

# Adult education programmes in USA

Adult Education is defined as the science and art of helping adults learn, which distinguishes it from the traditional school-based education for children. Adults have accumulated both knowledge and work experience, and are often self-motivated, as well as are able to apply what they learn in practical fashion to learn effectively. Teaching the adult population effectively requires a foundation and an understanding of the principles, characteristics, challenges and motivating factors of adult learners<sup>1</sup>.

## What is the Adult Education System?

The adult education system refers to programs across the US that offer instruction ranging from basic literacy and numeracy and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) to high school diploma equivalency, and college and career readiness.

### Need:

- i) In the US (in 2012), over 30 million adults do not have a high school diploma and 20% of US adults with a high school diploma have only beginning literacy skills. The US ranked 21st in numeracy and 16th in literacy out of 24 countries in a recent assessment of adults' skills.
- ii) Two-thirds of U.S. adults scored at the two lowest levels of proficiency in solving problems in technology-rich environments. Yet, the publicly funded adult education system is able to serve only slightly over 2 million young and older adults per year.
- iii) There are waiting lists for classes in all 50 states.
- iv) Current funding cannot begin to meet the need.

**Providers:** Adult education programs operate as free-standing organizations or as part of school districts, community colleges, municipalities, multi-services centers, libraries, faith-based organizations, housing developments, workplaces, and unions. Instruction is delivered by mostly part-time teachers and volunteer tutors.

**Teacher Preparation:** Given that the majority of adult education teachers do not receive pre-service training beyond an orientation, in-service training is critical to ensure high quality services.

**Funding:** The national, average annual expenditure per adult learner is around \$800. By contrast, the national, average annual per-pupil expenditure on public elementary and secondary education nationally is over \$10,000. Adult education programs receive less than 10% of the amount of federal, state, and local funding that goes to K-12, and less than 5% of what is spent to support higher education.

## Who are the Adult Learners?

**Working Poor or Those Looking for Work:** In 2012-13, 37% of adults enrolled in adult basic education were unemployed and 33% were employed; the rest were not in the labor force. Enrollments in adult education skyrocketed across the nation during the recession as adults were laid off and unable to find new jobs.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.gradschools.com/programs/adult-education> retrieved on 25.11.2015.

**Youth:** *Every year, over three million youth drop out of school. They join the 6.7 million youth between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither enrolled in school nor participating in the labor market. When they decide to complete their education, they enroll in adult education.*

**Immigrants:** *By 2030, nearly one in five US workers will be an immigrant. English Language Learners are a rapidly growing population across the nation.*

**Parents:** *Most adult learners are parents and primary caregivers of school-age children. Many are motivated to return to school by wanting to serve as better role models for their children and help their children succeed in school.*

## **ADULT EDUCATION IS AN ECONOMIC IMPERATIVE FOR INDIVIDUALS AND THE NATION.**

A healthy adult education system is an economic imperative for the economic prosperity of individuals and the nation. The US is falling behind other countries and cannot compete economically without improving the skills of its workforce. High school graduates and dropouts will find themselves largely left behind in the coming decade as employer demand for workers with postsecondary degrees continues to surge.

Full-time workers with a high school diploma earn almost \$10,000 more per year than those without a diploma. If they have some college, but no degree, they earn \$14,000 more on the average. College graduates working full-time earn about \$17,500 more a year than high school graduates.

Adults without a high school diploma are more than twice as likely to be living in poverty as high school graduates and over three times more likely to be unemployed than adults with college degrees.

By 2018, 63% of all US jobs will require education beyond high school. Yet, nearly half of the US workforce—about 88 million of 188 million adults aged 18 to 64—has only a high school education or less, and/or low English proficiency.

### **Adult Education Helps Children and Families Thrive.**

*One in four working families in our country is low income, and one in every five children lives in poverty.* Studies have concluded that programs designed to boost the academic achievement of children from low income neighborhoods would be more successful if they simultaneously provided education to parents.

- i. *A mother's education level is the greatest determinant of her children's future academic success, outweighing other factors, such as neighborhood and family income.*
- ii. *Higher levels of education correlate to lower rates of chronic disease, such as asthma and diabetes, and fewer hospital visits for children and their caregivers.*
- iii. *In the U.S., the odds of reporting poor health are four times greater for low-skilled adults than for those with the highest proficiency—double the average of the other 23 countries that participated in the assessment of adult skills.*

## **Adult Education Strengthens Communities and Democracy.**

- i. *People with more education earn higher incomes and pay more taxes, which helps communities to prosper. They are less likely to be incarcerated and more motivated and confident to vote and make their voices heard on questions of public policy.*
- ii. Federal, state and local governments stand to gain \$2.5 billion in tax revenue and reduced expenses for every 400,000 adults who earn a high school diploma.
- iii. Adult education makes communities safer. Inmate participation in adult education reduced recidivism by 29% according to a study of three states. Over 40% of all incarcerated adults in the US have not completed high school.
- iv. Voting is strongly correlated to educational attainment. The voting rate for adults without a high school diploma was less than half the rate for those with advanced degrees in 2008.
- v. In the U.S., more than in most other countries, 60% of those with lower academic skills feel that they have no influence on public decisions and the political process<sup>2</sup>.

## **History of Adult Education: Info on Adult Education Programs**

Adult education programs have changed significantly since the birth of America, growing from a narrow vocational skills focus to more broadly encompass fields like information technology.

### **Adult Education Overview**

*Adult education programs are also known as continuing or recurrent education. They are typically designed for individuals who are no longer in school full time. The main sources of adult education are public schools, colleges and universities, proprietary schools and the government.*

Public schools hold adult classes at night in the same buildings used by school kids during the day. Colleges and universities offer something known as extension courses. These courses are offered evenings, via correspondence or through the Internet. The programs may or may not lead to a degree.

Proprietary schools operate like businesses. They teach students vocational skills and may also offer distance education courses. The government also sponsors adult education programs. For example, the Department of Agriculture provides training in farming for adults in rural areas.

### **Modern-Day Programs**

At one time, adult education referred to being taught remedial and basic skills. However, today's programs focus on broader, higher-level skills that include problem-solving, information literacy and information technology. Students can enroll in adult education programs at adult high schools, community colleges, university extension programs and even prisons. Topics covered in these programs include:

- i. Adult Basic Education (ABE)
- ii. Citizenship preparation

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.worlded.org/WEIInternet/us/adult-ed-facts.cfm> retrieved on 25.11.2015.

- iii. English as a Second Language (ESL)
- iv. Family literacy
- v. GED classes
- vi. Workplace training

ABE courses help students increase their basic academic skills, improve their life skills, and make sure they are ready to join the workforce. ESL courses are for students whose primary language is not English. In a course like this, they'll get help speaking and writing English as well as preparation to enter the workforce. Family literacy courses train parents to become the primary teachers of their kids. This course also helps parents become economically self-sufficient.

GED classes are for students who did not finish high school and are looking for an alternative to the high school diploma. The same course subjects taught in high schools are learned in GED classes, including mathematics, English, history, science and government. GED classes also include a practice test in preparation for the GED examination.

