D4.1.1 Definition of basic principles for integrative approach in CE dimension

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TABLE OF CONTENT

1. Basic Principles – Integrative Approach

When speaking on the continuous education, a clear distinction should be made regarding the terminology used to describe some CE activities and university lifelong learning (ULLL).

Before 1980, the concept of learning was different from what we today consider this process to be. The learning then was understood as gaining of knowledge during the formal education period, but not the process that takes place outside this formal framework and outside this formal period of education. However, the term adult education (that nowadays is the part of CE) was firstly introduced by the American adult educator, Malcolm Shepherd Knowles, who saw the adult education as the "*organizing principle of all education*" (Continuing education; lifelong learning, Marjan Laal, Ashkan Laal, Arsalan Aliramaei).

Continuing education, adult education and professional development are all synonyms used to describe the process of gaining knowledge through education and training in order and are most commonly used during the 20th century. As processes of industrialization developed, new needs for professional and personal improvement emerged in terms of increased access to information, keeping the pace with rapid technology changes, new skill requirements, the term of lifelong learning has become more and more popular

However, regardless of the terms used (adult education, CE, LLL, adult learning, andragogy, etc.), the basics are the same. They all refer to the repeated and continuous gaining of knowledge and skills in order to keep the pace with ever-growing demands of industry and consequently the work labor.

The concept of lifelong learning has become very popular over the last decade. Due to industrial growth and development, many organizations felt the need to adapt to these rapid changes in order to solve to challenges emerged in an environment like this. In order to fulfil the requirements for skills and knowledge required for solving these challenges and problems, individuals seek for new competences through lifelong learning. Some important aspects of all LLL activities are: *duration, learner-centered perspective, multi-level and multi-subject learning, and open access* (Continuing education; lifelong learning, Marjan Laal, Ashkan Laal, Arsalan Aliramaei).

Another important aspect of lifelong learning is flexibility. From one side, due to new electronic and internet technologies allow learning at home, at workplace and in such a way makes it efficient cost and travel wise. On the other side, since the learning population is growing in number and age, including very often people with families who have jobs, time they can be spent on learning can quite challenging, which is why LLL can be easily fit into their everyday dynamics, since it can be organized at any place and any time.

Additionally, learners engaged in LLL activities are very different in terms of speed at which they can adopt new knowledge, capacities and interest in specifics, and there is no need to unify the pace and way of learning process, but on contrary can be adjusted to individual needs.

With the emerging needs to be constantly up-do-date professionally and technologically, the LLL becomes ongoing process (Beller, & Or, 1998), as well as competitive advantage.

"*LLL includes all strategies and programs taking place during individual's life, to make opportunities to learn. It is a process of continuous education throughout someone's life,*

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addressing the needs of both the individual and that of the relevant community" (Abukari, 2005).

The idea of lifelong learning encompasses both concepts of education and vocational trainings in policies and strategies for youth, employment and research. Here, interested individuals can have optimal use of different learning environments, regions and countries to improve their skills and competences (Harvey, 2012).

Having in mind all previously described, we can say that lifelong learning mean that one's education is varying, adjustable to individual needs and accessible regardless of place and time. As such, it can be used as important mechanism for facilitation of adapting to modern trends and technologies. Whether it is formal or informal, it improves the quality of life (personally satisfying) and work (occupationally required) and it contributes to personal, community and economic welfare.

One of the definitions of continuing education was given at the UNESCO Sub-Regional Seminar on Continuing Education which was organizes in 1987 in Canberra, Australia. The continuing education was defined as "*broad concept which includes all of the learning opportunities all people want or need outside of basic literacy education and pri8mar education*". This definition refers to the continuing education available to both youth and adults, which satisfies various needs in terms of knowledge and includes experiences from formal, non-formal and informal education. What is very important is that it is understood as opportunity to engage in lifelong learning after the primary education.

University Lifelong Learning (ULLL) is the process of providing opportunity to individuals to engage in LLL within the academic units of higher education institutions. However, different countries and different universities have defined ULLL in different ways. Eucen (European University Continuing Education Network) tends to define ULLL with special emphasis on rich diversity and ability to provide learning opportunities throughout the life. The definition provided by them is that:

"*ULLL is the provision by higher education institutions of learning opportunities, services and research for: the personal and professional development of a wide range of individuals - lifelong and lifewide; and the social, cultural and economic development of communities and the region. It is at university level and research-based; it focuses primarily on the needs of the learners; and it is often developed and/or provided in collaboration with stakeholders and external actors*"

Another definition is based on Delors' (1996) four pillars of education for the future, stating that LLL is *"learning that is pursued throughout life: learning that is flexible, diverse and available at different times and in different places"*. His four pillars are:

- Learning to know – learning with the purpose to provide the knowledge and skills required to understand better the world and its complexities, and to provide the solid ground for further knowledge improvements.

