
Lifelong Learning

from rhetoric to practice
LLL universities: current challenges and actions

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TOPICS

1. Notes on the recent history
2. European action through projects
3. A dynamic context
4. Challenges

“White Paper” (1995)

To define LLL strategies, in each country, till 2006;

- validation is an essential building block for implementing the LLL vision;
- emphasis on the recognition of learning outcomes under non-formal settings;
- acknowledgement of the diversity of learning environments and settings;
- need to ensure credibility and authenticity of learning under non-formal settings

16 years later these concerns remain in the agenda ...

Some landmarks of recent history [1]

- Sorbonne-Bologna process (1998) – accreditation, mobility, competence recognition. Instrumental support to implement LLL strategies.
- Praga Communiqué (2001) – “Lifelong learning is an essential element of the European Higher Education Area.”
- Copenhagen declaration (2002) – it is necessary to develop a set of common principles for the validation of non-formal and informal learning.
- Education Council (2003) – targets for adult participation in LLL: 12,5% by 2010.
- Berlim communiqué (2003) – ECTS system relevance.

Some landmarks of recent history [2]

- Bergen Communiqué (2005) – emphasis on the flexibility of learning pathways in Higher Education and on the validation of previous learning's.
- Council of Europe (2007) – new skills for new jobs, stressing the LLL role to achieve an increase on employability .

Some landmarks of recent history [2]

- European Commission (2008) – to anticipate and adapt to job market needs
 - the skills challenge
 - update competences at all levels
 - tailor to jobs needs
 - evaluate and anticipate
- EUA (2008) – “ULLL Charter”
- Leuven (2009) – transform universities in LLL institutions

Actions being developed (a glimpse of some European projects)

1. Development of observatory capacities
2. Development of performance indicators
3. Institutional development
4. National strategies
5. Recognition of prior learning
6. Articulate between research and practice
7. Quality of the learning process

1. Development of observatory capacities

To increase and make available knowledge on the LLL reality:

- Create a permanent observatory (European level)
- Data collection and analysis
- Validation of non-formal learning
- Identification of good practices
- National debates with the most influential actors
- Analyses of literature and research on LLL

2. Development of performance indicators

TO MONITOR PERFORMANCE:

- Characterization of publics, demand and offer
- Follow-up of learning pathways
- Employability and professional careers
- Characterization of relative role/weight of LLL inside universities

3. Institutional development

- Guidelines to support the transformation of European universities in LLL institutions
- Make the LLL charter a reality
- Development of integrated strategies at institutional level
- Offering of flexible learning opportunities
- Case studies (country-level and institutional level)

4. National strategies

- Identification of challenges and problems for the implementation of national LLL strategies:
 - Large diversity of situations
 - Decoupling and lagging between European, national and institutional policies
- Identification and dissemination of good practices

5. Recognition of prior learning's

- What do we validate?
- Norms and standards
- Identification of methodologies and tools
- Set of agreed European- wide common principles
- Transnational and cross sectoral collaboration
- Development of mutual trust regarding the practices in place and procedures used

6. Articulation between research and practice

- Use the best available knowledge
- Map existing research
- Foster further research on LLL
- Bring together researchers, decision-makers and practitioners
- Experience sharing
- Identification and dissemination of good practices

7. Quality of the Learning process

A dynamic context [1] – the Portuguese case

Diversity of public and pathways:

- Learning components (projects and dissertation on enterprises)
- Degree awarding vs. non-degree awarding
- Over 23
- Post-secondary vocational training
- From update to requalification and career change
- Pre-Bologna to Pos-Bologna upgrade (diplomas)

A dynamic context [2]

- Modes of delivery:
 - Distance learning (including blended learning)
 - Post-work schedules
 - Part-time, module – based programmes, single subjects
- Structures to support and to follow-up new publics
- Competence recognition regulations

A dynamic context [3]

- Learning-teaching model:
 - Student centered/competence based
 - Seminars/workshops/other initiatives for students and teachers

- Targets
 - 40% of the age group 25-34 by 2020
 - additional 100 000 diploma-holders in 4 years

Challenges [1]

- Make LLL a central (integration?) element of institutional strategies
 - Fully embrace the mission – profound cultural change
 - Allow flexible pathways – better use of Bologna structure of degrees
 - Development of teaching and non teaching staff
 - Development of services and support structures

Challenges [2]

How to do it?

- Quality assurance suited to LLL (public, pathways modes of delivery)
- Communication (internal and external) of decisions and results
- Sharing of experiences and dissemination of good practices
- Coupling research and practice

Challenges [3]

- Address conjuncture pressures
 - budget constraints
 - “technological drift”
 - risk of the long term perspective
- Maintain focus [EU Council, 11/05/2010]
 - Enabling the acquisition of a robust and wide range of competences
 - Evaluate and record transversal competences
 - Ensure access for all to LLL opportunities

FINAL ISSUES

- A LLL university – what is it like ?
- LLL within universities – an increasingly central issue ?