## **Basic Requirements**

Most modern-day adult education programs are designed for students 18 years of age or older; however, some allow 16 and 17-year-old students not currently enrolled in high school to attend. They may need special permission to enroll, usually from a parent, legal guardian or local government agency.

## **A Brief Overview of Older Programs**

### **Programs of the 1700's**

Apprenticeships were one of the first adult education programs. They were offered during the colonial period. In an apprenticeship, a person would learn an art or trade by working for a skilled master for a certain number of years. Masters also often taught their apprentices how to read and write.

### **Programs of the 1800's**

A wide array of adult education institutions popped up during this time period. Some of these institutions were study groups known as *lyceums*. Members of these study groups held discussions as well as attended lectures and debates. Another adult education system during the 1800's was termed the *Chautauqua movement*. In its simplest meaning, Chautauqua referred to traveling groups that went from town to town presenting lectures.

### **Programs of the 1900's**

It was during this period that the government began taking a more important role in adult education. Many pieces of legislation began popping up, such as the *Smith-Lever Act of 1914*, which provided federal funds for training in farming and home economics. Three years later, the *Smith-Hughes Act of 1917* was enacted to finance vocational programs. During the Great Depression, the government sponsored adult education programs to help create jobs for out-of-work teachers.

At the end of World War II, the government set up a program for veterans wanting to go to school. This program was known as the *GI Bill of Rights*. The *1962 Manpower Development and Training Act* and the *1964 Economic Opportunity Act* both provided federal funds for training unemployed adults. The Economic Opportunity Act also established the Adult Basic Education (ABE) program<sup>3</sup>.

## **The Rise of the Adult Education and Literacy System in the United States: 1600-2000**

In the last decade of the twentieth century nearly 40 million people enrolled in the programs of the U.S. *Adult Education and Literacy System* (AELS). What is even more remarkable than the sheer number of enrollees is the fact that these adults were for the most part members of the very population identified in numerous studies and reports as being unlikely to seek such education.

Studies of participation in adult education generally note that when it comes to education, the "*rich get richer*," meaning that those people with the most education are the ones who seek out more education. But of the more than 31 million enrollees in the AELS from 1992 through 1999, *7.9 million were the working poor, more than 3.3 million were welfare recipients, 9.3 million were unemployed, and 2.2 million were in prison* (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). *More than two-thirds of the 15 million enrollees during 1992-1996 had not completed twelve years of education or received a high school diploma, and more than 3.4 million were immigrants* (U.S. Department of Education, 1998).

With roots stretching back some four hundred years to the *religious instruction, vocational apprenticeships, and common schools of the original thirteen colonies* and to the first federal involvement in adult literacy education during the *Revolutionary War*, the AELS experienced a huge growth burst just some fifty-one years ago with the passage of the *Economic Opportunity Act of 1964*. *This act, which provided federal laws and funding for adult basic education (ABE), was followed by the Adult Education Act of 1966, which moved ABE from the poverty programs of the Economic Opportunity Act to the education programs of the U.S. Department of Education (DOE)*.

Today the AELS is an adult education delivery system funded in part by federal duty appropriated by the U.S. Congress and in larger part by the states and localities. In 1998, the DOE estimated that of some four thousand federal grant recipients, *59 percent were local education agencies (public schools), 15 percent were post-secondary institutions (mainly community colleges), 14 percent were community-based organizations, 4 percent were correctional institutions, and 8 percent were "others" (including libraries, literacy councils, private industry councils, and sheltered workshops)* (U.S. Department of Education, 1998).

Four themes emerged that reveal critical social forces involved in the formation of the AELS are the role of the U.S. military, the movement for self-improvement and charitable activities, immigration, and the movement for a liberal education that makes "good citizens" versus human resources development for economic productivity.

### **The U.S. military**

From the *Revolutionary War* to *contemporary times*, the U.S. military has played a foundational role in the development of the AELS, providing literacy instruction to hundreds of thousands of young

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<sup>3</sup> [http://study.com/articles/History\\_of\\_Adult\\_Education\\_Info\\_on\\_Adult\\_Education\\_Programs.html](http://study.com/articles/History_of_Adult_Education_Info_on_Adult_Education_Programs.html) retrieved on 25.11.2015.

adults and securing information on the language and literacy abilities of adults that has stimulated political action on behalf of adult literacy education.

### **A shift from self-improvement to charitable education**

From the middle of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century (1850-1950), adult education went from being regarded primarily as a *middle-class activity for self-improvement* in the wake of a flood of new scientific and technical knowledge to being regarded as a charitable activity for the benefit of the under-educated and mostly lower economic classes.

### **Immigration**

A continuous, although uneven, stream of immigrants has brought millions of adults into the nation. Beginning in the late nineteenth century and continuing to the end of the twentieth century, immigration has created a constant need for a system of adult education that can provide instruction in the English language and knowledge of American culture.

### **Liberal education versus human resources development**

Related to the second and third themes, particularly during the second half of the twentieth century, has been the conflict between those individuals and organizations favoring a national adult education system focused on broad, liberal education for all adults and those favoring a "human resources development" point of view, seeking education for the least well-educated adults to enable them to contribute to the economic productivity of the nation.

In addition to these four themes, two topics, concerning the definitions of adulthood and literacy, are especially salient across time in the area of adult literacy education. **The history of adult education is complicated by changing ideas about who is considered an adult.** In Colonial times, according to Long (1975), *girls and boys aged fourteen years were likely to be considered adults*. Using U.S. Census Bureau definitions of adulthood and literacy, Soltow and Stevens (1981, p. 5) reported that in 1840, 1850, and 1860 census enumerators were interested in the literacy skills of "adults" *twenty years or older*, while in 1870 "adults" were *ten years or older*. Cook (1977) reported that *from 1900 through 1940*, persons aged *ten years or older* were used to calculate illiteracy statistics for the U.S. Census. *From 1950 through 1970*, "**illiteracy**" or "**functional illiteracy**" was estimated for those aged *fourteen years or older* and was based on the highest number of school grades completed.

The definition of adulthood in government regulations regarding adult literacy education has changed only a little over the last half-century. Under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, ABE was to be provided for those *eighteen years or older*. In 1970, amendments to the *Adult Education Act* dropped the definition of an adult to *age sixteen or older* (Rose, 1991, p. 19). This age of sixteen or older has persisted to the present as the definition of adults qualified for programs funded under Title II of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. Currently, the number of adults qualifying for adult education is based on *U.S. Census data* giving the number of adults *sixteen years or older*, out of school, who have not completed twelve years of education.

In most studies of the history of literacy in the early United States, the term literacy has been more or less understood as the *ability to read or write*. Studies of the prevalence of literacy among adults during Colonial and Revolutionary times have used indicators such as signatures on wills,

marriage licenses, military records, or other legal documents to infer the prevalence of literacy (Long, 1975; Lockridge, 1974; Gubb, 1990).