- Learning to do – gaining skills and competences in order to be effective and efficient part of society and economy.

- Learning to live together and with others - to learn more on topics that will enable diffent individuals to live in peace and harmony (human rights, democratic principles, intercultural understanding, etc.).

- Learning to be - to develop skills which will enable individuals to develop to their fullest potential and become complete persons

This is supported also by "learning to learn" concept.

Lifelong learning can boost creativity, leadership, resourcefulness and other skills necessary for producing the expected professional results in the knowledge-based economy, such as to "*manage uncertainty, communicate across and within cultures, sub-cultures, families and communities, negotiate conflicts*".

The main focus of this concept is to enable individuals to be able learn and to keep learning throughout the all stages of their lives.

The European Commission (2001: 9) found that lifelong learning has "Four broad and mutually supporting objectives: personal fulfilment, active citizenship, social inclusion and employability/adaptability". This means that lifelong learning goes beyond the professional advancements.

The European Lifelong Learning Initiative defines lifelong learning as

"*…a continuously supportive process which stimulates and empowers individuals to acquire all the knowledge, values, skills and understanding they will require throughout their lifetimes and to apply them with confidence, creativity and enjoyment, in all roles circumstances, and environments.*" (Watson 2003: 3)

The collaboration could be exploited in many ways: through legal agreements between the parties; via formal contacts between specific persons in charge of developing such collaboration or any other type of settings the parties like to establish.

- Major content-related aspects of continuing education programs are defined by the academic units:
  - o The responsibility for courses and modules rests with the professor or their academic unit.
  - o The ideas for new programs can be initiated by professors in cooperation with other academics, (potential) students or employers. In some case ideas can be prompted also be generated by the students or by stakeholders from the territory, although the formal proposition of the new programs is always a task for the professors.
- Other responsibilities should be centralised, ideally in a specialised continuing education unit, for the following reasons:
  - o Curricula: should require approval by a centralised academic body (e.g. the Senate) to assure a counterbalance to purely market-driven forces
  - o Interdisciplinary: As continuing education programs are designed according to market needs, they are typically interdisciplinary and require, therefore, more than one faculty or department.
  - o Student services: adult working students need information different from regular students. In case they pay higher fees, they expect a higher service level.
  - o Marketing: As target groups for programs are not clear-cut, joint marketing material that promotes all CE programs is advisable. Economics of scale are

possible in areas like participation in trade fairs, production of marketing material, market research, etc.

- o Educational concept: students in continuing education need a special educational concept, and most university professors need guidance to implement this concept. This can include e-learning platforms.

- o Competent contact point (internal): Other administrative units of the university (like quality assurance, book-keeping, personnel, etc.) need a competent contact point that can explain the characteristics of continuing education.

- o Competent contact point (external): Continuing education units are contact points for companies that seek to establish customized programs and pro-actively contact corporations to initiate such programs

Benchmarks:

- Executive School of Management, Technology and Law of the University of St.Gallen (ES-HSG), Switzerland

- Postgraduate Center of the University of Vienna, Austria

- UNI for LIFE Seminarveranstaltungs GmbH, University of Graz, Austria

- SDA Bocconi School of Management, Bocconi University, Italy

- Department for Continuing Education, Oxford University. England

2. Fragmented approach vs. Integrative approach

During the past years, universities have become increasingly aware of the importance of development of continuous education. However, it seems that many higher education institutions in Europe and worldwide are facing the same obstacles and challenges in their efforts to develop and/or improve this area.

Continuous education activities have been realized in various forms (trainings, workshops, seminars, etc.). They are most often realized through university or faculty units (training centers, lifelong learning centers, CE units, etc.) as part of their regular activities. This role of theirs is defined in the Decisions on the establishment of these units and are embedded in their missions and visions.

Although many of them are indeed recognized as good practices and have been very successful in developing and delivering trainings to various target groups, there are still many challenges that can limit further development of continuing education in general at HEIs.

