitated through continuous learning at various stages of life.

The outcomes of a sociological survey gauging the awareness of diverse age groups within the population regarding the principal trends in adult education development and the significance of their implementation reveal a notable lack of essential information among Ukrainians. There is a general lack of understanding of the potential inherent in adult education, with a prevalent misconception associating this phenomenon almost exclusively with professional development, an inaccurate perspective.

Significant disparity between the national and European adult education systems is noteworthy, particularly in the endorsement by European countries of non-formal education, which is accorded parity with postgraduate education. This endorsement extends to fostering the establishment of private centers, institutes, and online platforms dedicated to adult education. In contrast, Ukraine is in the initial stages of comprehending the necessity for such measures.

Adult education holds the potential to deploy an array of tools that can effectively address challenges arising from the information society, population aging, migration, and unemployment. Consequently, it is imperative to prioritize the establishment of adult education at the state level in our country. This can be achieved through:

- The endorsement of the Law of Ukraine "On Adult Education."
- The acknowledgment of non-formal and informal education as integral components of adult education.
- Facilitating the establishment of private institutions catering to various age groups.
- Concluding the establishment of the National Qualifications System in Ukraine, aligned with the EU National Qualifications Framework.
- Conducting specialized training for professionals to operate within the adult education system.

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## APPENDIX

Appendix 1 – A questionnaire tailored to different age groups to assess the efficacy of the adult education system in Ukraine

1. Definition of Adult Education
2. In your perspective, is the continuous learning of adults crucial even after the culmination of their professional careers?
3. Are you acquainted with individuals who consistently engage in learning new concepts, participate in training sessions and workshops, and express interest in diverse courses while maintaining full-time employment?
4. Do you possess the inclination to pursue ongoing learning or cultivate a personal hobby throughout your lifetime?
5. Do you consider it appropriate to engage in educational activities while at work?
6. In your view, is adult education a contemporary fashion trend or a necessity in the modern world?
7. Would you be willing to make such drastic changes in your life that you might quit your studies or work tomorrow to venture into an entirely new field that you have dreamt of but were hesitant to pursue?
8. Is it your belief that schools represent the exclusive source for students to acquire knowledge?
9. What is your understanding of Universities of the Third Age?
10. In your opinion, does the act of learning contribute to the extension of one's lifespan?