*During the 1800s, U.S. Census enumerators asked respondents about the number of adults unable to read or write, and in 1870 they asked, "Can you read and can you write?" (Soltow & Stevens, 1981). From 1900 to 1930, the Census asked people whether they could read or write in their native language (Long, 1975). After 1930 questions about literacy were dropped and people were instead asked to give the highest grade in school they had completed (Cook, 1977). At different times during these thirty-year period adults with less than three, four, five, or eight years of education were considered "functionally illiterate," a higher standard of literacy than that indicated by signatures or the simple ability to read or write (Cook, 1977).*

In addition to changing definitions of literacy, it should be noted that there has been a shift across time in how people who are not literate are addressed. In the earlier years of the growing nation and up through the mid-1980s, it was common to talk about "illiterates" or "functional illiterates," and organizations gave themselves names like National Illiteracy campaign and Commission on Illiteracy (Nelms, 1997). But in the last decade of the twentieth century, the community of literacy workers has been more likely to talk about *literacy and degrees of literacy* than about illiteracy and to address the *development of literacy* rather than the "stamping out of illiteracy" (Sticht, 1984).

## **THE COLONIAL PERIOD AND EARLY NATIONAL PERIODS: 1600-1799**

Adult education during the Colonial and early National periods included apprenticeships for young adults aged fourteen and older as well as a number of opportunities for learning reading, writing, mathematics, and a variety of trades and crafts in commercial schools (Long, 1975; Cremin, 1970; Knowles, 1962).

*The foundations for our present-day public school system were laid early in the Colonial period. A Massachusetts law of 1647 provided "(1) That every town having fifty householders should at once appoint a teacher of reading and writing, and provide for his wages in such manner as the town might determine; and (2) That every town having one hundred householders must provide a grammar school to fit youths for the university, under a penalty of 5 pounds for failure to do so" (Knowles, 1977, p. 6). This basic arrangement for a common school set the stage for the subsequent emergence of the tax-supported school system that provides for the largest number of programs in the contemporary AELS.*

*Present-day public libraries had their origins in the private collections of well-to-do colonists. Some of these collections were donated to towns for general use by their citizens and some town libraries were available to the public. However, the largest impact on library use came from the organization of "subscription libraries" established by a voluntary association of individuals who contributed to a general fund for the purchase of books made available to association members. The first such library was established in 1731 by Benjamin Franklin, who later established the Junto, a club whose members studied and discussed intellectual concerns such as morals, politics, and natural philosophy (science and technology) as a form of self-improvement (Knowles, 1977, pp. 7-11; Kett, 1994). These early library and discussion groups provided a foundation for the later emergence of public libraries as well as institutions such as the Lyceums of the nineteenth century. Early on, these institutions played active roles in the liberal education of adults for the purpose of self-improvement.*

Later, they also began to provide basic literacy instruction for many of the least literate adults in what became referred to as "second chance" or "remedial" education rather than "self-improvement."

Though the education of children in *reading and writing* was first expected of parents and later of *common schools*, the teaching of reading and writing to adults was generally left to enterprising tutors and various commercial, proprietary schools that taught vocational as well as basic literacy skills. *Tutors advertised in Colonial newspapers*, often noting that *they taught children during the day and adults in the evening*. Between 1733 and 1774, more than four hundred such advertisements were published in the South Carolina Gazette, and many similar notices appeared in newspapers in Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia (Gordon & Gordon, 1990, p. 252). Between 1765 and 1767, one William Elphinistan advertised for students in the New York Mercury, *offering to teach "persons of both sexes, from 12 years of age and upwards, who never wrote before, to write a good legible hand, in 7 weeks one hour per day, at home or abroad"* (p. 246).

While there is little evidence regarding the extent to which adults learned to read and write during this time, Galenson (1979) used occupational records for samples of native-born colonialists and found that minors were less literate than older workers, which suggested to him that adults engaged in some literacy learning. By comparing the signatures of girls and widows on legal documents, Main (1991) estimated that in the period 1673 to 1694, *13 percent of girls signed documents of guardianship, while 32 percent of women signed documents of deeds*. In another study estimating literacy learning in adulthood, Main presents data comparing the signing of guardianship papers by children with the signing of deeds by adults born in the same time period. *About 45 percent of girls born between 1700 and 1745 signed letters of guardianship, while 60 percent of women born during those years signed deeds*. These studies led Main to suggest that some females learned to write as adults during and directly following the Colonial period and National periods.

If the ability to write one's name (rather than just making a mark on a document) is evidence of literacy, then, excluding American Indians and African Americans, there was near universal literacy, in excess of 80-90 percent, for both men and women by the end of the eighteenth century (Perlmann & Shirley, 1991). Of course, all such studies of literacy during these early years of the nation depend on samples of adults who do not represent the entire adult population of the colonies and so are contentious on the basis of sampling bias. For instance, Herndon (1996) presents data from documents of "transients" (non-propertied persons) showing that, just as in contemporary times, literacy rates for New England's poor, including whites, American Indians, and African Americans, were considerably lower than the rates estimated on the basis of property document signatures. Kaestle (1991a) provides a critique of literacy estimates that rely on the signing of documents such as military records and deeds.

One of the *more significant events* in adult literacy education during the later eighteenth century was the first commitment of government resources for *teaching literacy skills to troops of the Continental Army*. In 1777, General George Washington asked the Continental Congress to provide funds for a small traveling press that could be used to write about the war (Houle, Burr, Hamilton, & Yale, 1947). While this request was tabled and eventually forgotten (p. 13), General Washington's desire to communicate with his troops in writing led him to direct chaplains to teach the soldiers at Valley Forge basic literacy skills (Weinert, 1979).

By the end of the eighteenth century, the Navy employed *schoolmasters and teachers to teach reading and writing to seamen* (Langley, 1967). Navy regulations published in 1802 included among the chaplain's duties the following requirement: *"He shall perform the duty of a school-master; and to*



that end he shall instruct the midshipmen and volunteers, in writing, arithmetic, and navigation, and in whatsoever may contribute to render them proficient" (Burr, 1939, p. 111). As these and later examples illustrate, **from the very beginnings of the United States of America, the military has played a key role in the emergence and development of the AELS.** The military continued to contribute to the AELS by educating former slaves who served in the Union Army during the Civil War.

## THE ANTEBELLUM, CIVIL WAR, AND RECONSTRUCTION PERIODS: 1800-1899

Kaestle (1991a) observed that *"One of the causes' of higher literacy rates, in a sense, is higher literacy rates. For example, as more people become literate, the amount of fiction circulating commercially will increase and newspapers will become cheaper; in a society where more reading material is available, there is more motivation for people to learn to read and to use their skills. If schools turn out more highly literate people, this will, in turn, affect the job structure, which can affect the future demands placed on schools. Thus, one of the effects of literacy at the societal level is that it fosters more literacy"*. (pp. 28-29)

*The rapid ascent of literacy in the United States might well be traced to the influence of the writings of those who advocated for freedom from British rule and the creation of a new democratic republic.* For instance, Thomas Paine's tract *Common Sense* went through repeated printings totaling more than 100,000; by 1810 more than 360 newspapers were circulating in the new nation (Knowles, 1977, pp. 13-14). *In the twenty years after 1830, five times as many books were published than in the preceding sixty* (Kaestle, 1991b, p. 54). **Truly, the nineteenth century became the prime example of how more literacy begets still more literacy.**

The explosion of knowledge being released in volume upon volume of fiction, scientific, and technological writings begged for dissemination to a wider audience than those who could afford to possess books, and numerous adult education activities were taking place. To make books more readily available, following on Benjamin Franklin's idea of a *"subscription" membership library, fee-based libraries such as the Mechanics' Apprentices Library of Boston* were created, followed by the eventual rise of *tax-supported public libraries in the New England states and the eventual formation of the American Library Association in 1876* (Knowles, 1977, pp. 15, 19-20).

