

LIFELONG LEARNING – PREREQUISITE TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF ECONOMY AND KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

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Education, training and vocational training play a vital role in Europe economic and social strategy. Training has become a national priority in all European countries, being a component of the concept of “life long learning” set in the Amsterdam Convention and again by the European Commission. Currently it is required the implantation on the educational ideology perimeter of some models taken from the field of scientific management and their adaptation to nowadays specific educational market. It is necessary to find a balance between social skills and develop attitudes, on the one hand and knowledge of general and specific occupational areas, on the other hand. Taking to account the utility on the labor market, it should be reconsidered those capacities which belongs to the general preparation and ability, communication skills and working manual of mental capacity to work collectively educate sustained work ability, the ability of independent learning.

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The concept of lifelong learning

Modern educational policies have as main purpose building and developing the learning society concept, characterized by the transition from education, where school is in center, to the one based on lifelong learning, by developing professional software conversion and continues training. This educational guidance is based on adult education reviving need as a result of confrontation with the major problem of unemployment and significant changes in the economic and social system due to the dynamism imposed by technological revolution.

The “life long learning” term has its roots in the concept of “life long education” used in the 1920s in connection with northern education system (Hasan, 1996). After 1970, there were used other terms, namely “recurrent education”, “popular education”, “continuing education”, “adult education”, “post-initial education and training”. “The most quoted document referring to the life long learning term is “Learning To Be” (Faure et al, 1972).

During the 1980s the incidence of bibliographic references to the terms lifelong education and lifelong learning declined, while those to the term “adult education” continued to remain at a constant level. He does not fully explain this phenomenon. It may be that the focus in many countries throughout the 1980s combating the severe social and economic effects of recession and widespread unemployment by raising the literacy, skills base and quantifications of the adult population explains why a more specific term, such as “adult education” proved more useful for policy makers. Using a more specific term might also have helped them to distinguish between the needs of younger resource older and learns to relation in the labor market in a time of economic constraint and limited state budgets for education and training. During the 1990s, at international policy level, and individual in many countries at national level, lifelong learning became an umbrella term subsumed which part or all of what might earlier have been referred to as “lifelong education, recurrent education, popular education”, “adult education” or simply “post-initial education and training”.

The OECD report (1996) includes all aspects of education and training from pre-school through to adult education and includes learners of all ages within the concept of lifelong learning.

Lifelong learning was response to the 1990s, or even defense against a changing, frightening and unknown technological, economic, social and political environment-it became a concept as slippery and multifaceted as the environment in which it exists.

Others view the economic, technological, demographic, cultural and social trends prevailing in the 1990s as an intensification of a process that was present in earlier decades, but which grew in importance over the last quarter of the 20th century. Where agreement is hat is the speed of technological, particularly ICT, developments during the 1990s led to significant changes in employment trends, career patterns and skill demands (OECD, 1996). This, together with a widespread concern about the economic effects of increasingly aging societies (OECD, 1998), encouraged national governments and the international organizations to which they belonged, to consider policy instruments which might be used to meet these new demands.

Content of teaching is extremely important for the initial formation of the adult; it must be analyzed not only through the prism of what is taught but how, why and with what results. Educational ideologies evolution is significantly influenced not only by concepts of the curriculum but also by its actual configuration.

A development of the progressive current in the nineteenth and twentieth century is considered to be *reconstruction*, appropriate educational ideology of a democratic society with unlimited opportunities for

experimentation and development. Under this ideology, the curriculum should be structured according to the requirements of social life with significant influences over the individual quality of life.

Currently it is required the implantation on the educational ideology perimeter of certain models taken from the field of management. It is necessary to find a balance between social skills and attitudes development, on the one hand and knowledge of various general and specific occupational areas, on the other hand. Taking to account the perspective of the labor market, should be reconsidered those capacities which are the general preparation and ability, communication skills and mental and manual working, of collectively working capacity, educated sustained work ability, the ability of independent learning.

Lifelong learning at national, european and international level

The European process determined by the changes of recent years in the economic, social, cultural, political and academic world gives a very important role through the necessity of building and strengthening intellectual, cultural, scientific and technological dimensions of the new Europe. Only a Europe of knowledge is able to provide its citizens with the skills necessary to face the challenges of the current millennium.

The debate of continuing training of adults and the relationship between this and a sustainable development as a mean of eradicating poverty is a major concern and high current level. Thus, in Budapest in the period 3-5 December 2008 it was held the Pan European conference, that joined the following conferences prior to the sixth International Conference of Adult Education CONFITEA - VI which will be held in May 2009 in Brazil and its propose to discuss issues related to policies, structures, funding, quality, lifelong learning skills of duties as citizens and as a means of eradicating poverty.

