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PhD in Philological Sciences, Associate Professor, **MARYNA IKONNIKOVA**  
Khmelnytskyi National University, Ukraine  
Address: 11 Instytutska St., Khmelnytskyi, 29016, Ukraine  
E-mail: ikonnikova@ukr.net

### AFRICAN STUDIES AS A PART OF PHILOLOGISTS' PROFESSIONAL TRAINING IN THE USA

#### ABSTRACT

*It has been concluded that until recently debates on what is understood as African Studies have involved American scholars or have been mainly located within the African Studies Association (ASA) in the USA. Lately, European scholars have begun to occupy more discursive space and challenged Afrocentric orientations as well. African Studies emerged, on the one hand, predominantly due to the states' participation in either the colonisation or decolonisation of Africa and its people. On the other hand, powerful strategic geopolitical dimensions have motivated the emphasis on area studies and, in particular, African studies, in the United States after Second World War. It has been stated that American curricula consist of the following groups of subjects: 1) the major, i.e. the subjects which provide the required level of knowledge, abilities and skills in a particular area; 2) the minor, i.e. the subjects, that are necessary for better mastering of specialization subjects; 3) other areas of concentration, which are also a part of the curriculum (optional classes, etc.); 4) liberal studies courses, that provide mastering necessary skills and understanding of the interconnectedness of different fields of knowledge; 5) upper division courses, that are studied at the third and fourth years of study; 6) electives, which students can choose to explore new fields or expand the list of both professionally oriented and non-oriented courses. Based on the results generated by the official websites providing applicants with relevant information about degree programs, we have found out that African Studies are offered by numerous American higher education institutions, namely, Stanford University, Yale University, Columbia University in the City of New York, University of Pennsylvania, Duke University, University of Chicago, Brown University, University of Richmond, University of Kansas, University of Iowa and others. It has been indicated that African studies provide students with the understanding of the interactions among the social, economic, cultural, historical, linguistic, genetic, geopolitical, ecological and biomedical factors that shape and have shaped African societies. The interdisciplinary structure of the programs offers students an opportunity to satisfy the increasingly rigorous expectations of admissions committees and prospective employers for a broad liberal arts perspective that complements a specialized knowledge of a field. In addition, students are encouraged to pursue Study Abroad to enhance their understanding of African diasporic experiences.*

**Key words:** professional training, philologist, Bachelor of Arts, USA, African studies, curriculum.

#### INTRODUCTION

The problem of professional training of specialists, able to effectively operate in terms of domestic and international competition, combine high culture and fundamental knowledge in teamwork, skillfully organize professional activity at different levels, has



become rather topical in the context of reforming political and economic structures in Ukrainian society. Thus, the communicative competency of specialists directly influences the success of the state in the global economic and cultural space, which, in turn, necessitates the professional training of specialists in various fields.

Taking into consideration the global need for globalization and internationalization in the educational space, we have decided to characterize African studies in professional training of philologists in American higher education institutions as “they seem somewhat a contested territory and notion, depending on who executes the power of definition. Such studies and their results are at times questioned and ridiculed as exotic, at times underrated in terms of their social relevance, but occasionally also overestimated with regard to their political impact” (Melber, 2009). In our opinion, the experience of the United States is extremely relevant in the matter as American educators have accumulated the outstanding achievements in training specialists in the whole range of fields, in particular, philologists. In addition, the organization of African studies has not been properly considered in domestic scientific literature yet.

#### **THE AIM OF THE STUDY**

The aim of our study is to analyze the peculiarities of African Studies as a part of philologists’ professional training in the USA.

#### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODS**

The education system of the USA has been actively studied by native scholars, namely, N. Bidyuk (theory and practice in professional training of the unemployed); S. Brudina (professional training of Masters in Education Administration); L. Chorna (practical training of specialists in tourism); V. Korniyenko (professional training of Bachelor of Arts in Applied Linguistics); M. Nagach (professional training of future teachers at professional development schools); I. Pasyukova (professional training of Bachelors of Arts in Foreign Languages); N. Sobchak (professional training of social workers in the system of continuing education); I. Sulim-Karlil (organization of students’ individual extracurricular activities at teacher colleges) and many others.

As it has been mentioned above, the organization of African studies in American higher education institutions, in particular, have not become an object of researches of Ukrainian scholars. However, many foreign educators, namely, E. Alpers, S. Barnes, I. Berger, P. Dibben, T. Falola, C. Jennings, R. Kassimir, G. Kitching, J. Lonsdale, H. Melber, A. Olukoshi, P. Probst, A. Roberts, A. Tostensens, G. Wood, P. Zeleza have dedicated many papers to the defined problem.

