

Venezuelan programs for professional education of marginal groups

Key words: professional education of marginal groups; venezuelan education system; informal education; social-illuminating missions

Słowa kluczowe: kształcenie zawodowe wśród grup marginesu społecznego, wenezuelski system edukacji, kształcenie nieformalne, misje prospołeczne

The problems of Venezuelan education system studied C. Aponte Blank, V. Belyaev, A. Blandon, F. Brito-Figueroa, E. Dabahyan, T. La Belle, M. Fermin, C. Lanz Rodríguez, A. Marques, T. Medvedeva, G. Mota, V. Renau, J. Rivero, J. Posada, T. Rodriguez, B. Semenov, S. Taborda, A. Shulhovsky, Yu. Zubritsky and others. To scientific-andragogic analysis of Venezuelan programs for marginal groups` professional education, we consider appropriate appeal to some demographic indicators of this country. According to the population statistics, at the end of the first decade of the XXI century, in Venezuela lived 27 million people (47.7% were older: youth ages 15-24 years represented 19%; adults 25-34 years – 15.7%; and adults 35-44 years – 13%)¹.

Thus, almost half of the population is older people. Such high numbers of adults are observed in Venezuela because of the fact that in this country gradually declined the birth rate and increased life expectancy over 50 years, by reducing the overall speed birth rate from 6.8 to 2.6 children per woman between 1960 and 2010, improving education, increasing participation of women in the labour market, urbanization etc. Fertility in Venezuela, according to the 2011 year was about 19.78 per 1,000 people, the mortality rate was about 5 to 1000, and population growth 1.48% annually. Life expectancy in the country was 70.78 years for men and 77.70 for women².

¹ Instituto Nacional de Estadística de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela CENSO 2011. Режим доступу: <http://www.ine.gov.ve/CENSO2011/index.htm> (20.11.2012)

² Instituto Nacional de Estadística de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela. Caracterización general de la población venezolana. Режим доступу: <http://www.acnur.org/biblioteca/pdf/6913.pdf?view=1> (11.08.2012)

Another feature of modern Venezuelan demography is migration, which manifests itself with varying intensity in different regions of the country and depends on the social, economic and political factors. There are three types of regions depending on the intensity of migration: intense, in a state of transition and moderate. Nowadays, many immigrants, legal as well as illegal, come from Colombia. At least 3/4 of the population lives in a narrow strip of coastal mountain range, which stretches along the coast of the Caribbean Sea from the Colombian border to the Orinoco delta. Another 15% of the population is concentrated in the oil region around Lake Maracaibo³.

One of the relevant Venezuelan demographic characteristics at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, is the phenomenon of poverty, which still concerns many families of this country, despite the adoption by the government, at the end of 90-ies of XX century, of measures to eradicate poverty. Through the development and implementation of special programs of social assistance, the number of families, which were in a state of extreme poverty, declined significantly from 1997 to 2004. Since 2005, Venezuela has gradually acquired economic development: inflation has been discontinued, increased salaries, reduced unemployment, increased purchasing power, has been granted financial assistance to families in a state of extreme poverty. Thus, middle income of Venezuelan families rose to 60%. So deliberate social policy led to the decline in unemployment from 53.9% in 2004 to 43.7% in 2011, as well as to reduce poverty from 47% in 2004 to 37.9% in 2011, and to reduce families in a state of extreme poverty from 18.6% in 2004 to 15.3% in 2011. However, statistics show, that still almost half of the population does not have a permanent job, more third of Venezuelans living in poverty, and one tenth living in extreme poverty⁴.

