LELLE: Let's learn how to learn! - Raising awareness to the importance of and providing an innovative solution for the inclusion of the training of learning skills in existing higher education curricula

2015-1-HU01-KA203-013619

GENERAL RESEARCH SUMMARY MODULE 2

GENERAL RESEARCH SUMMARY

THE RESEARCH METHOD AND SCOPE

The research was the first stage of LELLE project. It concerned the learning competence including three selected skills:

- ⮑ **Learning to learn** is the ability to pursue and persist in learning, to organize one's own learning, including through effective management of time and information, both individually and in groups. This competence includes awareness of one's learning process and needs, identifying available opportunities, and the ability to overcome obstacles in order to learn successfully. This competence means gaining, processing and assimilating new knowledge and skills as well as seeking and making use of guidance. Learning to learn engages learners to build on prior learning and life experiences in order to use and apply knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts: at home, at work, in education and training. Motivation and confidence are crucial to an individual's competence.
- ⮑ **Critical thinking** – to reflect and handle tasks autonomously; to make sound decisions and reasonable judgements; to identify connections and recognize opportunities; critically evaluate ideas.
- ⮑ **Problem solving** – to understand the process of successful problem-solving; to be able to solve problems independently and collaboratively; a mixture of analytical and creative thinking; assertive, open communication.
- ⮑ **Managing your own learning process** – strategy, training, time management; the ability to access, gain, process and assimilate new knowledge and skills, organize their own learning, evaluate their own work; integrating information into the learning process in appropriate ways, adjusting way of learning to own goals.

The basic aim of the research was to collect best practices – solutions used – for the evaluation and development of the learning competence. This research is also to help correctly identify and understand the core of this competence. Opinions of employees from institutions of higher education, organizations that educate adults as well as employers (HR departments) in Europe and outside were the key information source. During the research - in relation to the learning competence and the skills it involves (critical thinking, solving problems, managing your own learning process) - such issues were mentioned as competence/skill importance, areas/fields where it is particularly important, its determinants and ways of evaluating it as well as its development.

The research was conducted between February and April 2016 in the form of a survey and in-depth interviews. The questionnaires were sent to the respondents by email and were sent back similarly. The in-depth interviews were conducted in person or by electronic communicators (e.g. Skype) by professional researchers.

The research covered universities, scientific and research centres related to LLL, adult education centres (continuing education centres), training institutions, psychological and educational counselling services for adults, teacher education centres, counsellors, schools, foundations, associations operating in the education and continuing education field, career services and carrier counselling entities, job agencies, human resources departments in companies.

In this work the named entities were divided into three categories:

[1] educational institutions (universities, schools – so-called formal education) – 34 entities,

[2] training institutions (language and coaching schools, continuing education centres, etc.) – 19 entities,

[3] non-educational organizations (companies, workplaces – employers) – 19 entities.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

Respondents who participated in the research performed within the project state clearly that the learning competences are very important and impact not only the potential and status of each individual but also of the institution he/she works for. The final findings are summarized according to the competences identified as key for the development of the learning competence:

⮥ **Learning to learn** is perceived as the key competence[1] in life that allows to act efficiently and achieve the set goals, every day one has to learn something new to act efficiently and effectively. The society based on knowledge creates new challenges and formal education provides only general knowledge in a specific field. If a person wants to be up to date with the development, he/she needs to learn continually and improve qualifications. There is a need to develop this competence not only in people being educated but also in educators. The learning competence is important in every aspect of human life, not only in educational (school), professional situations, but also in private (personal) situation, including self-development. The employees who have developed the learning competence can adapt faster to an organization, perform the tasks they are given more efficiently, as well as act much more effectively when taking new challenges. In most cases, the developing the learning competence is an individual matter of each employee. Thus, there are no special – formalised and systematic – actions for additional training in this scope. Ability to learn is crucial for the employees who want to live up to the changing requirements of the labour market. Among the respondents, there is a need to motivate employees properly and continually to improve themselves, be the best possible in different aspects of their work. Most often mentioned tools and methods for development of this competence were: internal trainings, trainings in the workplace, self-improvement, self-education, mentoring, coaching or tutoring, subject-based or problem-solving teams.

⮥ **Critical thinking** is considered as one of the key competences that is necessary for an individual. The critical thinking concept is perceived as a leading competence both in the process of transferring knowledge, sharing knowledge and developing knowledge. Based on this competence, students can make appropriate choices about subjects, lecturers, text books, and educational materials as well as the offer complementing the curriculum related not only directly to education but also to being active in other areas of life. On the other hand, carrying critical thinking too far could be a disadvantage in multinational environment.

