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LLL2010: Towards a Lifelong Learning Society in Europe: The Contribution of the Education System



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Welcome to the Third issue of the newsletter for the project, Towards a Lifelong Learning Society in Europe: The Contribution of the Education System.

More information on the project can be found on its website at –
<http://LLL2010.tlu.ee/>

Overview of the Subproject 3

Ella Desmedt (HIVA in Leuven)

Subproject 3 focuses on the participation of adults in the formal adult education.

In order to be informed about adult learners motivation to participate in adult education, a survey is conducted among 1 000 adult learners in each country.

The subproject is coordinated by the Institute of International and Social Studies in Tallinn and the Higher Institute of Labour Studies in Leuven.

The subproject examines the role of the formal education system:

- in **stimulating participation** and **persistence** in lifelong learning;
- in **reducing inequalities** in lifelong learning;
- in **fostering social inclusion**.

The **goal** of the subproject is to:

- obtain in-depth comparative information about adult learners' perspectives of formal provision of lifelong learning;
- test different hypotheses about the causes of unequal participation, with a specific focus on low-skilled and low-literate adults.

The experiences and perceptions of the adult learners form the starting point of this subproject.

However, the micro characteristics (i.e. age, gender and their impact on personal motivation) are studied in interaction with the interventions at the meso and macro level.

To gain some insight in the learning society, aspects of the learning environment and the characteristics of the broader institutional and policy context in which the learning system is embedded are included.

Theoretical Framework

The subproject starts from a socio-psychological approach and combines the insights of sociology of education with those of educational psychology. It focuses on the interplay between individual change and the changing social context.

The experiences and perspectives of adult learners that ground their motivation are the central dependent variables in this subproject. In the literature, "motivation" is generally defined as the reason why someone participates, and continues participating, in an educational program (Gordon, 1993). The subproject uses the ARCS model of John Keller as a stepping stone (Keller, 1987, 1999). Keller suggested 4 conditions that have to be fulfilled to motivate an adult to learn, namely:

- Attention
- Relevance
- Confidence
- Satisfaction

Translated to the context of the subproject, the following elements of the ARCS model were included:

- General attitudes towards lifelong learning, namely the extent to which the adult thinks lifelong learning is (not) joyful, important and/or valuable for himself, others and the larger society.
- The relevance of motives for, the expected benefits of participation in formal education. Important items are: the focus on educational and professional advancement, the increase of employability in the knowledge society, becoming a more active citizen, the intellectual enjoyment of learning and personal development, possible obligatory participation.
- (Lack of) confidence in the ability to successfully complete the selected course in formal education.
- (Dis)satisfaction with the formal education itself or with the expected outcomes of participation in formal education.

Besides these micro level characteristics, the subproject also takes the institutional and policy factors into account. At the level of the educational institutions, the following items were included:

- Institutional differentiation including horizontal and vertical differentiation, articulation and transfer routes, student choice and information, dead-end routes, equivalence of general and vocational routes, coordination between different sectors/programs.
- Institutional autonomy and flexibility.
- Open or flexible access with specific policy and outreach strategy for lifelong learners, recognition of work and life experience, special entry routes, involvement in regional development/service for the community.
- Modes of study including modular courses and credit transfer, part-time study and distance learning.
- Financial and other support.
- Adult education opportunities like provision of relevant courses, appropriate scheduling, and affordable fee levels.

The psychosocial climate of the learning environment is important to explain the motivation and persistence of adults to learn. From earlier research, the following characteristics can be derived and were taken into account in the subproject:

- **Affiliation:** the extent the students like and interact positively with each other.
- **Teacher support:** the extent of help, encouragement, concern and friendship teachers direct towards students.
- **Task orientation:** the extent to which students and teachers maintain focus on task and value achievement.
- **Personal goal attainment:** the extent to which the teacher is flexible, providing opportunities for adults to pursue their individual interests.
- **Organisation and clarity:** the extent to which activities are clear and well organised.
- **Student influence:** the extent to which the teaching is learner-centred and allows for student influence in course planning decisions.
- **Involvement:** the extent to which students are satisfied with class and participate actively and attentively.