Lifelong learning is an essential strategy in *educational policy domain for civic attitudes development, social cohesion and personal fulfillment*.

Education, training and vocational training play a vital role in Europe economic and social strategy. *Training* has become a national priority in all European countries, being a component of the concept of "life long learning" issued in the Amsterdam Convention and again by the European Commission in a statement that has the following *key points*:

- continuous and universal access to learning through the accumulation of basic knowledge, especially knowledge of science, foreign languages, entrepreneurship, technological culture, social knowledge to face the challenges of knowledge-based society;
- an increased amount of investment in human resource;
- the application of innovation through the use of methods of teaching-learning specific continuing education;
- assessment of learning;
- ensuring an easy access to quality information and advice on learning opportunities for every age;
- organization of education throughout life as close to home.

Continue training provides important opportunities on the individual to maintain and develop skills and abilities; it is an individual strategic objective.

In Romania, *the professional training of adults* according to Government Ordinance no.129/2000 has as objectives: to facilitate social integration of adult on the labor market, improving training in the basic occupation and occupations related, to acquiring advanced knowledge, modern methods and processes necessary for tasks of service, professional development skills already acquired and acquiring new skills. Adult training includes the initial and continuing training organized by other forms than the specific national education system.

The relationship of cooperation between education institutions and businesses, universities, business community, local community is called by the Government Ordinance No 115/2000 of *social partnership in education and initial training*, and activities relate to the development of knowledge, human resources development, development of voluntary and optional components of the national curriculum, the establishment of professional qualifications, diversifying and increasing sources of revenue of establishments of education, etc.

Training adults is differently organized than the original one and takes account of the needs of employers, of the basic skills of adults, the requirements imposed by the employment and adults' opportunity to build a career.

The procedure for training adults are courses organized by employers within their units or by specialist trainers, training courses and practical training in units throughout the country and abroad and other forms of training provided by law. To authorize providers of training at national level was created a body which coordinates this activity, namely the National Adult Training.

A component of the Bologna Process concerns to the higher education organization on the cycles of learning and is closely related to the need to increase the quality of education and the creation of closer links between higher education and research, between higher education and economic environment.

Common bases of European higher education are based in accordance with the Bologna Process, on two main cycles which divide higher education on different levels, known as Bachelor and Master in order to develop a rigorous framework, common to the qualifications of national and internationally level.

According to art. 9 of Law 288/2004 on the organization of university studies in Romania, university masters “provides in depth studies for a license or in an area near capacity building and scientific research as a basis for compulsory preparatory doctoral studies”.

Education Law No. 84/1995 on art.134 states that the Ministry of Education grant specialist assistance, on a contractual basis, those who organize various training programs in adult education system and the permanent conversion training.

For Romania to participate in the Program for Integrated Lifelong Learning (LLP), officially launched at European level in May 2007, was created in 2005, the National Agency for Community Programs in Education and Vocational Training (ANPCDEFP - www.anpcdefp.ro), and for 2008 have been allocated from the budget over 21 million for the development of “Lifelong Learning”. Since 1 January 2007, The SOCRATES II and LEONARDO DA VINCI II continues in a manner integrated with the new *Community Lifelong Learning, LLP - Lifelong Learning Program 2007-2013*, which will be held between 1 January 2007-31 December 2013.

Central Priority of the Lifelong Learning Program is to strengthen the contribution of education and training in achieving the Lisbon objective, of transforming the European Union into the most competitive knowledge based economy, with sustainable economic development, more and better jobs, and increased social cohesion. Each component of the program give priority to actions that support national strategies development for lifelong learning in the participating countries and consolidate cooperation between the various components of the system of national education and training, is strengthening the content of lifelong learning and supporting the acquisition of competent key.

Legislation it was created and that regulate the activity of training and adult education in various fields: Law no. 375/2002 for adults training, which provides the overall framework for the creation of training providers, Government Ordinance no 67/2007 on Romania's participation in community programs “Lifelong Learning”, “Erasmus Mundus” and “Youth in action” during the period 2007-2013, OMECT no. 5.056/2008 regarding the provisions relating to the legal establishment and organization of university masters programs.

Dynamics of adults participating in the initial and continuing training

According to 2009 EUROSTAT edition, in 2006 the Romanian pupils and students was 3.8 million, meaning 4% of all European pupils and students , and students represented 21.8% of the total school population, compared with 20% of European average. Share of population aged 25 to 64 years included in the training is about 3% to almost 10% European average (Europe 27).

