Historical Overview and Tradition of Adult Education in Croatia

Croatia has a century-old tradition of institutional adult education. Adult education in Croatia was pioneered at the beginning of the 20th century by Albert Bazala, founder of public university lectures, and Andrija Štampar, founder of the School of Public Health. In 1907, pursuing the initiative of Alberta Bazala, Faculty of Philosophy, Faculty of Law and Faculty of Theology in Zagreb started organizing lectures open to the interested public.

Adult education offer in Croatia bloomed between 1919 and 1941 through establishment of a number of „people's universities“ and andragogical societies. In years following the end of World War II system of publicly organized adult education further expanded in response to the increasing demand for skilled labor due to intense industrialization and economic development of the country. The golden age of development of adult education system in Croatia were the sixties of the XX century, when a rich network of people's universities was established.

In 1954 these developments led to the establishment of the Croatian Federation of Peoples Universities - the first association of this type of educational institutions - which still operates today as the Croatian Association of Open Universities. The federation was founded with the goal of connecting peoples' universities in order to facilitate sharing of educational programs and experiences among them, pooling of their teaching staff and expansion of the adult education institutions' network in regions and local communities where they did not exist yet. The Federation is organized as the national, non-profit and non-governmental organization and since 1996 it is a full member of the European Association for Adult Education. The Federation subsequently founded the Andragogic Center as the institution catering for the advancement of adult education. The Federation and the Center jointly established and published journal „Adult Education“.

Besides the Federation, two more organizations involved in representing and promoting the interests of adult education institutions exist in Croatia: Croatian Andragogical Society and Association of Adult Education Institutions.

Despite the long tradition of adult education in Croatia, during the Homeland war period (1991-1995) andragogical activity dwindled and in following years its recovery was hindered by the country's economic difficulties. This in turn led to the sharp decrease in the number of adult education institutions and programs.

Adult education in Croatia is today recognized as part of a unified education system of the Republic of
Adoption of the Adult Education Act in 2007 created the preconditions of re-institutionalization and legal and statutory regulation of the education system adults. Law was preceded Adult Education Strategy, which was adopted by the Croatian Government in 2004.

**Adult Education Strategy** (2004) represents in twofold manner an important step forward in the development of this system. It first signifies stronger public sensitization regarding the lifelong learning. Second it officially recognizes and positions adult education as a distinct and fully fledged element of total education system in Croatia. Consequential legislative framing marked by the adoption of the Adult Education Act in 2007 and a year later the associated legislation. Finally, the necessary institutional framework was provided by establishing the Agency for Adult Education in 2006, and subsequent merger (in 2010) of the Agency for Adult Education and the Agency for Vocational Education in the Agency for vocational education and adult education and establishment of the dedicated public body titled the Council for Adult Education (in 2007), as an advisory body of the Government of the Republic of Croatia.

**Educational Offer in Adult Education System in Croatia**

Adult education system in Croatia offers the following opportunities:

- **Elementary (single structure primary and lower secondary) education** - Primary and lower secondary education programmes are provided in duration prescribed by the curriculum for the primary and lower secondary adult education.
- **Middle (upper secondary) education** - The number of teaching hours for each subject in the programme for adult education aimed at acquiring an upper secondary qualification, upper secondary vocational qualification or lower vocational qualification cannot be lower than 50% of the number of hours prescribed by the curriculum for the full-time education, regardless of the teaching mode.
- **Retraining** - The number of teaching hours for each subject in a retraining programme cannot be lower than 50% of the number of hours prescribed by the curriculum for the full-time education.
- **Training** - The minimum training programme duration is 120 teaching hours, unless the training is provided for one or only a few job activities that are typically taught individually, in which case the minimum duration of the training is 60 teaching hours.
- **Professional development** - The duration of a professional development programmes depends on the programme type. For the programmes aimed at refreshment and improvement of acquired knowledge and skills and the acquisition of new knowledge in the profession of the same complexity level, the minimum programme duration is 150 teaching hours. For the jobs of higher complexity levels, the minimum programme duration is 500 hours, with the exception of CPD programmes in computing.

**Adult Education in Strategy for Education, Science**
In Croatia, a large share of population has not completed single structure education (62,092 persons older than 15, according to the 2011 census) or has completed only single structure education (773,489), and an additional 283,867 persons have only partially completed single structure education. Among the economically active population, the majority have completed upper secondary education, mostly vocational (more than 1.9 million people). This means that, overall, a large number of the population is either unskilled or semi-skilled or, in general, has completed a lower level of education or has not acquired key competences for lifelong learning. This points to the need for improving the supply of the programmes for upgrading the competence potential, and for the continuous adjustment of these programmes to the variable and progressively demanding requirements of the economy and society.

In order to reach a significantly higher degree of involvement of adults in the education programmes, the **Strategy for Education, Science and Technology** envisages a range of activities and measures that will have the purpose of overcoming current structural, situational and mental obstacles for the access and the engagement of the adults in education programmes. Besides the financial reasons, the current, unsatisfactory involvement of adults is partly caused by the current offer of educational programmes and its quality. Therefore, the Strategy underlines the need for the improvement of the quality and relevance of the offer, as well as for encouraging the higher education institutions to take up a more active role in adult education, especially through the study programmes with a partial workload (part-time study programmes) in the STEM fields, and especially through courses outside of full-time study programmes. Organisation of seminars, workshops and programmes for specialist training of highly educated experts is the main task of higher education institutions. Such activities of higher education institutions are a part of their third mission, which provides a strategic basis at the international level.

**Institutional Framework for Adult Education in Croatia**

Adult education system in Croatia is managed by the following national public bodies and institutions:

- Ministry of Science and Education
- Council for Adult Education
- Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education
- Adult education institutions

**Legislation**

Legal framework of adult education system in Croatia is regulated by the following general acts:

- Croatian Qualifications Framework Act (Official Gazette 22/13),
- Act on Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (Official Gazette 24/10)
Primary and Secondary Education Act (Official Gazette 87/08, 86/09, 92/10, 105/10, 90/11 and 16/12)
Vocational Education Act (Official Gazette 30/09)
School Inspection Act (Official Gazette 50/95)
Expert Pedagogical Supervision Act (Official Gazette 73/97)
Adult Education Act (Official Gazette 17/07)
“Guidelines for Strategy for Education, Science and Technology” (Committee of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports in cooperation with the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, April 2012)
Ordinance on Public Documents in Adult Education (Official Gazette 129/08)
Ordinance on Standards and Regulations as well as Methods and Procedures for Determining the Fulfilment of Requirements in Adult Education Institutions (Official Gazette 129/28)
Ordinance on the Contents, Form and Method of Keeping Andragogical Documentation (Official Gazette 129/08)
Ordinance on Records in Adult Education (Official Gazette129/08)
Ordinance on Amendments to the Ordinance on Public Documents in Adult Education
Ordinance on Amendments to the Ordinance on Standards and Regulations as well as Methods and Procedures for Determining the Fulfilment of Requirements in Adult Education Institutions

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