An important issue of socio-economic development of Venezuela is the issue of ethnic groups of this country, which number decreases every year. Culture of Venezuela has Spanish and African roots, in addition, since the mid of the XX century, marked a strong U.S. influence. However, the role of the indigenous population in the development of national culture is extremely small. According to the census of 2001 there were 23.242 million people (estimated in 2010 – 29 105 632 people), excluding illegal immigrants and Indians living in the jungles of the interior of the country. Ethnic composition was as follows: 70% mestizos, 20% whites (Spaniards, Portuguese, Italians), 9% Blacks, 2% Indians. According to a count in 2003, the number of Indian population of Venezuela (people who associate themselves with one of the Indian groups living in Venezuela) was 511 329 people

³ Cfr. *ibid.*

⁴ Instituto Nacional de Estadística de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela. Cifras definitivas para la educación 2006, Режим доступа: <http://www.ine.gov.ve/condiciones/educacion.asp>

(2.2% of the total population). And according to the last census in 2010 Indian population was only 178 343 people. About 40% of these groups live in remote rural areas outside urban centres where there are not even basic modern social and hygienic services (electricity, sewerage, water supply, telecommunications, etc.)⁵.

The statistics about the demographic situation of Venezuela, is important to analyse the current state of adult education and professional education of economic marginal in the country where 37.9% are poor and 15.3% are extremely poor. After all, these socioeconomic conditions matter in providing educational services to the least protected populations, should be a priority of educational policy, however, before XXI century this educational sector has been neglected.

It should be noted that in the last decade of the twentieth century due to the introduction of neo-liberal economic regime that led to the socio-political crisis, almost all education system of Venezuela became subject to the laws of supply and demand, typical free market, many schools were privatized, leading to the violation of the system of public education and rising rates of illiteracy and low education of economically marginal population.

In the period 1999-2010, the Venezuelan educational policy in education of youth and adult and professional education of the most vulnerable segments of society, suffered the qualitative change. During this period, laws were approved and adopted national plans and programs of adult education. These measures, implemented, yielded significant results. In 1999, the new Constitution of Venezuela, which has become a tool of transformation of Venezuelan political system, rehabilitation and development of the right to a democratic, free and compulsory education, the conceptualization of education as a continuous process of education worthy citizens, contributing to the cultural and linguistic diversity.

The Constitution guarantees the right to life, work, culture, education, social justice and equality without any discrimination and subordination; calls to promote peaceful cooperation between nations, development and strengthening of Latin American integration, according to the principle of non-intervention and self-determination of peoples, to facilitate the implementation of universal and indivisible human rights, the democratization of the international community, nuclear disarmament, ecological balance and create legal conditions for the preservation of human heritage. Articles 102, 103 and 110 of the Constitution of Venezuela (1999), in full compliance with the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights establish the following guidelines for socio-economic policy: everyone has the right to quality, continuous general education under equal conditions and op-

⁵ Instituto Nacional de Estadística de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela. Caracterización general de la población venezolana. Режим доступа: <http://www.acnur.org/biblioteca/pdf/6913.pdf?view=1> (11.08.2012)

portunities for all citizens. These principles promote the formulation of public policies aimed at ensuring the inclusion of all citizens, including the economically and culturally marginalized populations in the educational process, the implementation of which meant the rapid growth of this sector, both in traditional and non-traditional⁶.

With regard to non-traditional educational activities, they are a clear example of social and educational mission, which theoretical and methodological basis for a new approach to inclusive education for adults, the implementation of which has brought a significant increase in the number of adult learners, and thus indicates a commitment government to achieve the Millennium development Goals, which were placed UN.

In 1999 it was accepted the Fundamental Law of Education (*Ley Orgánica de Educación LOE*), which contains the following articles about adult education:

Article 39: “Adult Education aims to train all citizens of fifteen years or more who wish to obtain, expand, restore, improve their skills or acquire new professional skills and knowledge. Its purpose is secondary and professional training necessary for professional development for the integration of production, improvement of living conditions, continued learning in higher education”⁷.

Article 40: “Adult Education is in full-time in special education, part-time and correspondence, as well as in distance form using technical means and means of social communication, or combined form, approved by the Ministry of Education”⁸.

Article 41: “As to the conditions for accepting students in courses, plans and training programs, systems assessment and certification system of the adult world is guided by parameters such as the level of knowledge, skills and experience of adult learners, maturity level, the diversity of interests and types of professional students. Method of assessment and certification of acquired knowledge is subject to specific regulations of each institution”⁹.