As noted earlier, popular demand for knowledge generated the Lyceum (Study Groups) movement, a national network of local study groups that numbered *more than three thousand by 1835. The aim of group members was self-improvement through learning and mutual teaching.* One of the movement's most significant effects was to ***mobilize public opinion in favour of tax-supported public schools.*** Another was to serve *as a model for adult study and learning.* This later encouraged the formation of the ***Chautauqua Institution*** in western New York, which grew to sponsor education programs across the nation and led in 1878 to the ***"first integrated core program of adult education organized in this country on a national scale"*** (Knowles, 1977, p. 37).

Perhaps the most important occurrence in the nineteenth century for the future of the Adult Education and Literacy System was the ***rise of the national system of state-supported schools.*** **Overcoming resistance from private schools, conservative taxpayers, church schools, and other vested interests, those in favor of publicly supported schools saw them established in most northern states by 1850.** Following the Civil War, by 1880, each of the ***thirty-eight states*** then in the Union had free public schools, including both elementary and high schools, and a chief educational officer.

With the growth of the public (Govt.) school system came parallel growth in evening schools for youth and adults in both elementary and high schools. For the most part, these evening schools served young people who could not attend school during the day, and their curriculum was the same as that followed in the daytime. Still, *these evening schools laid the foundation for today's adult education programs in the public schools* (Knowles, 1977, p. 30).

A large number of voluntary associations formed during the nineteenth century contributed to the rise of the AELS. Among many others were the *Young Men's Christian Association* (founded in 1851), the *Young Women's Christian Association* (1855), the *National Teachers Association* (1857), the *American Library Association* (1876), and the *General Federation of Women's Clubs* (1890). All promoted educational activities for youth and adults, including literacy education for adults (Knowles, 1977, chapters 2, 3; Gere, 1997).

*In 1870, the National Teacher's Association amalgamated with the American Normal School Association and National Association of School Superintendents to become the National Education Association (NEA) (Wesley, 1957), which was to play a major role in the emergence of the AELS in the first half of the twentieth century.*

## **Education of African Americans**

In the Antebellum period, the education of African American slaves was generally forbidden by various state laws. For instance, acts passed by the General Assembly of North Carolina in 1830 made it a crime punishable by thirty-nine lashes to teach "*slaves to read and write, the use of figures accepted*" (Jacobs, 1861/1987, p. 270). Nonetheless, many adult slaves were taught to read and write by abolitionist whites or other slaves. Some learned from their masters or by overhearing tutors working with their masters' children or by other surreptitious means (Woodson, 1919/1968).

During the Civil War, the Union Army provided many educational opportunities for former slaves (Cornish, 1952). Blassingame (1965) provides numerous examples of educational activities engaged in by officers of the Union Army, including the work of one General Banks: "General Banks sought to eradicate the widespread illiteracy among the 18,585 Negro troops serving in the Department of the Gulf by appointing several members of the American Missionary Association as lieutenants in some of the colored regiments. Banks appointed these men for the sole purpose of teaching the Negro soldiers. Later, Banks realized that he could not procure enough teachers for the Negro soldiers. As a result, on November 30, 1864, Banks modified his system by ordering the chaplain in each regiment to teach the colored soldiers". (pp. 156-157)

After the Civil War, the U.S. Congress created the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands as the primary agency for reconstruction. This agency was placed under the jurisdiction of the War Department and was popularly known as the Freedmen's Bureau (Stubblefield & Keane, 1994, pp. 164-166). The Freedmen's Bureau provided education for freed slaves, engaging teachers who were primarily from voluntary organizations, such as the American Missionary Association. Collectively, these organizations became known as Freedmen's Aid Societies. Between 1862 and 1872, fifty-one antislavery societies, involving some 2,500 teachers and more than 2,000 schools, were conducting education for freedmen (pp. 164-165). Citing fiscal burdens, the U.S. Congress disbanded the Freedmen's Bureau in 1872.

## **Immigrant Education in Settlement Houses**

In the middle of the nineteenth century, J. W. Hudson published his *History of Adult Education* (Hudson, 1851/1969). According to Houle (1992), Hudson was apparently the first to use the term adult education, which he regarded as the organized and institutional provision of learning opportunities, principally for "the lower classes of the community" (p. v). Excluding the many service organizations providing education for former slaves, most of the adult education activities that arose during the nineteenth century were not intended to help the "lower classes" but as means of self-improvement for the somewhat educated "middle classes," as mentioned earlier. These organizations included the many women's literary clubs that surfaced as an integral part of the growth of the women's movements for suffrage, temperance, and general equality as citizens of the growing democracy.

An exception to these middle-class self-improvement efforts was the importation of the idea of settlements or neighborhood centers from London, where Toynbee Hall center was founded in 1884. In 1886, Stanton Coit founded the Neighborhood Guild (later called University Settlement) in New York City, and in 1889 the most famous of the settlement houses, Hull-House, was founded in Chicago by Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr (Knowles, 1977, p. 65; Addams, 1910, 1930). Hull-House was founded to help immigrants adjust to American life. At the end of the nineteenth century, hundreds of thousands of immigrants were coming to America, most of them poor and undereducated, and some four hundred settlement houses had sprung up, inspired by the work of Jane Addams and Hull-House. The settlement houses provided basic education, including reading, writing, and English-language training. Many provided health care that the hundreds of thousands of immigrants, most of them crowded into urban tenement slums, could not find elsewhere (Davis, 1995, pp. 229-230). The work of these settlement and neighborhood centers was instrumental in stimulating the federal government's Americanization movement in the first half of the twentieth century, and they were the forerunners of the community-based groups that make up 14 percent of the AELS today (U.S. Department of Education, 1998).

## **THE RISE OF THE ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY SYSTEM: 1900-2000**

With the Civil War in the fading distance and a general prosperity throughout the nation, the turn of the twentieth century saw a plethora of institutions and organizations engaged in one way or another in adult education. Knowles (1977) catalogs the following institutions that emerged in the late 1800s and early 1900s to advance what he called "the adult education movement in the United States": business and industry, colleges and universities, cooperative extension services, foundations, government agencies (including the military), voluntary health and welfare agencies, independent and residential centers, labor unions, libraries, mass communications media (newspapers, books, magazines), museums and art institutes, proprietary schools, public schools, religious institutions, and voluntary associations.