Number of higher education institutions increased from 48 to 286 students in 1991 to 104 to 775 of faculty in 2007 and the rate of students per 10,000 inhabitants from 81 in 1990-1991 to 364 students per 10,000 inhabitants in 2007.

Between 1990 and 2007 the number of students increased by approx. 4 times and the highest growth recorded per students to university courses with low frequency (about 6 times) followed by students in university courses in education day (about 4 times) and open distance learning (about 3 times).

If in the 1990/1991 academic year, the technical specialties represented 62.5% of graduate school, in 2006/2007 they were only 21.7%, the medical-pharmaceutical were halved, while economic specializations and share tripled, and the legal increased about 5 times.

Postgraduate education has been an increase in the total school population from 1% in 2002/2003 to 3.2% in 2006/2007.

Population by level of school education

Table No 1. (% Total school population)

Education level	2002/2003	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007
Higher Education	14,1	15,1	16,5	18,6	20,7
Postgraduate education	1,00	1,40	2,00	2,60	3,20

Source: Source: Romanian Statistical Yearbook, 08-Education p.353

In 2007-2008, according to the Report on the status of national education in 2008, higher education had the most spectacular growth, 6.4% more compared to the previous year. Thus, today more than half of the population age range is appropriate for this level of education. If the academic year 2000/2001 the rate of coverage in higher education was 27.7%, in 2007/2008 amounted to 53.6%. The rate of coverage of female population in higher education is higher by about 5 percentage points than that of men throughout the period 2000/2001-2007/2008.

The rate of occupancy of the active population at the University has increased during 2001-2007 from 81.7% to 86.6%.

A very significant indicator to highlight the effectiveness of external learning system and its adaptation to the needs of the labor market is the *insertion of graduates of various levels of education who have found a job one year after completing their studies*. Unfortunately, there are no investigation systems at national level for different levels of

education competence .Last investigation on the transition from school to work (in the investigation AMIGO) conducted regularly at system in Romania, took place in 2000 and is planned for current year.

Public expenditure on education as a share of GDP, highlights the financial support made by system for education sustaining and the importance given to education as a system and different levels of education and is issued as follows:

Public expenditure on education as% of GDP
Table no. 2

2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
3,4	3,6	3,6	3,5	3,3	3,5	4,3	5,5	cca.6,0

Source: Ministry of Education and Research, General Directorate for Budget, Finance, Investment and Heritage

Romania continued trend of increased funds allocated to education as the Czech Republic and Bulgaria too, significantly closer to the average of the EU member countries. In 2007 Romania has allocated to education more than 17% of total public expenditure, being one of the privileged public services, including higher education having returned 3.9% (MECT, 2008, INS, 2008).

If we refer only to expenditure on higher education in total spending for education, we can find maintaining their weight around 22% during 2002-2007.

Total expenditure for continuing training as an expression of the total percentage of total expenditure on education should be calculated by considering the public and private contributions too. Unfortunately no information necessary to establish the correct value of this indicator is available. Joint Interim Report 2008 draws attention to the effectiveness and sustainability of funding education and training remain the most critical EU member. In Romania, the average expenditure per employee continues to be well below the European average.

According Progress Towards the Lisbon Objectives in Education and Training Report, Commission of the European Communities (2008) there are large differences with regard to participation in adult education and training between the EU Member States: the Scandinavian countries and the UK recorded the highest rate of participation over 20%, while in Bulgaria, Greece, Romania these rates are around 2%, over four times lower in comparison with the EU average.

In 2007 the rate of participation of adults (25-64 years) on education and training is at 1.3%, when the European states that the objective value is at least 12.5%.

In Romania, there are many *university departments of continuing education or lifelong learning and developing centers of excellence* in the programs of the National Council for Financing Higher Education (CNFIS) financed by the World Bank. Center for Continuous Training mission in the universities is to monitor and manage training programs conducted at their level. These training activities are defined as training activities in the sphere of vocational training programs which involve the conversion / reconversion / professional training courses, postgraduate courses for specialization, postgraduate refresher courses, workshops, summer schools.

Some departments integrated to the PRIME-NETWORK European association (Interuniversity Professional Networking for Educational Management).

The following extract from a report in 1994 by the Commission of the European Community is typical of policy documents of this period: "All measures must therefore necessarily be based on the concept of developing, generalizing and systematizing lifelong learning and continuing training. This means that education and training systems must be reworked in order to take account of the need-which is already growing this year set to grow even more in the future-for the permanent recomposition and redevelopment of knowledge and know-how".

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