



Asia-Europe Meeting
ASEM Education and Research Hub
for Lifelong Learning



LIFELONG LEARNING POLICY IN LATVIA

DACE RATNIECE

The Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia

**The speech on behalf of the minister of Education and Science of Latvia
prof., Dr.habil. Tatjana Koke**

at the Opening Session of ASEM Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning Network 4
“National strategies of Lifelong Learning with regard to citizens' motivation and barriers against
continuing education and training” meeting in Riga, Latvia, June 16, 2009



**IZGLĪTĪBAS un ZINĀTNES
MINISTRIJA**

On behalf of the Minister of Education and Science of Latvia, prof. Tatjana Koke, I would like to welcome the participants of the ASEM Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning Network 4 "National strategies of Lifelong Learning with regard to citizens' motivation and barriers against continuing education and training" meeting here in Riga, the University of Latvia.

Why is it urgent to discuss lifelong learning?

How is the growing learning market challenging public education? Do we need more education or do we already have enough skills?

Lifelong learning today means more than adult education - it encompasses all learning 'from cradle to grave', whether it takes place in school, at the workplace, in civil society or in the family. An integrated perspective is therefore the order of the day.

First of all, the individual must acquire new knowledge throughout his or her life. This means that, even in basic school, pupils must not just acquire knowledge but acquire knowledge on how to acquire knowledge. You can't just learn - you have to learn how to learn. In other words, lifelong learning starts in the first grade. More than ever before, an appeal must be made to the individual's independent acquisition of knowledge both as a skill and as a cognitive openness. You have to learn to be curious, and you have to learn how to satisfy your curiosity. You can't just learn the right answers; you have to learn to pose good questions.

Second, this requires the overall educational system to match together structurally. In many countries, it is a problem that, in the course of their education, the individual passes through many different educational structures, each characterized by its own culture:

- Primary school has one culture and one kind of teacher.
- Upper secondary schools have a different type of teacher.
- And when you reach higher education or continuing education, you encounter yet a third culture and a third type of teacher.

Third, it is important to put the individual at the centre of the lifelong learning process. Different studies must be driven by demand, because they must be able to meet the individual's need for further education in relation to individual demand.

Fourth and finally, all this does not only lay pressure on the education system but also on society and the business world. Businesses must create conditions and frameworks to accommodate their employees' growing skills and competence, and they must exploit the potential their employees bring with them. We need intelligent, workplaces and businesses that provide organizational learning along with individual learning for co-workers.

All this is the reason why we - here and throughout the world of education - do not talk about lifelong education but about: *Lifelong Learning*.

Lifelong Learning and Globalization

Globalization has taken place in most developing and developed countries. It makes the knowledge supply across country boundaries and the production of skilled labour a shared responsibility of all nations. Global competitiveness replaces basic literacy as the foundation of individual development and economic growth. However, globalization must have a 'humane face', a consideration for the standard of living of the general public. Attention to social welfare and global competitiveness sets the stage for the development of a harmonious world where people learn throughout their lives.

Knowledge-based economy is growing at an unprecedented pace. This fundamental change in economic structure creates a huge demand for highly skilled workers. The defining character of this knowledge-based society is its demand for people at various skill levels. In other words, all citizens must participate in lifelong learning activities, both skilled and unskilled ones. This is largely due to the fact that knowledge depreciates over time. Even academic degrees may have an 'expiration date' because of knowledge depreciation and technological innovation. These factors make continuous learning a new social norm in a knowledge-based society.

Introduction of lifelong learning program comes with the initiation of inclusive education in many countries. Lifelong learning and inclusive education act as two legs of a human being. The first pushes individuals to take part in extended education programs, while the latter pulls disadvantaged groups into these learning activities. This push-and-pull mechanism drives us into a learning society.

Lifelong learning - a light at the end of the financial tunnel

Lifelong learning should be the political response to the international financial crisis. A surge in unemployment will create a massive demand for further and post-vocational education. But who will pick up the bill in the middle of a recession?

The automobile-industry, the financial sector and the construction industry: in these three sectors alone, millions of people have already lost their jobs as a result of the on-going financial crisis. And we may just have seen the beginning of a long and hard recession so far.