Within this rich assemblage of adult education institutions, all of which have contributed to the rise of the AELS to a greater or lesser degree, some institutions and individuals stand out. Among the institutions are the U.S. military, the National Education Association, and the Carnegie and Ford Foundations. While the military's contribution to the emergence of the AELS primarily concerned the invention of the technology of mass standardized testing (Sticht & Armstrong, 1994), the National Education Association and the Carnegie and Ford Foundations helped to establish the profession of adult education by forming associations for educating and training professionals in the field of adult education, conducting research in and disseminating information about adult education, and providing guidance and advocacy for shaping adult education policies at the federal and state level (Knowles, 1962, 1977; Stubblefield & Keane, 1994).

Among the many individuals who helped the AELS emerge, one, Cora Wilson Stewart, played a major role in focusing attention on the problems facing illiterate and semiliterate adults (Nelms, 1997). She created programs of instruction for adult literacy education, mobilized tens of thousands of volunteers as teachers and tutors for adult literacy programs, and advocated strongly for public support of educational opportunities for adult literacy learners. More is said about Stewart and her work later.

Throughout the twentieth century and up to the present, a tension has existed between those advocating for the professionalization of adult education as a broad, liberal, general educational enterprise for adults of all social classes and educational levels and those advocating for adult literacy education for the least educated and most needy citizens or those foreign-born who have immigrated to the United States in search of a better life (Rose, 1991; Stubblefield & Keane, 1994). The large institutional educational providers, mainly the tax-supported public school systems in the states, have typically favored adult education in the broadest sense, while those community-based organizations that rely heavily on charitable contributions and volunteers to accomplish their work typically favor service to the least educated and most needy adults.

To a considerable extent, the history of the rise of the AELS in the latter half of the twentieth century is the history of the struggle between and the mutual accommodation of these two philosophies of adult education that made possible the passage of the Adult Education Act of 1966. This struggle is traced in a summary fashion in subsequent sections. First, however, there is an overview of the military activities in World War I and World War II that influenced the thinking of adult educators in each philosophical camp.

### **The Role of the U.S. Military in the Rise of the AELS**

As noted earlier, during the eighteenth century, the Continental Army set the precedent for federal provision of adult literacy education when chaplains tutored the troops fighting the Revolutionary War. In the nineteenth century, during the Civil War, the Union Army provided African Americans and other soldiers with literacy education, and, following the war, during Reconstruction, the War Department took initial responsibility for the Freedmen's Bureau and the education of former slaves.

But it was in the twentieth century that the military had its greatest influence on adult education. In 1917, during World War I, the U.S. Army sponsored the development of the first group-administered, standardized tests of "intelligence" for literates, illiterates or low literates, and non-English-speaking recruits (Yerkes, 1921). This had the immediate effect at the time of providing "objective" evidence that large numbers of native-born young adults were not literate and that large numbers of immigrants were neither literate nor functional in the English language. This information fueled the cause of advocates of adult education, who could claim that large numbers of adults were in need of literacy education and that large numbers of immigrants needed education to help them become "Americanized."

On one hand, the World War I experience with "intelligence" testing convinced some people that large numbers of adults, both native- and foreign-born, were mentally incapable of benefiting from adult education (Stubblefield & Keane, 1994, p. 187). On the other, in what has been a second major influence of the military on adult education, it has repeatedly demonstrated that thousands of adults considered "uneducable" could indeed acquire at least basic literacy skills within fairly brief periods of instruction lasting from six to twelve weeks. In World War I, literacy education for both native and

foreign-born young adults was accomplished in so-called Development Battalions. Nearly twenty-five thousand illiterate and non-English-speaking troops had received such training by February 1919 (p. 182).

The military's testing efforts developed the technology, and the propensity to use the technology, of standardized testing to determine for large groups of people exactly who would get what sort of educational or occupational opportunity. This had a major effect during World War II, when, in 1942, the tests of General Educational Development (GED) were developed to give military service members a chance to use their experience in the military to qualify for a high school education equivalency certificate (Baldwin, 1995; Rose, 1990). For tens of thousands of members of the armed services who had cut short their high school education to serve the nation during World War II, obtaining the equivalent of a high school education made it possible for them to get jobs and to use the GI Bill to pursue further vocational training or a college education. Many of the GIs who did go on to college became the first in their families to earn a university degree (Olson, 1974). Today the GED is widely used in both the United States and Canada to certify high school equivalency. In the United States, the AELS devotes an increasing portion of its resources to helping adults acquire a credential that has its technical origins in the "intelligence" tests of World War I and served the vocational and educational needs of the troops during and after World War II.

As indicated later, the results of the military's standardized tests of "mental ability" initially developed in 1917 would play another pivotal role in shaping the AELS almost half a century later, in the early 1960s, as part of a new "war," this time fought not on foreign soil but at home, the domestic program called the War on Poverty.

### **The Adult Education Professionalization Movement**

The drafting and eventual passage of the Adult Education Act of 1966 was largely the result of two major, interactive strands in the movement for adult literacy. One worked toward the goal of professionalizing and expanding adult education, the other toward that of helping the least well-educated native- and foreign-born adults to acquire basic literacy and language skills.

The professionalization movement started in the early 1920s and aimed at forging a professional field of adult education from the disparate activities of educators in the many institutions identified by Knowles (1977). The work of these various institutions captured the attention of the Carnegie Corporation of New York in the early 1920s. The Carnegie Corporation was founded by Andrew Carnegie in 1911 to promote the diffusion of knowledge among the population. One of his major contributions toward this end was to donate millions of dollars to help develop and support public libraries (Learned, 1924). Based on this interest in diffusing knowledge, it was natural for the Carnegie Corporation to become interested in the broader array of institutions that could help people acquire the knowledge they needed to more effectively manage their lives (Rose, 1989).

In 1924 the Carnegie Corporation Board of Trustees directed the new president of the corporation, Frederick P. Keppel, to initiate a program of activities that would move the many efforts in adult education forward. Keppel had been an assistant secretary of war in World War I, and he knew about the wartime programs of education for soldiers and other activities in adult education (Keppel, 1926/1968). He was devoted to the role of broad, liberal education for adults, and, working from the recommendations of an advisory council of adult educators and the results of several studies and regional conferences, in 1926 he committed Carnegie Corporation funding to the administrative support

of a new adult education organization, the American Association for Adult Education (AAAE) (Rose, 1989; Stubblefield & Keane, 1994, pp. 187, 192-193; Knowles, 1977, pp. 190-192).

A major function of the AAAE was to screen applications from adult educators who were applying for funds from the Carnegie Corporation. The association also conducted research, experimental projects, and other such activities that would advance adult education. It published the *Journal of Adult Education* to disseminate information about adult education and to promote the use of the term adult education, hoping to bring coherence to the field by giving it a name (Stubblefield & Keane, 1994, p. 193).

