

“Life long learning”

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1. Two mayor tasks for life long learning.

A. It has to help one to create a career with certain conditions:

- One can plan his/her studies independently and be an analyzer of his/her own life.
- Students with clear vision of their personal future are surprisingly good in judging what subjects and modules he/she needs during his/her career. Of course there are sometimes situations where a student thinks that he/she doesn't need certain subject, but realizes later on that actually the subject is useful. Anyways, in many disciplines and faculties there is quite little possibilities to personal decisions and many students have very similar personal studying plans. HE systems should be developed into direction where students could have more competence in understanding the curricula and it's relevance to a certain profession or field of research. This requires more efficient tutoring and counselling services - also prioritising of subjects.
- Curriculum is flexible and degree systems are not rigid.
- Mechanisms for personal curriculum planning should be developed further. As mentioned before, due to lack of knowledge how curricula are made students don't know how to build personal learning plans and responsibility moves to another person – in this case normally to the tutoring teacher. Well made plans are proven to be very efficient in ones personal development and further plans like continuing studying. ECTS and diploma supplement are systems that enhance possibilities to build degree from modules. These systems should be developed further also in this sense.
- Studying is labour market relevant, provides latest academic and professional knowledge.
- Students should have more labour market contacts. This can be achieved by collaboration in different applied science projects, practice periods and making thesis. For example, finnish polytechnics have good collaboration (projects for regional development, applied science institutions) with labour market, economy and communal decision making. Students should benefit from it in more direct manner. Students should be involved and be treated as equal partners in collaboration.
- Tutoring provides sufficient means to understand the essence of LLL and gives enough information from the very beginning of studying.
- In order to achieve LLL one has to learn how to learn already in comprehensive school. Students should know all their possibilities as well as possible and know the most efficient way in finding information about further and supplementary education. Students should have better access to information about them and their studying (credit register should be detailed and in real time, statistics about exams should be available etc.).
- Studying serves ones personal needs and gives a possibility to personal growth.
- Not all of the skills and knowledge that is achieved during the studies are ment for the society. It's a human right to have access to education and cultural refreshments without any conditions. Of course studying clearly aims to employability and LLL makes possibilities to develop or advance in a career better. Still from my point of view a big part of studying is self development and spiritual growing. This possibility should be offered to everyone during the lifetime.

B. It has to give a possibility to change career, direction of career and lifestyle:

- Changing career or discipline should be easy.
- This is possible with efficient adult educational systems and supplementary education. Mechanisms to change discipline inside the polytechnic or even between the HE-systems should be developed. (example about the importance: the manager that started to build clay houses, institution trained nurses developing to polytechnic specialist nurses).
- Older people should be well informed about possibilities they have.
- I may have given a little pessimistic picture about students knowledge in LLL. Actually I wanted to point out that they already know quite a lot, but should know more. Someone maybe makes the remark that for students most important thing about LLL is information. No one can be forced to study at all after graduation, but a person that realizes that in nowadays society you have to develop as fast as society will find means for that. Older students that are near their graduation use information technology very naturally to find information about "post graduation life" and further studying. Older people are not usually in institutions full of knowledge about studying and tutoring person giving advices. Information about education should be given and marketed to older people too and latest IT should be available to all the people. People should be encouraged to try new things and learn new methods. Changing discipline should not be judged by institutions.
- Enhancing mobility, accessibility, diversity and equality should be the values that guide the development of life long learning. (between systems, disciplines faculties, countries).
- Poor socioeconomical situation should not be a barrier to LLL. Degree studying is usually supported, but stipends and grants should be available to other students too. All students should have possibility to education after the first degree.

2. Some threats to life long learning

- Resource efficient society: LLL is used to take the last drop of juice out of population to serve the society.
- Funding shouldn't be based only on results. People should have possibility to supplementary studying even if employer doesn't profit from it (example: discussion with trade union's representative, employer side).
- LLL doesn't mean long lasting learning.
- Studying too often and too big blocks isn't necessarily life long learning. Learning is not only about studying. For example being in student politics, travelling abroad taking a year off and work are all things where you learn something new and see the things that you have studied in a new perspective.
- Degree centered society - only aim is degree after degree.
- Portfolios are good example about how to show knowhow in another way than only degrees. Example: A Student has completed every single credit of his/her degree, but one credit is missing. He/she doesn't have a good chance to get employed, because of the missing degree. Of course we all understand the importance of degrees, but the little clumsy example makes one think of the meaning of degree. Maybe systems like ECTS and diploma supplement could be developed to serve to employers and non-degree students too?

3. Conclusion:

Studying is every persons right and it's natural that therefore everybody should have a possibility to join the process of LLL. People should not be forced to study their whole lifetime, because there are different lifestyles and personal needs – studying and learning are not the same thing. Anyway, older people should be encouraged to continue learning and studying – to take part in LLL. LLL can be used as a way of studying to profit both society and individual by diverse ways of education, but it should not put any more result making pressure on individual. People should be encouraged to think what LLL means and should be given information and means to actively plan their way of LLL.