The supply and demand for lifelong learning is influenced by the macro-structural aspects of a country. Previous research by HIVA showed that some institutional and structural dimensions in the economy, the labour market, the education

system, social security and labour market policy have an impact on participation in lifelong learning. These system characteristics will be taken into account during the analysis of the subproject. The consortium introduced an "ad hoc group explanatory framework" that will explore these system characteristics in greater detail so that the various subprojects can use their input.

Technical Aspects of the Survey

The subproject is built around a survey among **13 000 participants in formal adult education and the educational institutions** in which their learning activities take place.

The target group of this survey includes "**adults studying in the formal education system**". The project coordinators formulated definitions for "formal adult education" and "adult learner". These definitions are common for all partners and the core sample of 1 000 completed questionnaires is based on it.

The definition of formal adult education is taken from the Adult Education Survey: *Formal education is education provided in the system of schools, colleges, universities and other formal educational institutions that normally constitutes a continuous "ladder" of full-time education for children and young people, generally beginning at age of five to seven and continuing up to 20 or 25 years old. In some countries, the upper parts of this "ladder" are organised programmes of joint part-time employment and part-time participation in the regular school and university system. Formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It leads to certification which leads to the next educational level.*

This common definition, together with a set of overlapping questions, will allow us to compare the results of Subproject 3 with Subproject 2.

In Subproject 3, an **adult learner** is an adult who learns in a formal educational setting and shows the following characteristics:

- he/she has left full-time initial education;
- he/she participates in formal education again;
- the gap between leaving and re-entering is at least 2 years.

Each participating country team has to collect 1 000 questionnaires of individual learners.

The survey consists of a **stratified sample by level of education**. In principle, the 1 000 completed questionnaires include four groups of respondents:

- 250 respondents ISCED 1-2 level
- 250 respondents ISCED 3 level
- 250 respondents ISCED 4 level
- 250 respondents ISCED 5-6 level

This sample is not representative for the whole population of adult learners, but fulfils the aim of the subproject to pay special attention to the differences in experiences and beliefs of adult learners at different levels of education.

Due to these different levels of education, the survey method differs. The Subproject coordinators proposed to use face-to-face interrogation for ISCED 1-2 levels, group written questionnaires with the help of an interviewer for ISCED 3-4 levels and postal or e-mail questionnaires for ISCED 5-6 levels.

The **questionnaire for students** was created by the project coordinators and consists of four parts:

- Educational background
- Participation in formal adult education
- Personal details
- Day-to-day activities.

The **questionnaire for the educational institutions** was developed by the Subproject coordinators, taking into account the feedback and the comments from the project partners. The questionnaire consists of three parts:

- Characteristics of the educational institution
- Characteristics of the specific programme
- General questions about lifelong learning policy.

Timetable of the Subproject 3

The survey started in April 2007 and will be finished by November 2007. After finishing the field work, each national team will produce a national report by May 2008. These national reports and the cross national data set will form the starting point for the international analysis which will be carried out by the subproject coordinators by the beginning of 2009. More information on the progress of this Subproject can be found on the project website. ■

Typology as Glue between the Five Subprojects of LLL2010

Odd Bjørn Ure (Fafo in Oslo) and Ellu Saar (IISL in Tallinn)

Introduction

Perhaps for good reasons, many European projects spend months, if not years, on agreeing on a common vocabulary underpinning their work towards the final conclusions. This exercise is good for the cohesion between the partners but is very repetitive in terms of producing results building on prior achievements. In a long run it is probably not useful to continuously dig into the differences between, e.g., competencies and skills in the English language, between UK *competencies* and French *compétences*; and not to forget the link to German *Fähigkeiten*.

To the contrary, no vocabulary is foreseen in the project LLL2010 because key concepts should primarily be functioning in each sub-project and only to a minor degree be illustrating a final outcome of the project.