Article 42: “Persons over 16 years, may be certified for graduation basic education through exams without attending classes. To fulfill these articles, Ministry of Education must provide the population with special educational institutions and adult education in which every citizen can gain the knowledge, providing basic, secondary and professional levels of education; provide a wide range of specialties, all variants of forms and conditions for learning”¹⁰.

⁶ Constitución de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, 1999.

⁷ Ley Orgánica de la Educación de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, Ley Orgánica de Educación, 1999.

⁸ Cfr. *ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Based on these Articles, Ministry of Education of Venezuela is the main body governing the public education system in the country and is responsible for the development, implementation and control of educational policy planning and implementation of the national executive in education. In addition, the Ministry of Education must coordinate, focus, program, promote the development and dissemination, supervise, monitor and evaluate the whole educational system of Venezuela; encourage research activities, promote cultural, sporting and recreational activities. Thus, according to the Constitution of Venezuela, the Ministry of Education, must promote in accordance with the guidelines of the nation and the state, a higher level of cultural development of Venezuelan society through comprehensive training of all citizens to learn to integrate into community life in difficult conditions of modern post-industrial and globalized society to build their lives with responsibility to their families, provide solidarity with all members of the community, loyal to their homeland and preserve the cultural values of the Venezuelan people¹¹.

Based on these principles, normative order, chief state educational agency has the task to modernize and make more appropriate and functional structures, processes and resources of the country's education system to meet the new requirements imposed international educational authorities to "quality education for all throughout life". Thus, the main vectors of Venezuelan education policy is to provide all citizens lifelong comprehensive, high-quality, inclusive education that develops creative, reflexive thinking, critical attitude to real participation, cooperation, solidarity, responsibility for preserving the environment, use the new technologies.

So, since 1999, with the adoption of the new Constitution and the Fundamental Law on Education, with the new education policy of the government of Venezuela, neoliberal educational paradigm was gradually replaced by an alternative model of education, aimed at physical and intellectual development of the individual from early childhood until his death. This was achieved through a deep transformation of the structure of the education system, transforming it into an instrument of transformation of individual and social values, the formation in the citizens such knowledge and skills that would contribute to the cultural, social and political integration of all Venezuelans and their active participation in decisions that affect future development of society.

Since 2003, on the initiative of the government of Venezuela, was established a special government body dealing exclusively with adult education – Directorate of Adult Education (from 2005 – Department of alphabetisation, education for

¹¹ Constitución de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, 1999.

work, professional development) of the Ministry of Education and Sports of Venezuela, and provides Educational services 48% of adults attended by adults education system (other 39% serve private organizations and 13% social and educational mission). According to statistics, financial support allocated to the adults education sector of Venezuela, representing 3% of the state budget¹².

Since 2005, management of the education system and young adult and professional education of marginalized, is realized by three instances:

- Department of alphabetization, education for work, professional development of the Ministry of Education and Sports of Venezuela;
- Social and educational missions, which leaders the Ministry of Education of Venezuela in coordination with other government agencies such as the National Oil Company (La Empresa Nacional Petróleos de Venezuela PDVSA), state power company (La Compañía Eléctrica del Estado CADAPE) and others;
- Communities of Adult Education (Organizaciones sociales de educación alternativa), such as “Faith and joy” (“Fe y Alegría”), Venezuelan Association of Catholic Education (Asociación Venezolana de Educación Católica AVEC) and many others¹³.

Education Youth and Adult and Professional Education of margin, which provides the Department of the Ministry of Education and Sports of Venezuela, is carried out in the framework of lifelong education and covers the population aged 15 years and older, which did not get timely the basic, secondary or basic professional education. Training offered by the sector (both formal and informal) aimed at achieving integral development of the individual through traditional and innovative methods and conducted in person and distance form. Ministry of Education and Sports developed such programs for adults: the elimination of illiteracy; day-time adult education, distance education¹⁴.

As regards programs to eliminate illiteracy, it should be noted that since 2003, its main objective – alphabetization of adult population of Venezuela – was mainly achieved because at the moment it continues to act only as a special mission (so-called mission “Robinson”). Thus, the program to eliminate illiteracy was part of the National Plan of education of the adult population, who need basic training (Plan Nacional de Atención a la Población adulta con Necesidades de Aprendizaje

¹² Ministerio de Educación. Documento Dirección Educación de Adultos, Caracas-Venezuela 1996.