From 1926 to 1941 the Carnegie Corporation provided administrative support for the AAAE; additional funding came largely from membership dues. Membership was limited to individuals and organizations having "a direct and usually professional interest in adult education" (Knowles, 1977, p. 197). In 1941 the Carnegie Corporation ended its support of the AAAE, and from 1941 to 1951 the AAAE relied mainly on membership dues. These dues were inadequate to support the AAAE, and, in 1951, based on the recommendation of a Joint Commission for the Study of Adult Education consisting of members from five organizations that practiced adult education, the AAAE approached the Department of Adult Education of the National Education Association (NEA) to discuss the formation of a new association.

The NEA, which originated in the mid-1800s, had become the major organization representing teachers and administrators working in the nation's expanding tax-supported public school system. It was a primary force for the professionalization of teaching and a strong advocate for public education. Early on in its history, the NEA recognized the problems of illiteracy for both foreign- and native-born Americans and, through its Department of Adult Education, played a major role in the subsequent movement to advance adult education as a mainstream component of education in the United States. In 1951, when approached by the AAAE to discuss their mutual interests in adult education, the Department of Adult Education, now called the Division of Adult Education Service, was separated from the NEA and its membership merged with that of the AAAE to form the Adult Education Association of the United States of America (AEA/USA) as the major association for promoting the professionalization of adult education.

### **The Americanization Movement**

*In the latter part of the nineteenth century there was a growing concern among civic groups and state and federal policymakers about the large influx of illiterate immigrants into the country.* In 1910, the U.S. Census indicated that 7.7 percent of adults—more than 5 million people—were illiterate and that almost 30 percent of these individuals were foreign-born. In 1917, after the results of the military's standardized tests had confirmed that large numbers of both native- and foreign-born Americans were not literate in any language, the government passed a law that prohibited immigrants from entering the country if they were sixteen years old or older and could not read in any language (Cook, 1977, pp. 11, 13).

For the millions of illiterate foreign-born who were already in the country, the idea arose to "Americanize" them in immigrant education programs. Between 1915 and 1919, the Federal Bureau of Education gave extensive professional aid to groups interested in providing Americanization education (Cook, 1977, p. 19). Many of these programs were provided by public schools in evening classes, and many of the teachers and administrators of these schools were members of the National Education Association. In 1920, the NEA formed a Department of Immigrant Education to provide professional

members working in the Americanization movement with assistance. As the movement for adult education began to spread, the NEA in 1924 changed the name of the Department of Immigrant Education to the Department of Adult Education and broadened its mandate beyond concern for immigrant education to include adult education in general (Knowles, 1977, pp. 173-174).

At first, membership in the NEA's Department of Adult Education was limited to public school educators and served to advance their work. In 1927, it redefined its membership to include "all those educators who instruct adults from beginning English classes to evening high school and general evening classes in special subjects, all under public auspices" (Knowles, 1977, p. 210). With this new, expanded definition, the NEA Department of Adult Education became more competitive with the AAAE for the membership of adult educators working "under public auspices," whether in public schools, libraries, museums, or other settings.

By 1945, the NEA Department of Adult Education had become the Division of Adult Education Service, a staff advisory office of the NEA. Then, as indicated earlier, to put an end to the competitiveness between it and the AAAE and to more effectively represent the totality of adult education, in 1951 the NEA Division of Adult Education Service was dissolved and its membership merged with that of the AAAE.

### **Cora Wilson Stewart and the Illiteracy Movement**

In the first third of the twentieth century, Cora Wilson Stewart stands out as an exemplar of what one person can do to advance a cause. Stewart's cause was the eradication of adult illiteracy, and she began to work for it in her home state of Kentucky. In 1911, while she was superintendent of public schools in Rowan County, she started a program to eliminate adult illiteracy. This program, according to Cook (1977), "might well be classified as the official beginning of literacy education in the United States". (p. 13)

The schools operated only on moonlit nights so people could find their way to and from school safely, hence the name Moonlight Schools. The schools were staffed by volunteer teachers from the day schools for children. Stewart was convinced that adults should not use the same materials as children to learn to read, so she developed for adult students the Rowan County Messenger, a newspaper with short sentences and lots of word repetition. In teaching writing, she concentrated first on teaching adults to write their own names, believing that this was a vital way to develop what we would today call self-esteem.

The success of the Moonlight Schools, coupled with Stewart's apparently superior public speaking and presentation skills, helped to spread the success of the Rowan County experiment to numerous counties in Kentucky, and, in 1914, the governor of the state established an illiteracy commission, the first such commission in the United States (Cook, 1977, p. 14).

Nelms (1997) reports that Stewart's strong advocacy for adult literacy education took her in 1918 to the annual convention of the NEA, where her speech so impressed Mary C. L. Bradford, then president of the NEA, that Bradford quickly established an NEA Committee on Illiteracy and issued a proclamation calling for the Americanization of immigrants and the teaching of literacy to native-born illiterates. Stewart was invited to chair the committee, which she did until 1925.

From 1916 to 1926, Stewart carried out numerous activities on behalf of the education of illiterates. Not only did she chair the NEA Committee on Illiteracy for seven years, she also led a

crusade in Kentucky to eliminate illiteracy, developed *The Soldier's First Book* to teach military recruits to read during World War I, conducted dozens of illiteracy conferences throughout the United States, chaired from 1919 to 1925 the Illiteracy Division she had convinced the General Federation of Women's Clubs to form, chaired the Illiteracy Section of the World Conference of Education Associations five times, spoke about adult illiteracy issues before the Democratic National Convention in 1920, and initiated the National Illiteracy Crusade in 1926 (Nelms, 1997).

Throughout these years when the adult education movement was forming and Americanization was the primary goal emphasized by the federal and many state governments, Stewart continued to focus on native-born illiterates. She denounced the NEA's naming of a Department of Immigration because she feared it would overshadow work with native-born illiterates. Later, she denounced the replacement of the Department of Immigration with the Department of Adult Education because she thought that the emerging field of adult education was too broad and "middle class" and did not focus on the educational needs of the least literate and most economically needy. These concerns led her in 1925 to resign as chair of the NEA Committee on Illiteracy, and in 1926 she struck out on her own to advocate for programs for adult illiterates by forming the National Illiteracy Crusade, with the goal of wiping out illiteracy by 1930.

But the economic collapse following the stock market collapse of 1929 and the start of the Great Depression got in the way of these efforts. Though Stewart was instrumental in getting President Herbert Hoover to appoint the National Advisory Committee on Illiteracy in 1929, by 1933, funding ran out, and the committee concluded its work. After that, Stewart's work was centered mostly on the National Illiteracy Crusade. By the time of World War II, national interest in the cause had faded, and Stewart turned her energies away from adult illiteracy issues to the activities of the Oxford Group, a religious organization advocating a particular form of spiritual life within the Christian faith. She died in 1958 at the age of eighty-three.

### **The Human Resources Conservation Movement**

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, New Deal programs were implemented with the goal of employing teachers while providing an education for adults who had fallen on hard times. In 1933, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was initiated and developed educational programs for unemployed illiterate and undereducated young men. In 1935, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) was initiated to provide work for unemployed teachers, and in 1938 WPA officials were able to announce that more than 1 million illiterate persons had been taught to read and write. Like Stewart's early materials for the Moonlight Schools, the WPA teachers developed functional materials with adult-oriented content on topics such as health, safety, work, and family life (Cook, 1977, p. 41). In 1941, the urgent demand for workers fueled by the advent of World War II led the government to terminate the WPA.