During our study we have used such methods as analysis, synthesis, induction, deduction, systematization, generalization and individualization.

#### **RESULTS**

Thus, the formation of Bachelors’ of Arts training system in the USA is based on the principles of American philosophy of education, namely, the ideas of D. Perkinson’s critical pedagogy, J. Dewey’s philosophy of pragmatism, existentialism, postmodernism, social constructivism and pedagogical anthropology. Current approaches and methods of language training in foreign pedagogy as well as educational technologies and the dominance of the principle of educational pluralism in defining educational strategies of foreign language learning have become leading factors in professional training of specialists.

Speaking about the generalization of experience in implementing language training in American higher education institutions, numerous researches show that the study of foreign languages was determined by the role of a language in a certain historical period.



Political events, such as wars, changes in political systems, collapses and formations of new states, which, in turn, caused migration processes, significantly affected the interest in the study of certain languages. However, the rapid development of higher education in the United States, held by the accumulation and selection of European experience, allowed language training to occupy an important place both in the traditional training system and in higher education in general (Alpers, Roberts, 2002; Kassimir, 1997; Melber, 2009).

In addition, American social and pedagogical context of Bachelors' of Arts training is determined by the peculiarities of American society and is formed under the influence of general pedagogical trends such as diversification of forms and methods of education, increase in the number of students due to the realization of the concept of lifelong learning and increasing internationalization. Moreover, social context of Bachelors' of Arts training is characterized by the multicultural society; the introduction of the "democratic diversity" principle; the combination of national and regional interests in education policy; the tendency to continuous updating of the education system elements; the improvement of the tuition fees mechanism at universities.

Until recently debates on what is understood as African Studies have involved American scholars or have been mainly located within the African Studies Association (ASA) in the USA. Lately, European scholars have begun to occupy more discursive space and challenged Afrocentric orientations as well. It is worth noting that the first European Conference on African Studies was held by the African and European Group for Interdisciplinary Studies (AEGIS) in 2005. It suggested that presently the discourse is subject to significant changes. However, African Studies emerged, on the one hand, predominantly due to the states' participation in either the colonisation or decolonisation of Africa and its people. On the other hand, powerful strategic geopolitical dimensions have motivated the emphasis on area studies and, in particular, African studies, in the United States after Second World War.

According to the American survey, "mainstream Africanists across the spectrum of U.S. higher education appear to be divided with respect to what constitutes "African Studies" (Alpers, Roberts, 2002; Kassimir, 1997). The top rankings were the following: the study of sub-Saharan Africa (22 %); the study of the entire continent of Africa (33 %); the study of the people of Africa, both in Africa and the diaspora (41 %) (Melber, 2009).

It should be mentioned that American curricula consist of the following groups of subjects: 1) the major, i.e. the subjects which provide the required level of knowledge, abilities and skills in a particular area; 2) the minor, i.e. the subjects, that are necessary for better mastering of specialization subjects; 3) other areas of concentration, which are also a part of the curriculum (optional classes, etc.); 4) liberal studies courses, that provide mastering necessary skills and understanding of the interconnectedness of different fields of knowledge; 5) upper division courses, that are studied at the third and fourth years of study; 6) electives, which students can choose to explore new fields or expand the list of both professionally oriented and non-oriented courses. In addition, the share of the major subjects is about 1/4 of the total academic load that is aimed at obtaining a Bachelor's degree (general load corresponds to 120–130 credits, that is approximately 2,000 hours of the classroom studies) (Пасинкова, 2005).

Based on the results generated by the official websites providing applicants with relevant information about degree programs, African Studies are offered by numerous American higher education institutions, namely, Stanford University, Yale University, Columbia University in the City of New York, University of Pennsylvania, Duke University, University of Chicago, Brown University, University of Richmond, University of Kansas, University of Iowa and others (Graphiq, 2016).