¹³ J. Rivero, J. Posada, A. Blandón, B. Regnault, Reporte sobre el estado actual de la educación de personas jóvenes y adultas en Perú, Colombia y Venezuela//Revista Iberoamericana de educ. de adultos Año 29 /No. 1/ enero – diciembre 2007 / nueva época. Режим доступа: http://tariacuri.crefal.edu.mx/rieda/ene_dic_2007/mirador/mirador_art1_p5.htm

¹⁴ Cfr. *ibid.*

Básico) and served for illiterate citizens necessary basic knowledge. This program is operated through several projects: alphabetization and productive work (Alfabetización ligada al trabajo productivo); providing education of adolescents 11-14 years (Atención al grupo de 11 a 14 años de edad); alphabetization and adult education in the border area between Venezuela and Columbia (Programa conjunto de alfabetización y educación de adultos en la zona fronteriza Colombo-Venezolana); alphabetization for Indians (Alfabetización para áreas fronterizas e indígenas)¹⁵.

Full-time adult education is realized in Venezuela by two types: formal and informal education. Formal adult education is a systematic multidisciplinary process that pursues general and professional education of persons and their preparation for productive activities for the benefit of national development. Informal adult education planned and carried out in an organized form outside the formal education. Its goal is to provide the group of adult students certain knowledge, skills, skills that they need in real life or professional situations, stimulate their creativity and team collaboration¹⁶.

Distance adults learning is the official program of the Ministry of Education of Venezuela, which offers students the course of the second stage of basic education and secondary course and professional education. Education realized in semester regime with flexible methods. As well as the full-time education, distance learning school for adults has plans, programs and evaluation system. The only difference is that by choosing distance learning, student organizing, regardless of other students own work plan.

Along with the programs of adult education in Venezuela exist so-called social-illuminating missions, which leaders the Ministry of Education of Venezuela in agree with some industrial structures of the country (National Oil, State power company and other) and other organizations. They started to operate since 2003 and covers educational services for the population, who had no opportunity to obtain appropriate educational level and professional qualifications and for that reason cannot find a job and provide for themselves and their families a decent standard of living. Socio-illuminating missions consist of a set of social programs aimed at solving specific problems of social security (health, education, aid to poor families, etc.), and under the jurisdiction of different state of organisms:

- The Mission “Robinson” (Misión “Robinson”) is performed by the Ministry of Defence of Venezuela (Ministerio de la Defensa) and the Institute for Educational Cooperation (Instituto de Cooperación Educativa INCE);

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Políticas Educativas del Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Educación. Caracas – Venezuela, 2008.

- The Mission “Ribas” (Misión “Ribas”) is led by State power company (Compañía Eléctrica del Estado Venezolano CADAPE), National Oil (Petróleos de Venezuela PDVSA) and the Ministry of Energy and Oil (Ministerio de Energía y Petróleo);
- The Mission “Turn face” (Misión “Vuelvan Caras”) is led by the Institute for Educational Cooperation (Instituto de Cooperación Educativa INCE)¹⁷.

Socio-illuminating missions have certain differences with ordinary public programs of adult education. Firstly, they aim not only to adults who wish to continue their education, as it is in the formal system (basic and secondary education for adults) or informal education (courses of the Institute of educational cooperation, exchange professional development and youth employment). Socio-illuminating missions provide educational services to all citizens, regardless of age, and their goal of overcoming the problems of everyday life today, not in the distant future, they are aimed at correcting mistakes that were made by state education agencies in the past.

So, the mission is an example of non-traditional approach to solving the problems of adult education and professional education of the most vulnerable segments of the population. It has witnessed innovative educational activities that give positive results when the system of formal education does not justify allocated to its responsibility.