During World War II, as in World War I, it was discovered that hundreds of thousands of American adults were undereducated and functionally illiterate—that is, having literacy skills at a level lower than those of a fifth-grade student (Cook, 1977, p. 51). General Dwight David Eisenhower, commander of the Allied Forces during the war, was concerned that poorly educated, functionally illiterate adults were a threat to national security, a drain on America's industrial productivity, and a general waste of human talent. After he retired from the army and assumed the presidency of Columbia University, he established there the Conservation of Human Resources project. Like the CCC, the goal of which was to develop and preserve the nation's natural resources, the Conservation of Human Resources project was intended to develop and preserve the nation's human resources.



Picking up on these concerns about wasting the country's "human resources," Ambrose Caliver of the U.S. Office of Education organized in 1957 the National Commission on Adult Literacy to look for a solution to the adult illiteracy problem in some sort of government program (Rose, 1991, p. 15). Because of its strong focus on employment and illiteracy, however, the commission's work was not wholeheartedly supported by the adult education community as represented by the AEA/USA, with its interest in broad, liberal education for adults.

When the AEA/USA was formed in 1951, the Ford Foundation made an offer of funding support. The Ford Foundation had recently established a program called the Fund for Adult Education with the goal of supporting programmatic and administrative activities that provided liberal adult education (Fund for Adult Education, 1961). To further these goals, Ford's Fund for Adult Education gave grants to create positions for state directors of adult education and to improve the ability of community public schools to provide liberal adult education. This promoted a view of adult education as civic-minded, liberal education with broad purposes as opposed to the economic productivity-oriented focus of the human resources agenda.

These contrasting points of view about the goals of adult education became more important when the AEA/USA adult education community, consisting of public school teachers and administrators, found itself without the strong support it had enjoyed as part of the NEA. In 1952, the National Association of Public School Adult Educators (NAPSAE) was formed as an affiliate of the AEA/USA. In 1953, NAPSAE also affiliated with the NEA, and in 1955 it dropped its affiliation with the AEA/USA and became a department of the NEA, with the full strength of the NEA's strong lobbying experience behind it (Knowles, 1977, p. 231).

While the National Commission on Adult Literacy was lobbying for a federal adult literacy program in the late 1950s, the NAPSAE/NEA was lobbying for an Adult Education Act that would help professionalize the adult education field. As stated by Rose (1991), "As envisioned by this group, adult education would become an equal of the other branches of education, with adequate state and local funding" (p. 15).

By the beginning of the 1960s, the adult education community had become fragmented into several factions: those seeking recognition for adult education as a broad, liberal educational component of the national education system; those who, like Cora Wilson Stewart earlier, sought education for the least educated, least literate adults; and those seeking the conservation of human resources to enhance America's security and increase the industrial productivity of the nation by giving education and job training to adults living in poverty.

As it turns out, none of these groups was having much success getting adult education or adult literacy education implemented in federal legislation. An Adult Literacy Act drafted in 1962 was deemed too narrow, and so it was renamed the Adult Education Act even before it was introduced for legislative hearings. But the U.S. Office of Education considered the term adult education too broad. The name finally decided on was the Adult Basic Education Act of 1962, but it went nowhere (Rose, 1991, p. 17).

At the time, President John F. Kennedy, struck by issues of poverty, particularly poverty among African Americans had placed the adult education issue within the human resources development framework and problems of labor force training. He had been successful in getting the Manpower

Training and Development Act and the Area Redevelopment Act for community economic development passed in 1962. But further legislation to combat poverty was stalled. In 1963, Kennedy was assassinated and Lyndon Baines Johnson became president. He would soon find a way to break the logjam and advance his "War on Poverty," which would carry adult education along with it. Once again, leverage for social action in adult education would come from the nation's military.

According to biographer Godfrey Hodgson (2000), in July 1963, Daniel Patrick Moynihan-then an assistant secretary of labor-read an article in the Washington Post stating that about half the young men called for examination for military service by the Selective Service System (the "draft") had failed the tests of physical or mental abilities or both. Hodgson reported, "Moynihan had observed how the sacred plea of national security could be used to persuade politicians to support causes they might not otherwise care two pins about" (pp. 81-82). After reading the article, Moynihan got hold of Secretary of Labor Willard Wirtz and convinced him to have the president establish a task force on manpower conservation for which he, Moynihan, would serve as staff leader. Wirtz agreed, and on September 30, 1963, just two months before Kennedy was assassinated, he established the Task Force on Manpower Conservation, which Johnson continued when he became president.

The task force set out to understand why so many young men were failing the military's standardized entrance screening exam, the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT), and to recommend what might be done to alleviate this problem. Just three months later, on January 1, 1964, Wirtz delivered the task force report to President Johnson. The report was stunning in revealing that half of the young men called for service by the draft were unqualified for military service and a third did not meet the standards of health and education (President's Task Force on Manpower Conservation, 1964). It went on to recommend methods for using the AFQT to identify young adults with remediable problems and to provide them with services by increasing the funding for several ongoing federal government programs (like the Manpower Training and Development Program) and by enacting legislation that would provide additional education and training (pp. 29-33).

In May 1964, President Johnson gave the speech that launched his "Great Society" programs, in which he argued, "The Great Society rests on abundance and liberty for all. It demands an end to poverty and racial injustice to which we are totally committed in our time" (Davis, 1995, p. 367). With his appeal to "abundance and liberty," Johnson captured the interest of those in Congress concerned with employment, productivity, and poverty ("abundance") as well as those concerned with national security ("liberty"). In August 1964, Public Law 88-452, the Economic Opportunity Act, was passed by the Congress and signed by President Johnson. It contained within it Title IIB: the Adult Basic Education Program (Rose, 1991, p. 14).

Two years later, in 1966, when the Economic Opportunity Act legislation came up for legislative review, the NAPSAE/NEA and the AEA/USA lobbied to move the Adult Basic Education Program from the poverty programs of the Office of Economic Opportunity to the educational programs of the U.S. Office of Education, where it had, in fact, been administered all along. The two organizations also lobbied for a change in title, from the Adult Basic Education Program to the Adult Education Act, seeking to broaden its applicability beyond basic education (Rose, 1991, p. 16). Congress agreed to these changes, and, in November 1966, President Johnson signed an amendment to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 that included Title III: the Adult Education Act of 1966. The acorn from which the AELS would grow had finally been planted.

## **Growth in Funding and Enrollments: 1965-1999**

Figure 2.1 shows the funding and enrollment trends for the newly formed AELS from 1965 to 1999. In 1965, the federal adult education program received federal funds of some \$18.6 million for some thirty-eight thousand enrollments. By 1999, federal funds had increased to more than \$365 million and enrollments to more than 3.6 million (Sticht, 1998, p. 4). While the funding rate grew sporadically, enrollments appear to have grown at a fairly constant rate up to 1997.

