

New Solutions for Eliminating Barriers for Lifelong Learning: Opportunities and Challenges

Ineta Luka, Dmitrijs Kulss
University of Latvia

LATVIA



- Located on the East coast of the Baltic sea;
- The central country of the Baltic States;
- The official language is Latvian;
- Riga is the capital of Latvia;
- Latvia's population in June, 2010 was 2,239,800 people;
- The territory of Latvia covers 64,589 km²;
- The official name of Latvia is the Republic of Latvia;
- The Republic of Latvia was founded on 18 November, 1918.



- Founded on 23 September, 1919;
- A state University with 13 faculties and 2 affiliates now, each faculty has 2-4 study centres;
- 9 scientific institutes - agencies, 7 scientific institutes, 4 institutes at the faculties, 11 administrative departments, 9 study centres at the university, modern library with branch libraries at each faculty, publishing house, the career centre;
- Offers the programmes of full academic cycle;
- Recognized diplomas;
- 15 doctoral schools and 24 PhD programmes;
- The main areas of the research – the humanities, sciences, social sciences and education sciences (500 projects, 700 publications and 1000 reports at the conferences annually).

- The growing demand of the society for knowledgeable, innovative, creative, competent employees;
- Economics striving to overcome unemployment consequences of the current downturn;
- A decline in employment since 2008 – 4.6% in Europe, 15.1% in Latvia;
- A demand for highly qualified personnel by 2020 – higher skill levels (from 29% to 35%), drop in demand for low skills (from 20% to 15%).

The Goal of the Paper

- To reveal the lifelong learning context of Latvia and develop the pattern for eliminating barriers for lifelong learning and improving individual's competences in order to make a lifelong learning a reality.

- An analysis of theoretical literature and adopted documents in the field of lifelong learning;
- An analysis of the available statistics regarding employment rate in the EU, participation rate in adult learning of Latvia and the financing of adult learning in Latvia;
- An analysis of best practice (case study, informant interviewing);
- Data analysis;
- Elaboration of suggestions.

National Strategy for LLL (2007-2013)

- LLL is a learning process that takes place life long and is based on the people's changing needs to acquire knowledge, skills, experience in order to promote or change their qualification according to the requirements of the labour market and one's own interests and needs and it develops one's natural abilities alongside with the promotion of new competences (The National LLL Strategy for 2007-2013).

- In the rapidly changing world the competences required are changing inevitably and fast;
- Formal, non-formal and informal learning are crucial in the lifelong learning context and complement each other by promoting the learning culture, widening experience, increasing the learning environment at the micro, macro and mezzo level;
- The revised version of the Strategy (2009) emphasizes adult learning as one of the least advanced education sectors in Latvia.

Policy Documents and Regulatory Framework (I)

- The **Education Law** (adopted in 1998);
- The **Law on Local Governments** (adopted in 1994);
- Long-term conceptual document **Latvian growth model: Human in the First Place** (adopted in 2005);
- Latvian Sustainable Development Strategy **Latvia 2030** (adopted in 2010);
- **Latvian National Development Plan 2007 -2013** (adopted in 2006);

Policy Documents and Regulatory Framework (II)

- **Lifelong Learning Strategy 2007-2013** (adopted in 2008);
- Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No.166 "**Regulation on active employment measures** and preventive measures to reduce unemployment" (adopted in 2008);
- **Business Competitiveness and Innovation Promotion Programme 2007-2013** (adopted in 2007);
- The Programme for Structural funds **Human Resources and Employment** (adopted in 2008).

Participation in Adult Learning

Participation in Adult Learning in Latvia and the European Union (average)

Coverage\Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009 (provisional)
European Union	7.2%	8.5%	9.3%	9.8%	9.7%	9.5%	9.5%	9.3%
Latvia	7.3%	7.8%	8.4%	7.9%	6.9%	7.1%	6.8%	5.3%

Source: Labour Force Survey, Eurostat

Participation in Adult Learning (progress)

Participation in Adult Learning in Latvia and the European Union (average): Required Progress

Coverage\Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2020
European Union	12.5%				15%
Latvia	9.0%	10.0%	11.0%	12.5%	15%

Source: Education and Training 2020; Latvian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2007-2013

State Public Funding for Adult Learning

State public financing for adult learning in 2007-2009 and 2010-2013 in Latvia

Period	2007-2009				2010-2013			
	million EUR	%	persons	%	million EUR	%	persons	%
Ministry of Economics	2.86	6.74	2427	1.41	44.41	25.12	27173	5.70
Ministry of Education and Science	3.88	9.15	10400	6.06	39.14	20.74	37000	7.77
Ministry of Agriculture	1.18	2.78	28676	16.71	1.27	0.67	47524	9.97
Ministry of Culture	2.06	4.86	8946	5.21	2.95	1.56	8024	1.68
Ministry of Welfare	32.44	76.47	121162	70.61	97.98	51.91	356753	74.88
Total:	42.42		171611		185.75		476474	
Total per year:	14.14		57204		46.43		119118	



Funding by Local Governments

AGENDA

- supports
- no support
- no response



Voucher System in Latvia: Latest Initiative

- The coordinating institution – the State Employment Agency;
- The framework of “Lifelong learning measures for the employed persons” whose goal is to provide adults under the risk of unemployment an opportunity to participate in up-skilling or re-skilling in adult non-formal learning to become more competitive in the labour market.