The Mission “Robinson” began to operate from 2003 to the complete elimination of illiteracy in the adult population of Venezuela for the vulnerable time – one year. This has developed a special methodology called “I Can!” (“Yo sí puedo”), which consisted on three phases: training, practice reading and writing and consolidation of knowledge and skills. Although that goal was not achieved in one year, the program had positive results. After its completion was developed the Mission “Robinson II”, which continued the case of the first draft and had a goal not only elimination of illiteracy in Venezuela, but also providing basic education to all citizens. Moreover, the timing of training were also identified record – 10 months. The next mission was “Robinson III” and mission “Robinson production” (“Robinson Productivo”). The latter aims at providing basic knowledge and skills of economically marginalized families for rational management of his household, craft skills to develop national souvenirs and sales and thus increase family income (see Table 1)¹⁸.

¹⁷ Ministerio de Educación. Documento Dirección Educación de Adultos, Caracas-Venezuela 1996.

¹⁸ Ministerio de Educación. Misión Ribas. 3 tomos. MED, Caracas. 2005, Режим доступа: www.med.gob.ve.

Table 1. The socio-productive projects of Mission “Robinson Production”

Projects by economy sectors	Agriculture	Stock-breeding	Art	Building	Textile industry	Tourism	Total	Direct benefit recipients	Indirect benefit recipients
Total	24	06	15	12	14	13	84	603	3015
Financing	465067,24	106897,14	227433,11	224297,60	114899,40	111912,03	1250506,52		

It should be noted that the basic strategy of the missions is to bring education to the regions in which the performance of the educational level of the population is the worst and adapt curricula and programs to the real needs of citizens and use in the learning process everyday life experiences of adult learners.

According to the report of the President of the Republic of Venezuela on October 28, 2005, by the Mission “Robinson” were alphabetized 1 482 543 persons, thus the country was revealed “fully literate nation”. However, it should be noted that this statistical information is based solely on the results obtained during the ordinary population poll and describe random survey of households (homes) (La Encuesta de Hogares por Muestreo). Official statistics show that illiteracy still exists¹⁹. According to UNESCO, Venezuela has 96% literate population, which is an important achievement in the field of education. In Latin America, this factor puts it on a par with countries with the highest literacy population: Uruguay (97%), Argentina (96%) and Cuba (94%)²⁰.

Since its inception (2003) and by 2011 Mission “Robinson I” were achieved 1 652 337 adults with basic education diploma; Mission “Robinson II” – 427 559 people (total 2 079 896 people) Mission “Robinson III” serves 50 443 adults by 5325 instructors in 5327 schools. It should also be noted that the mission “Robinson” is valid not only in Venezuela but also provides educational services in Bolivia and Nicaragua (see Table 2).

Table 2. Results of the Mission “Robinson” in other countries

Country	Total number of adults in need of educational services	The total number of adults that received educational services	The total number of adults that not received educational services
Bolivia	823 256	522 239	301 017
Nicaragua	198 748	125 000	673 748

¹⁹ J. Rivero, J. Posada, A. Blandón, B. Regnault, Reporte sobre el estado actual de la educación de personas jóvenes y adultas en Perú, Colombia y Venezuela // Revista Iberoamericana de educ. de adultos Año 29 / No. 1 / enero – diciembre 2007 / nueva época. Режим доступа: http://tariacuri.crefal.edu.mx/rieda/ene_dic_2007/mirador/mirador_art1_p5.htm

²⁰ Instituto Nacional de Estadística de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela. Cifras definitivas para la educación 2006, Режим доступа: <http://www.ine.gov.ve/condiciones/educacion.asp>

Like Mission “Robinson”, Mission “Ribas” provides education and social assistance to the adult population of Venezuela, in a state of economic marginality. The main divergence between these two programs is that the former is mainly aimed at eliminating illiteracy and providing a basic education, and the second – secondary and professional education. In 2005, the Ministry of Energy and Oil of Venezuela (Ministerio de Energía y Petróleo) published on its web page results that were obtained by Mission “Ribas”, for its management it says: 718 309 adult learners’ course of secondary and professional schools (14,3% of all students in this educational level) and 20 000 adults who have successfully completed training and received a diploma of secondary education; 32 822 instructors dealing with groups of adults in 29 688 schools located throughout the country, including in rural areas and in remote, difficult to achieve settlements. In 2011, the mission has served 1 007 192 people, of whom successfully completed training and received a diploma of secondary education 510 506. In addition, through the Mission “Ribas” were created 297 cooperatives economically supported indigenous communities and socially integrated 9877 Indians, 260 graduates of the mission received government scholarships to study at medical schools of Cuba²¹.

