A European Research Agenda for Lifelong Learning

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Research Task Force Lifelong Learning

- Convened for the first time in Leuven, September 2007
- Upon request of the EADTU Board
- Focus is aligning research activities
- Actively participating institutes
  - Open University NL (chair), Heerlen
  - Cent. Nat. d’Enseignement à Distance, Poitiers
  - Fernuniversität, Hagen,
  - Open University, Milton Keynes
  - Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm
  - Universidade Abierta, Lisbon
Lifelong Learning: Objectives and Status Quo
Employability objective:

*Europe has moved towards a knowledge-based society and economy.* More than ever before, access to up-to-date information and knowledge, together with the motivation and skills to use these resources intelligently on behalf of oneself and the community as a whole, are becoming the key to strengthening Europe’s competitiveness and improving the employability and adaptability of the workforce (2000 Memo on LLL).
In the knowledge society, innovation (David & Forey, 2003; Sloep & Jochems, 2007)
- goes ever faster
- increasingly depends on knowledge
- increasingly ignores disciplinary boundaries

We therefore need
- to accelerate and enlarge knowledge production
- ever more to work in multidisciplinary teams

Education needs to prepare people for this, but how?
Active Citizenship:

*Today’s Europeans live in a complex social and political world. More than ever before, individuals want to plan their own lives, are expected to contribute actively to society, and must learn to live positively with cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity. Education, in its broadest sense, is the key to learning and understanding how to meet these challenges* (2000 Memo on LLL)
• The knowledge society is a more complex society, education should teach citizens how to cope with that, **but how?**
• In the knowledge society, the responsibility to keep up to date shifts from the employer to the employee, education should help people exercise that responsibility, **but how?**
Some data on the status quo

- Increase in LLL from 7.4% in 2000 to 9.6% in 2006 (benchmark is 12.5%) (2006 memo, progress towards the Lisbon objectives)
- Highest participation in Scandinavia, UK, NL (ibid.)
- Differences between Eastern and Western Europe (Daskalova, 2003)
  - Woman do better than man
  - Younger people do better than older
  - Rural populations do better than city dwellers
The need for research into LLL

• We need still better to know what the current situation is (*cf.* Bernard Cornu)
• We need better to know what can be done to get rid of regional differences
• Above all, we need better to know how we can obtain the Lisbon objectives
• But actually, the Lisbon objectives are a mere milestone; it is all about how better to ourselves for the knowledge society
• We need research and development on lifelong learning
R & D themes for Lifelong Learning R & D
1. Lifelong learning should seamlessly follow on initial, compulsory education and seamlessly integrate with the work environment.
2. Lifelong learning should provide flexible and personalised learning opportunities.
3. Lifelong learning should emphasise non-formal modes of learning and yet be economically viable.
4. Lifelong learning should integrate communities of learning with communities of practice.
1 Competencies as integrators

- Competencies allow one to describe prior knowledge and skills, and development goals.
- Competencies allow employers to describe job profiles (across Europe).
- Competencies are a means to compare and assess learning opportunities from different providers (across Europe).
- Competencies thus should be used to bridge school and work, various job situations, and different regions.
2 Flexible and personalised

• Logistic flexibility refers to time, space and pace.
• Personalisation (pedagogic flexibility) refers to content, learning paths and learning styles.
• It applies to single units of learning and entire ‘programmes’.
• Content, learning environments and organisations offering learning opportunities should prioritise these demands in what they do.
3 Non-formal learning as dominant

- Non-formal learning is part of the answer, it is intentional but not top-down organised (Commission staff, 2000).
- Systems need to be devised, such as Learning Networks, in which several educational service providers collaborate and serve unconnected groups of professionals, who only share a particular interest.
- Technical, pedagogical and economic challenges need to be overcome.
4 Integrating cops and cols

- If working and learning grade into each other, so should communities of learning and communities of practice.
- If a Learning Network is to be successful, it should play host to a great many, intermingling communities of learning and practice.
- Again, technical, pedagogical and economic challenges need be overcome.
Task Force’s tasks

- **Four research themes**
  - competencies
  - flexibility and personalisation
  - non-formal settings
  - integrating learning and working to become professional development

- **Four development themes**
  - *technical*, devising information and communication systems
  - *pedagogic and didactic*, designing instructional systems
  - *social and economic*, setting up working and affordable systems
Thank you

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