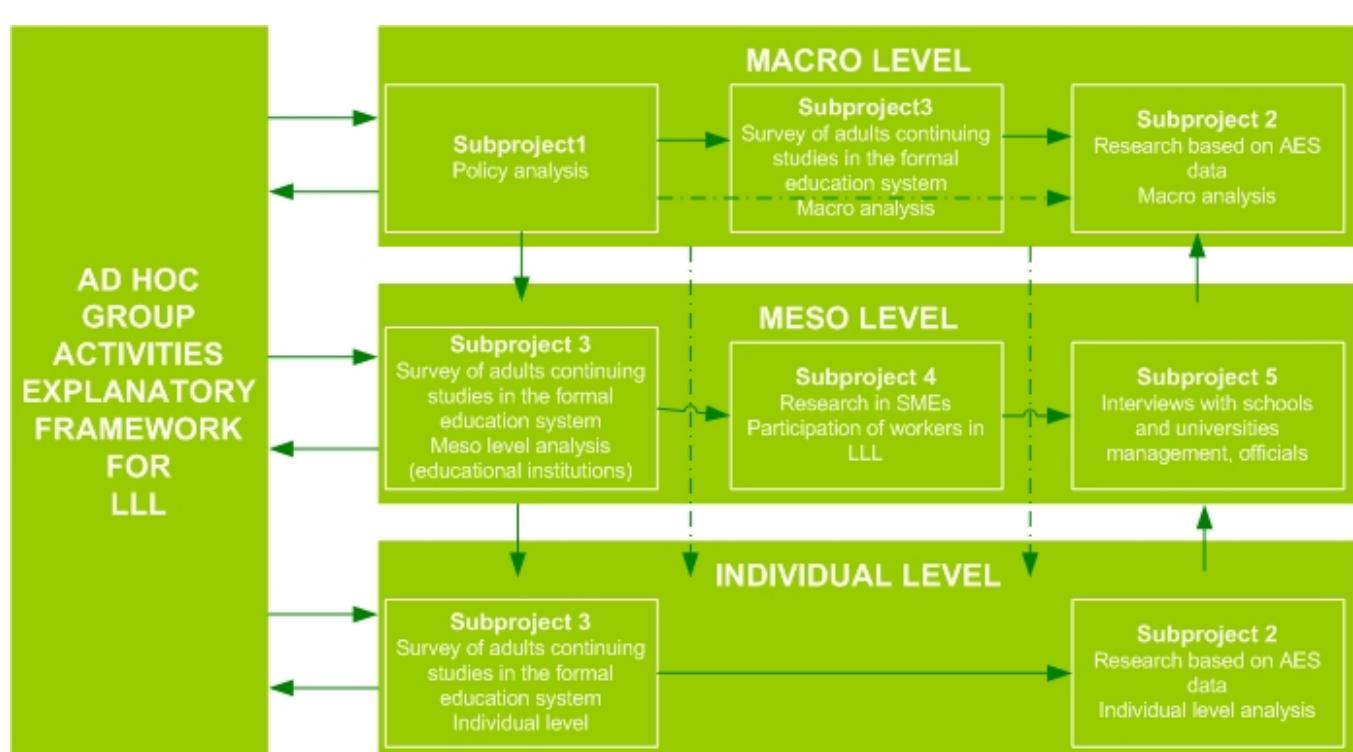
After two years of work, all partners in the project are deeply involved in simultaneously handling several subprojects with an ensuing multitude of major and minor tasks. The main theoretical challenge is probably to link the micro, meso and macro levels coherently together.

This depends on a successful running of the five sub-projects foreseen. It is however too easy to proverbially state that the road until year 2010 for the project LLL2010 will be constructed while walking on it. There is a need to develop the main guidelines for the intertwining of the micro, meso and macro levels by harvesting from the planning of each sub-project (SP) and from their implementation. Also, the comments so far from the European Commission and the scientific review panel are important input in this process.

The main task of an ad hoc group, which will deliver a first paper in November 2007, is to propose an overall framework for the project. The conceptual framework paper to be made by the ad hoc project members of that group will constitute a common theoretical reference point for the project. Based on this understanding, the planning and implementation of each SP depend on a gradual consensus on concepts, factors and indicators that formed part of the project application but which need to be refined throughout the project.