Over the years, the federal funding share of adult education has declined and the share of matching funds by states and local education agencies has increased. In 1966, federal funding for adult education was around \$20 million for some 377,660 enrollees (\$53 per enrollee), while state and local funding was around \$10 million (\$26 per enrollee). By 1998, federal funds for adult education had risen to more than \$345 million for some 4 million enrollees (\$89 per enrollee), while around \$958 million (\$240 per enrollee) was available for adult education from state and local matching funds (U.S. Department of Education, 2000; Sticht, 1998, p. 4).

Four amendments to the Adult Education Act of 1966 contributed to the growth of the AELS over the last third of the twentieth century.

In 1970, amendments to the Adult Education Act of 1966 lowered the age of those who could participate from eighteen to sixteen years. Also in 1970, amendments expanded educational services to go beyond ABE for those students with fewer than nine years of education, those who spoke English as a second language, or those who wanted citizenship classes. New provisions included students needing adult secondary education involving the completion of high school or passing the GED.

In 1978, amendments expanded services beyond the school-based definitions of basic skills—such as "ninth grade" or "high school"—to include a functional, competency-based definition for adults who might have high school diplomas but whose basic skills were considered too low to permit them to function well in society.

In 1988, amendments expanded services to permit partnerships with business, labor unions, and educators to provide workplace literacy programs for employees with limited basic skills (U.S. Department of Education, 1991; Rose, 1991).

Another factor contributing to the growth of the AELS during this period was a large influx of immigrants that created heavy demand for English-language education, especially from 1981 to 1990, when some 7.3 million immigrants came to the United States (Sticht, 1998, p. 10).

In addition to the amendments that expanded the number of adults entitled to services under the Adult Education Act of 1966, several amendments expanded the number of education service providers eligible for funding through the act. As described by Rose (1991, pp. 15-31), the major changes included the following:

Amendments in 1968 permitted state grants to private non-profit agencies in addition to the public schools and public nonprofit agencies already eligible to receive state grants.

Amendments in 1978 required state plans to describe how the delivery of educational services could be expanded beyond schools, particularly by public or private nonprofit organizations, and to reach out to those least educated and most in need.

Amendments in 1984 allowed grants to for-profit agencies. Amendments in 1988 permitted special grants to workplace literacy programs, English literacy programs, and programs for commercial drivers, migrant farm workers, and immigrants.

The National Literacy Act of 1991 (Public Law 102-73) replaced the Adult Education Act of 1966 and further encouraged the expansion of the number of nonprofit education providers eligible for federal funds by including a requirement that every provider in a state have "direct and equitable access" to federal basic grant funds (Moore & Stavrianos, 1995, p. 5). The changes in the Adult Education Act influencing the eligibility of adult populations and of service providers from 1966 to the end of the century reflect the relative influence of three major groups:

The professional associations of adult educators who advocated for the broad, liberal education of adults for self-improvement, which eventually had become the contemporary call for "*lifelong learning*". This group followed the lead of the American Association of Adult Education (1926 to 1951) as it transformed first into the American Association of Adult Education in the United States of America (1951-1982) and then into the American Association of Adult and Continuing Education (1985-present).

The associations for public school teachers and administrators who were in favor of diverse educational programs for adults that would ultimately have equal footing with the K-12 system as part of a public adult education system. This group of mostly public school-based educators formed several professional associations of the National Education Association, Department of Adult Education (1924-1951), then the affiliate of the AEA/USA known as the National Association of Public School Adult Educators (1952), which eventually became a part of the NEA and then became a separate organization known as the National Association for Public and Continuing Adult Education (NAPCAE) (continuing education was added to include the many community college educators that were engaging in noncredit adult education through divisions of continuing education). Other influential organizations include the Council of State Directors of Adult Education and the National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium (NAEPDC) (1990-present), established to provide state adult education staff a presence in Washington, D.C.

Many community-based adult educators followed in the footsteps of Cora Wilson Stewart and also advocated for basic literacy education for adults. Among the groups exerting particularly strong influence over the last third of the century have been Laubach Literacy (1955-present; Laubach Literacy, 1999) and Literacy Volunteers of America, Inc. (1962-present; Colvin, 1992). The Commission on Adult Basic Education (COABE) (1971-present), which started as a part of the AAACE and is now a separate organization, has also been a strong advocate for adult basic literacy education (Campbell, 2000). In 1981, the National Coalition for Literacy was formed by eleven associations concerned with adult literacy education (Newman & Beverstock, 1990, pp. 168-181). By the end of the century it included more than thirty organizations and was firmly established as the primary advocacy organization for adult literacy education in the United States.

Though it was the second of these groups-the public school teachers and administrators, with some support from the first group of adult educators-that was most influential in naming the Adult Education Act of 1966, it was the third group, the largely community-based groups serving the least educated and relying largely on volunteer tutors, that prevailed over time to get the Adult Education Act recast and renamed the National Literacy Act of 1991. Community-based groups were assisted in this effort by the Business Council for Effective Literacy (BCEL), a nonprofit agency established to

help promote the interests of public and private organizations, including businesses and industries, in providing literacy education for adults (McGraw, 1984). The BCEL was instrumental in stimulating an influential report by the Southport Institute for Policy Analysis (Chisman, 1989) that informed the drafting of the National Literacy Act of 1991.

With the passing and signing of the National Literacy Act (NLA) of 1991, the U.S. Department of Education, Division of Adult Education, was renamed the Division of Adult Education and Literacy (DAEL). But just seven years later, in 1998, the NLA of 1991 was gone.

Ironically, the same report that had helped stimulate the drafting of the NLA, with its emphasis on literacy as a broad educational goal, had also emphasized the importance of adult literacy education for workforce development to ensure America's competitive position in the world economy (Chisman, 1989). Armed with this and other influential reports of the 1990s (O'Neil, 1997), advocates of adult education for human resources development, like those who had been so influential in making the Adult Basic Education Program part of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, rose to prominence.

This time, however, the argument for adult education as human resources development was not focused on the need to eliminate poverty but to prop up America's economic competitiveness in the new global economy. In this context, the NLA was incorporated into the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 as Title II: The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) (Tracy-Mumford, 2000, pp. 3-9). Though obviously colored with an orientation toward preparing students for the workforce, by virtue of its inclusion in the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, the AEFLA permits the full array of adult education and literacy services that existed prior to the enactment of the WIA.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the WIA/AEFLA is the source of the federal rules and regulations that guide the work of more than four thousand state, local, and community-based organizations that annually receive federal funds for adult education. Among other things, the WIA/AEFLA determines who may attend programs, who may deliver programs, how institutions should develop strategic plans, and how programs should be monitored for the purposes of accountability and quality improvement. The cooperation and coherence that this federal guidance provides for the many disparate programs across the nation has made for a third unique system of education that exists alongside the K-12 and higher education systems, all supported by public funds for the general health and prosperity of the nation.

Yearly, millions of adults who seek education to improve their lives as parents, citizens, workers, and individuals find an opportunity for learning and development in this third branch of public education, the Adult Education and Literacy System of the United States<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.ncsall.net/index.html?id=576.html> retrieved on 25.11.2015