Thus, Stanford University established the Center for African Studies and coordinates an interdisciplinary program in African Studies for undergraduates and graduate students. The program seeks to enrich understanding of the interactions among the social, economic, cultural, historical, linguistic, genetic, geopolitical, ecological, and biomedical factors that shape and have shaped African societies. Courses in African Studies are offered by departments and programs throughout the University. Each year CAS sponsors a range of seminars and workshops to demonstrate to advanced undergraduates and graduate students how topics of current interest in African Studies are approached from different disciplinary perspectives. Course offerings in African languages are also coordinated by the Center for African Studies. Along with regular courses in several levels of Arabic, Swahili, Xhosa, and Zulu, the center arranges with the African and Middle Eastern Languages and Literatures Program in the Stanford Language Center to offer instruction in other African languages; in recent years, it has offered courses in Afrikaans, Amharic, Igbo, Kinyarwanda, Shona, Twi, Wolof, and Yoruba.

Undergraduates may choose an African Studies focus in the form of a minor or concentration: a) a minor in Global Studies with African Studies Specialization offers students the ability to combine a focus on Africa with their major in any other discipline. This offers the students a strong regional specialization. A major in a traditionally defined academic department such as Anthropology, History, or Political Science affords ample opportunity to enroll in courses outside the major, leaving the student free to pursue the interdisciplinary study of Africa. Interdepartmental majors, such as African and African American Studies or International Relations, offer coordinated and comprehensive interdisciplinary course sequences, which permit a concentration in African Studies (Stanford University, 2016).

At Yale University, in the African Studies major, students gain a cross-disciplinary exposure to the arts, history, cultures, politics and development of Africa. In the junior and senior years, students develop analytical ability and focus research in a particular discipline such as anthropology, art history, history, languages and literatures, political science, or sociology or on topics such as global health, economic development or human rights. Besides, African Studies provides training of special interest to those considering admission to graduate or professional schools, careers in education, journalism, law, management, city planning, politics, psychology, international relations, creative writing or social work. The interdisciplinary structure of the program offers students an opportunity to satisfy the increasingly rigorous expectations of admissions committees and prospective employers for a broad liberal arts perspective that complements a specialized knowledge of a field (Yale University, 2016).

At University of Pennsylvania the Africana Studies major is designed to provide students with an integrated understanding and appreciation for the African, African American, Caribbean and other African Diaspora experiences in their diverse dimensions. Courses in the major provide students with a broad, interdisciplinary understanding of the field, as well as the opportunity for regional and/or disciplinary concentrations. Students are encouraged to pursue Study Abroad to enhance their understanding of African diasporic experiences. Students who excel in the major are encouraged to pursue Honors in their senior year. Students who wish to major or minor in Africana Studies should meet with the Undergraduate Chair to design a program of study. In addition to contacting the Department of Africana Studies, students interested in learning about the major may consult a peer advisor through the College's Major Advising Program (MAP) (University of Pennsylvania, 2016).



At University of Chicago students who would like to major or minor in African Studies can do so through the Comparative Race and Ethnic Studies (CRES) track, which offers an “Africa Past and Present” emphasis. It is also possible to focus on Africa by taking courses and conducting BA research through other disciplines and centers. Particularly popular are the majors in Anthropology, History, Human Development and International Studies (The University of Chicago, 2016).

The Department of African and African American Studies at Duke University offers undergraduate degrees that equip students with bodies of knowledge that emerge from studying the culture, history and social reality of African and African-American peoples and of those of African descent across the diaspora. Mastering knowledge about these diasporic peoples will also produce a broad-based interdisciplinary learning experience in the social sciences and humanities, also tied to an intellectual, social and personal maturation process. The major prepares students for graduate and professional training in law, medicine, psychology, sociology, anthropology, music criticism, journalism, art history, economics, political science, history and public policy, among other disciplines. Graduates in African and African American Studies will be equipped to function at the highest levels of professional life, with skill-sets consisting of critical analysis, mediation, creative and effective outcome design and a sophisticated understanding of how diversity works in a globalized pluralistic world (Duke University, 2016).

It must be noted that the main organizational forms of Bachelors’ of Arts training in the United States are mainly lectures, seminars, individual consultations as well as workshops and placements.

### CONCLUSIONS

So, in the conclusion we would like to say that until recently debates on what is understood as African Studies have involved American scholars or have been mainly located within the African Studies Association (ASA) in the USA. Lately, European scholars have begun to occupy more discursive space and challenged Afrocentric orientations as well. African Studies emerged, on the one hand, predominantly due to the states’ participation in either the colonisation or decolonisation of Africa and its people. On the other hand, powerful strategic geopolitical dimensions have motivated the emphasis on area studies and, in particular, African studies, in the United States after Second World War.

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Rather perspective we consider the study of curricula for Asian Studies at American universities.

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