Another Mission “Turn face” (Misión “Vuelvan Caras”), which leadership has Institute of educational cooperation (Instituto de Cooperación Educativa INCE) was introduced as a project of professional development to ensure employment of economically marginal population of Venezuela and improve their living standards. At its inception (2003) Mission “Turn face” subordinated to the Ministry of Labor (Ministerio del Trabajo) and its objective was to provide financial assistance to representatives of the most vulnerable segments of society to start working, craft and agricultural cooperatives. The department also took part mission of the Ministry of Commerce (Ministerio de Producción y Comercio), which provided the infrastructure of this Mission (building schools, purchase of furniture, equipment, training material, etc.) for professional development courses; Military armed forces of Venezuela, and the Institute of educational cooperation, which currently is the sole manager of the Mission “Turn face”²².

It is important to note that the Mission “Turn face” has a direct relationship with professional education of marginalized populations of Venezuela, as well as the introduction of the new government’s economic policies aimed at supporting the national economy, the creation of national cooperatives, etc., which is consid-

²¹ Ministerio de Educación. Misión Robinson. 2 tomos. MED, Caracas. 2005, Режим доступа: www.med.gob.ve.

²² C. Lanz Rodríguez, Fundamentos conceptuales de la Misión Vuelvan Caras. El desarrollo endógeno y la Misión “Vuelvan Caras”, Режим доступа: <http://www.aporrea.org/endogeno/a7708.html> (14.02.2012)

ered an alternative to neoliberal economics, dominant in most Latin American countries. Thus, Articles 70 and 118 of the Constitution of Venezuela set: "...promote socio-economic development through the establishment of a public service, government, co-management, organization of cooperatives in all forms [...] and other forms of association that are guided in their mutual organization cooperation and solidarity. [...] The right of workers as well as the whole community, to create community partnerships, cooperatives, and other organizations that promote social and economic development. The law recognizes the specificity of these organizations, especially those relating to cooperation, teamwork associated with the generation of the common good. The state will promote and protect these associations are designed to improve alternative economy"²³.

So, the Venezuelan programs for professional education of marginal groups, are offered by the formal and informal education sector to achieve the integral development of adults through traditional and innovative methods. An example of non-traditional innovative approach to solving the problems of adult education and professional education of the most vulnerable segments of the population, are the social-illuminating missions. It has witnessed innovative educational activities that give positive results when the system of formal education does not justify allocated to its responsibility.

Summary

In this article analysed are Venezuelan programs for professional education of marginal groups. Author found, that these programs are offered by the formal and informal education sector to achieve the integral development of adults through traditional and innovative methods. An example of non-traditional innovative approach to solving the problems of adult education and professional education of the most vulnerable segments of the population, are the social-illuminating missions. It has witnessed innovative educational activities that give positive results when the system of formal education does not justify allocated to its responsibility.

Programy edukacji zawodowej dla grup marginesu społecznego w Wenezueli

Streszczenie

Niniejszy artykuł przedstawia analizę programów edukacji zawodowej dla grup marginesu społecznego w Wenezueli. Autorka dostrzega, że programy, oferowane przez sektor formalnej i nieformalnej edukacji, mają na celu usprawnić ogólny rozwój dorosłych za

²³ Constitución de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, 1999.

pomocą konserwatywnych i innowacyjnych metod. Przykładem innowacyjnego (niekonserwatywnego) podejścia do rozwiązania problemów edukacji dorosłych i kształcenia zawodowego wśród jednego z najsłabszych segmentów populacji są misje prospołeczne. Pomagają one wdrażać rozwiązania edukacyjne, które przynoszą pozytywne wyniki, gdy system formalnej edukacji się nie sprawdza.