Voucher System in Latvia: Basic Conditions

- Supporting eight key competences;
- Support rather two persons one time than one person two times;
- Individual's choice and motivation;
- Limits;
- Special support for vulnerable groups;
- Use of structural funds;
- Intervention.

Voucher System in Latvia: Financing

Distribution of financing of the initiative

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013
Financing in EUR	643 589	1 164 300	1 211 222	791 071

Source: the data of the State Employment Agency; currency is converted into EUR using 0.702804 Bank of Latvia official exchange rate of Latvian Lats on November 17, 2010.

Voucher System in Latvia: an Evaluation Research

- A formative evaluation research was conducted in Adult Education Centre of Turība University (Riga, Latvia);
- Qualitative approach was chosen for the study;
- The applied method – informant interviewing;
- The purposeful sample using the series method to target the whole range was composed (3 groups: *experts, insiders, the highly experienced*);
- 2 experts, 7 insiders, 3 highly experienced.

Voucher System in Latvia: Findings from the Study

- The information available;
- Offer of the programmes;
- Motivation to learn;
- Benefits of the activity;
- Drawbacks / barriers that should be eliminated.

To conclude, both the analysis of the existing documents on introduction and implementation of the voucher system, as well as the practice show its benefits and admit the necessity of further empirical studies in order to improve it.

Best Practice of Latvia: Framework

- “New Solutions for Promoting Ex-offenders’ Employment” as part of the European study in order to create the European Inventory of Good Practices;
- Educational innovation: the integration of the teaching-learning process, support and guidance counselling, individualisation and flexibility, participation and self-evaluation, extending the competences of the teachers, holistic design of learning programmes including the integration of various content areas as well as the learners’ environments.

Best Practice of Latvia: Initiative

- The target group – one of the disadvantaged groups: people in custody (aged 25-64);
- A national initiative for people in imprisonment with no qualification and limited employment opportunities after serving the sentence within the 2006-2010 national programme “Creation, Testing and Realisation of the Pedagogic Improvement Programme for Imprisoned People”, building on a previous EQUAL project.

Best Practice of Latvia: the Stages

- Project preparation and application;
- Motivating engagement in learning;
- Course delivery;
- Qualification exam and evaluation of the initiative.

Best Practice of Latvia: Benefits (I)

- The target group was a disadvantaged group (people in custody) with no professional qualification or occupation (low-skilled audience);
- The initiative contributed to the accessibility of vocational education (learning in closed type of establishments);
- The costs were reduced by using the European structural funds;
- The qualification of the target group was improved (successful graduates were awarded ISCED 2 qualification);

Best Practice of Latvia: Benefits (II)

- The programme promoted inmates' motivation for lifelong learning (an opportunity to change the activity and environment, an opportunity to gain professional qualification, a possibility to get released before the term, employment possibilities after release);
- Improved social obligations (the course participants were given an opportunity to earn some money which they could transfer to their families);

Best Practice of Latvia: Benefits (III)

- Combination of traditional learning and workplace learning (16% of the target group participated for one year and 32% for another year which was possible because of designing of specialised teaching-learning aids and because of the introduced self-learning phase);
- Fulfilling personal expectations of the learners (two thirds of the participants found the training interesting).

Conclusion

- Clear policy and legislative support for promoting adult learning as part of lifelong learning concept in Latvia;
- State and local governments provide substantial financial support for non-formal adult learning;
- The continuity of learning process after completing state-funded course is not always ensured by individuals using self-financing;
- Most of nationally funded learning was only short-term and did not result in further individual's motivation to learn.

Pattern for Eliminating Barriers for LLL (I)

- The best practice of formal adult education shows innovative ways of organizing adult learning for disadvantaged groups (people in custody);
- The created support system gave a positive result;
- The programme promoted inmates' motivation for lifelong learning and fulfilled learners' personal expectations;
- The learners raised their professional skills and successful graduates of the programme were awarded professional qualification, which promoted their competitiveness.

Pattern for Eliminating Barriers for LLL (II)

- The current practice of vouchers proved to be theoretically an efficient state intervention instrument in Latvia by supporting key competences, with defined policy priority of involvement on the ‘first-time first-go’ basis, a free choice of individuals and the balance between motivation and clear limits with special support for vulnerable target groups and career guidance;
- Formative evaluation research might be considered as a pilot study which gives an insight in the situation which should be further studied in the whole country.

Thank you for your attention!

Dr.paed., assoc. prof. **Ineta Luka**
ineta.luka@lu.lv

Dmitrijs Kulss
dmitrijs.kulss@gmail.com