Continuous education implemented in this way cannot reach its full potential because this approach is fragmented and scattered throughout a number of faculties, offices, centers and other units. This is one of the top challenges that causes many other limitations (as described in the following text).

The lack of information on existence and range of offered CE activities at the level of whole HEI, makes the institution unaware of the degree of CE implementation at its own premises. There are no reliable information on the topics covered, number of courses/trainings held, number of trainees, structure of trainees, funds invested in development and delivery of CE activities, revenue from organized trainings, etc.

Also, the learning outcomes and all information relevant for the follow-up of such activities (number and structure of participants, satisfaction feedback, statistic reports, etc.) stay within mentioned centers and offices, which makes them impossible to monitor or to have a clear picture on realized activities. Although many times the news and reports on realized CE activities are published at the websites of HEIs' and their units' websites, this kind of announcements are available only to the limited number of people and are again very scattered and it is impossible to keep record of them.

In many cases, there have been no established mandatory procedures or requests from any of the HEIs management bodies/structures to prepare and send this kind of information to one centralized place (IT system, CE Office, etc.), where the data would be collected and available for the further use. Recent efforts to centralize this information were mainly voluntary based which leads to conclusion that even if there were some information related to CE activities, it is not reliable and exhaustive.

The lack of available information of existing CE activities and the topics covered by them can also lead to the risk of duplicating and unjustified repeating, which causes unnecessary waste of both human and financial resources. Instead, these resources can be directed to development of new activities that are required by target groups.

On the other hand, from the potential users' point of view, this lack of centralized information and single point of access to available courses and trainings may lead to the loss of potential trainees to other competitive units and decrease the number of activities and consequently the income generated from these activities.

3. Basics of Integrative Approach in Continuous Education

Having in mind all shortcomings of the fragmented approach to realization of continuous education activities, it is necessary to develop the model for integration of these activities to a central access point.

Integrative approach (in this sense) is a way to deal with the complex system of continuous education in such a way that normally different and fragmented activities fulfil the main objective and mission of the organization resulting in an optimum performance in a cost effective and sustainable manner for the benefit of all involved actors.

Operationally, integrative approach should encompass several elements

Mapping and promotion

Information on all continuing education activities should be available at one place.

Publically visible information should include the list of offered services with description of:

- Topic covered

- Modules (if any)

- Unit where this service is available

- Participation fee (if any)

- Lecturers (optional)

Internal (for institution only) section that would be used for the collection of data for realized activities, such as statistical data, structure of users, revenue generated, cost of realization, list of lecturers, reports, contact lists, etc.)

This kind of centralized access often requires the introduction of information data base or system for collecting and storing the data at the level of University and/or establishment of the unit particularly dealing with Continuing Education dimension.

Institutional regulations and structures

In order to gather information on the realized continuing education activities, it is usually required to have one single unit at the level of HEIs dealing with CE whose regular activity will be keeping records and collecting the data on trainings, courses, workshops, etc.

However, besides existence of such unit and clearly defined tasks and responsibilities, there is always an issue of information flow towards this unit. This is why, there need to be mandatory procedures (for CE activities organizers) for delivery of information on realized activities (statistic data, reports, revenue if any, funds spent, etc.) to this unit.

Another issue that needs to be addressed institutionally is the strategy and accompanying procedures for introduction and approval of new CE (LLL) courses. With introduction of clearly and strategically defied rules, the HEIs will avoid the risk of duplicating the CE services and unnecessary realization costs (both financial and human resources wise).

Monitoring and quality control

As with any of the activities carried out at higher education institution, it is strongly recommended to have efficient monitoring and quality control procedures that will provide the constant quality of delivered services. For this purpose, it is desirable to introduce the progress monitoring system with clearly defined key performance indicators that will be applied in regular assessment of realized activities.

Visibility

Visibility issues need to be addressed at the level of institution (e.g. at the university's and/or faculty's website), not only at the level of individual units, centers or projects within which these activities are carried out.

List of offered CE activities (trainings, workshops, etc.) need to be publically available and easily accessible to as wide group of potential users as possible.

Based on the previously mentioned principles, otherwise scattered activities can be channeled towards the joint objective and fulfilment of the unique CE mission of an institution, without jeopardizing their main characteristics of being

- tailored to suit the needs of social and technological progress

- tailored to answer to the needs of different target groups

- sustainable in organizational, professional and financial terms.