Analytical Levels

From the outset the project was conceived as a coordinated enlightenment of micro, meso and macro factors illustrating LLL in the constituencies of the thirteen partners. The SP's should shed light on one or more levels, as illustrated below:



Building Blocks in a Conceptual Framework

So far the work of the ad hoc group has singled out five ingredients in a conceptual framework for the project:

- individual LLL processes and outcomes
- collective LLL processes and outcomes
- national patterns of processes and outcomes
- institutional and structural dimensions of LLL processes
- typologies of LLL systems

Below, we will look closer into how a typology can be developed as the project LLL2010 evolves.

Three Steps towards a Typology

A first step in the construction of a typology might be to single out **key concepts** that i.e. characterise the levels of analysis. At a macro level the concept of **system** is consequently central in our analysis. The concept of **institution** should guide much of our work at a meso level; whereas the concept of the **individual** (as learner, citizen...) should be scrutinised at a micro level.

A second step is to **identify factors constituting the dimensions of LLL to be scrutinised**. The various dimensions have been captured while summing up the literature on existing LLL typologies. As illustrated below, many of these dimensions cover macro dimensions of LLL, above all related to the socio-economic environment and the labour market. The existing LLL typologies can be summarised as follows:

- institutional framework of knowledge and learning

- varieties of capitalism in terms of liberal vs. co-ordinated market economies
- socio-economic models
- skill formation systems
- countries based on training in enterprises
- education and training systems
- models of lifelong learning

Despite of the fruitful thoughts in these typologies, **they cannot serve as fully-fledged framework** for LLL2010. They are in their present state inadequate because they:

- either look at a specific selection of countries, while particularly leaving out the new Member states of the EU
- are very macro-oriented while particularly featuring socio-economic factors
- poorly measure historical, political and cultural dimensions

Hence, **one typology or several fine-tuned typologies need to be developed specifically for the project LLL2010**.

This brings us to the third step, which is the **development of indicators**. They are as important as concepts in this project, which combines qualitative and quantitative methods. In order to illustrate the process towards development of indicators, we will show below how key characteristics (see Table 1) of existing typologies on education and training systems have been extracted as an input to the future LLL typology (or typologies, if we decide to have more than one). The issue for each characteristic is whether it applies for the country under scrutiny.

Table 1 Examples of key characteristics on the way towards indicators

key characteristics of education and training (E&T) systems	yes	no	partly	n.a.
social equality in adult education				
comprehensiveness in E&T systems				
centralisation in E&T systems				
general/vocational education in 1. and 2. education				
alternance school/work during initial education/training				
involvement of HE institutions in adult education				
control and validation of adult education				
arrangements for transition education/work				

To sum up, the work on typologies of LLL systems aims to put together key concepts, factors describing dimensions of LLL as well as key characteristics needed for developing indicators.

Conclusion

One conclusion is that we should build on existing typologies while constructing our own. We should for example take into account different dimensions covered by previous scholar works. Whether we should arrive at one single typology or one for each SP is still an open question. Each SP could scrutinise how the state-of-play revealed has been constituted and why this has occurred. In other words, what drives LLL? Hopefully, the project will shed some light on the weight of international organisations (such as OECD and the European Commission) as well as global forces (europeanisation vs. globalisation?); compared with intrinsic factors in national institutions and systems.

The conceptual framework paper will not reach its final version before the project closes by September 2010. Furthermore, it will continually be revised by means of input from the sub-projects. ■

Project Workshops

Workshop in Krems

The fifth meeting of the project team was held at the Danube University Krems, Austria from 4 – 5th September 2007. On behalf of the European Commission LLL2010 scientific officer Marc Goffart together with project reviewer Dragana Avramova were also participating and giving feedback on SP1 Comparative Report as well as on overall progress of the project. Fifth workshop discussion covered:

- Subproject 1: Discussing results of the revised Comparative Report and how conclusions of the report should be taken into consideration during the next subprojects;
- Progress of ad hoc group: during the fourth project workshop in Vilnius the ad hoc group was introduced to secure horizontal link between all Subprojects and the overall integration and coherence of the project. The main task of the ad hoc group is the development of an overall explanatory framework for lifelong learning for the LLL2010 project, which should constitute a common (theoretical) reference basis for the work within the partnership and also serve as a common point of departure for the different subprojects;



LLL2010 project members at Danube University Krems

- Subproject 3: ideas for the outline of SP3 reports;
- Books: the content of two books that the project team will deliver;
- Subproject 4: preparations for the launch of the Subproject 4 – SME's and participation of workers in formal learning (interviews with employers).