The tendencies of globalisation change the individual's role in the entrepreneurship, put forward the task to develop human capital, increase the role of the educational system in the training of the new generation for the entrepreneurship. It is essential to start the development of entrepreneurial skills exactly in the school, to prepare professionals and enterprising, creative, risk taking, competitive people, who are self-determined and are able to employ themselves and lead the others.

In 2003 and in 2007, the Centre for Economic Education at the University of Latvia developed and conducted a survey to find out how the implementation of entrepreneurship teaching is ensured in the educational system of Latvia and to evaluate its efficiency, as well as to prepare the recommendations for the improvement of entrepreneurship teaching in Latvia.

The results of the survey show that in Latvia before entering the University they have acquired knowledge about the entrepreneurship and the skills related to it at a secondary school through learning Basics of Business Economics (85% of all respondents) and by participating in various extra-curricular activities and research

projects (41% of all respondents). As currently extra-curricular activities are not efficient enough, the following change in the economical education is necessary. Unfortunately, as the respondents themselves point out, more than half of them have only satisfactory or even poor knowledge about the entrepreneurship and extracurricular activities. Only 10.4% in 2003 and 12.7% in 2007 of respondents were motivated to find out a problem related to the national economy and try to solve it by setting up their own business.

However, the majority of respondents – 59.9% in 2003 and 72.03% in 2007 pointed out that at the secondary school they had been mainly oriented towards the studies at the higher educational establishment to obtain a speciality and get a well-paid job, not to be ready for self-employment. This means that teaching entrepreneurship at secondary schools should be implemented more purposefully by developing a certain programme of actions for a long period of time, which would include the elements facilitating the development of entrepreneurial skills already in primary school and would be improved in the period of elementary and secondary school. Moreover, it is indispensable to find out on the national level how to train teachers for this kind of work and ensure that the above mentioned programme would be available for all pupils.

Nowadays during economic downturn providing quality LLL opportunities become even a more crucial task. As the minister of Education and Science, I pay special attention to providing consequence of education levels and personal growth, in order to facilitate increasing quality of education, its availability and ensure the return of invested funds. Considering possibilities of modern technologies, we should extend the use of innovative technologies, internet and interactive tools in knowledge acquiring process, especially in adult education as well as providing recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

The Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia has prepared the proposals for revising LLL strategy priorities and they have been discussed with social partners last Wednesday during the meeting of ministries and social partners.

Those are:

- adult education for unemployed, job seekers, employees and business start-ups;
- recognition of non-formal and informal education in vocational education;

- flexibility in education supply in higher education institutions;
- revising vocational education system to become more suitable for market needs and adults;
- providing relevant application and synthesis skills for students at all levels;
- improving career guidance;
- coordination improvement in-between stakeholders;
- others.

Some facts on ASEM LLL Hub

The ASEM LLL Hub is an umbrella for university cooperation in Lifelong Learning between Asia and Europe, for comparative research. The Hub creates the meeting place for research and educational policy.

The ASEM Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning was launched at a conference in Copenhagen in May 2005.

- The Hub is promoting cooperation among Asian and European countries with regard to evidence-based practice, evidence-based research and evidence-based policy.
- The Hub is a network for educational and labour-market institutions to develop joint teaching and learning projects
- The Hub is a research observatory for new basic skills, core competences and their implementation in educational systems and workplace learning.

There are five networks within the Hub. They are:

1. Development of ICT skills, e-learning and the culture of e-learning in Lifelong Learning.
2. Competence development as Workplace Learning.
3. Professionalisation of Lifelong Learning with a special emphasis on teacher training.
4. National strategies of Lifelong Learning with regard to citizens' motivation and barriers against continuing education and training.
5. ASEM Core Competences

Within the framework of ASEM Education and Research Hub, the goal of the network "National lifelong learning strategies with regard to citizens' motivation and barriers to continuing education and training" is to create a forum among European and Asian countries for presenting and exchanging knowledge, ideas and experiences of lifelong learning policies and practices. This is done by encouraging network participants and affiliated researchers to gather inputs that:

- Reflect the national development of implementing lifelong learning policies and strategies;
- Examine the lifelong learning policies and practice in the framework of national socio-economic development;
- Promote sharing of research achievements and practices of implementing lifelong learning;
- Develop possible areas of cooperation and corresponding action plans.

These inputs help to promote policy and strategy dialogue among policy makers, researchers and practitioners which are affiliated with the network.

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