Additionally, the project team was privileged to participate the conference "Europe's Cultures of Workplace Learning: New Insights in Training and Public Support for Lifelong Learning in Enterprises", which took place in the Danube University Krems on 3^d September. Our special thanks to Jörg Markowitsch, Günter Hefler, Silvia Benda-Kahri and everybody on organising team!

Next Project Workshops

The sixth LLL2010 workshop will be held in Budapest, Hungary on 24 – 26th of January 2008, hosted by TÁRKI.

The seventh project workshop is planned for 19 – 21st of September 2008 to be held in Prague, Czech Republic, hosted by NTF.

Project Video-Conferences

Third LLL2010 project video-conference meeting was held on 14th of May 2007. Members of project Coordination Committee discussed progress of Subproject 1 Comparative Report and agenda for Krems workshop.

Fourth video-conference meeting was held on 18th of June 2007, where mainly work done by Ad-hoc group was discussed: development of LLL2010 theoretical framework that would cover and help to link all subprojects.

On 28th of August 2007 took place fifth LLL2010 video-conference which was mainly dedicated for preparing Krems workshop.

Project Online Working Papers

LLL2010 project team will be publishing reports on work-in-progress on website:

<http://LLL2010.tlu.ee/publications/working-papers/>

LLL2010 team will publish different kinds of reports on the research carried out within this project. Some of these will be regarded as Comparative Reports, based on data from country-specific national reports. The National Reports will be published online in the project's Working Paper Series, as soon as the relevant

Comparative Report has been made available. In addition to that, the project team will produce some papers to advance the research and its methodological and theoretical background. We are also planning to make some of these papers available in the Working Paper Series.

Now Available on LLL2010 Website:

- SP1 Comparative Report: Lifelong Learning: Patterns of Policy in Thirteen European Countries

<http://LLL2010.tlu.ee/publications/project-reports/>

- Project Working-Papers on SP1 Country Reports; SP1 Report on Developing a Typology of Approaches to Lifelong Learning in Europe: Varieties of Capitalism and Approaches to Lifelong Learning; and SP1 Review on The European Union's Lifelong Learning Policies

<http://LLL2010.tlu.ee/publications/working-papers/>

Forthcoming Activities

In autumn 2007 project partners will finish Subproject 3 survey of adult learner (due to a difficult sampling procedure finding respondents took more time than initially expected) and deliver datasets by the end of the year 2007.

National Reports on SP3 survey will be ready in August 2008 and Comparative Report in the beginning of the year 2009.

In November 2007 ad hoc group will present a paper on common LLL2010 theoretical framework.

Launch of Subproject 4: in the beginning of 2008 paper on SP4 – Participation of SME's in Continuous Vocational Training – will be introduced to the consortium. After agreeing on SP4 methodology partners will start fieldwork (case studies in enterprises).

Meanwhile project partners will meet via video-conferences and two meetings in Budapest and Prague. ■

Participating Institutions

- Department for Continuing Education Research and Educational Management at the Danube University Krems, Austria
- Higher Institute for Labour Studies, University of Leuven, Belgium
- Institute of Sociology, Bulgaria
- The National Training Fund, the Czech Republic
- The University of Nottingham, England, United Kingdom
- Institute of International and Social Studies, Tallinn University, Estonia
- TÁRKI Social Research Centre, Hungary
- Educational Disadvantage Centre, Centre for Human Development at St. Patrick's College, Dublin City University, Ireland
- Centre for International Relations and Studies, Mykolo Romerio University, and the Institute of Social Research, Lithuania
- Fafo Institute for Labour and Social Research, Norway
- St. Petersburg State University: Department of Sociology, Department of Retraining and Improvement of Professional Skills for Sociology and Social Work, Russia
- Moray House School of Education, University of Edinburgh, Scotland, United Kingdom
- Slovenian Institute for Adult Education, Slovenia

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