---

[1] Stracke, C. M. (2012). Competences and skills for learning-outcome orientation: competence development, modelling, and standards for human resources development, education and training. 华东师范大学学报（自然科学版）Journal of East China Normal University. Vol. 2012 (2). Shanghai: ECNU. pp. 115-130. [CLC number: Q948; DOI: 10.3969/J. ISSN 1000-5641. 2012.02.012] [retrieved online from: http://www.opening-up.education]

The employees who have the critical thinking skill take into account a broad analysis perspective when developing solutions, they are able to question and not to accept solutions that are substantively doubtful. Following tools and methods for development of this competence were proposed: trainings, workshops, courses, evaluation of selected areas, self-assessment, exchanging best practice, feedback from supervisor implemented on the work, mentoring, coaching, group work (brainstorming).

⟳ **Problem solving** is understood by most of the institutions included in the research to be important or very important in each employee group. This skill is manifested in efficient decision-making and the quality of decisions both in terms of routine and unique processes. Typical problems are solved automatically, while complex problems require advanced skills that should be improved. The problem solving skill was considered important in the context of rapid changes in the world that surrounds us and corresponds in a direct way to innovative and creative thinking. This skill is desired both in individual and group work and is reflected in high flexibility, analytical and creative thinking, the ability to think conceptually, having a critical attitude to the suggested solutions, the ability to communicate in an assertive and efficient way, looking for new solutions on the market and implement changes. Attitude toward problems is emphasised as the most important thing to develop. According to the research respondents, this competence can be developed in following ways: popularization of best practice, raising awareness of available courses and trainings, tutoring, peer learning, coaching, participation in trainings.

⟳ **Managing own learning process** skill seems to be the hardest to define and the more diverse at first but eventually nearly all respondents linked this to managing own learning path has something to do with work-life balance, lifelong learning and career goals. This competence includes time management skills, self-knowledge and reflective mind-set. Students need to have the skill of managing their own learning process in order to gain the knowledge, skills and competencies described in the curriculum in a specific period. It is manifested in an open attitude to new challenges, the fact of having the present state of knowledge, readiness to develop professionally and increase their competencies, in the satisfaction of conducting the tasks given, sense of self-development and motivation for further development. People who have the skill of managing their own learning process can efficiently manage their own time, determine the scope of knowledge that is essential to gain in a specific time. The skill of controlling the level of own knowledge as well as updating it intentionally and systematically is highly valued and particularly desirable when the employee is confronted with new tasks and has not fully developed the ways to perform them yet. As per information collected among the research respondents, the most effective ways of developing this competence are: trainings, courses, internships, tutoring, exchanging of experiences with internal experts, mutual observation, working groups, problem solving, supporting and motivating employees to take responsibility and action considering their own development.

When asked about **general recommendations** regarding the learning competence development, respondents showed how complex issue it is. Special attention was given to the individualisation of the learning process according to the needs and capacities of each student which should be reflected also in a complex evaluation of the progress and motivation activities supporting the

willingness of the student to continue and progress with further activities. They proposed numerous methods how the learning could be developed, e.g.:

- activate students during the university education time,
- offer individualised and interactive forms of learning and skills development,
- create inclusive and tolerant learning environment, enable learning on mistakes,
- offer workshops on different aspects of the process of learning,
- give more time in workshops to enable peer-to-peer learning,
- motivate to participate in professional trainings and workshops,
- perform assessment and evaluation of progress.

These methods are based on the activation of the learner and transferring the responsibility over the learning on the learner. The learning should be based on activating and interactive methods of work and a system of motivating and evaluating the learning process. Trainings of soft skills are considered as those that show people their capability to develop their learning competence and success during the training course increase the level of motivation to continue the work and further development.

The most often mentioned learning methods are presented in the table below:

Critical thinking	Problem solving	Managing learning process
- Discussions - Meetings - Giving feedback - Communication / assertive communication - Raising questions, comments - Peer supervision and support - Workshops / trainings - Teamwork - Critical analysis	- Teamwork / groupwork - Workshops - Discussions - Presenting own ideas and implementing them - Idea box - Presentation / presenting - Feedback	- Individual development plan (sometimes linked to performance assessment system) - Self-evaluation / Self-knowledge - Career orientation/planning - Comparison of self-evaluation results (from current period and previous ones) - Forcing/giving constrains (deadlines, etc.) - Training courses (outsourced) - Feedback & reward (sometimes annual performance report & feedback) - Learning portfolios for tracking evidences of one's own learning - Peer-observation and feedback

There is a clear understanding that continuous learning is a key element of giving answers to the challenges of the constantly changing world and can impact the market position of the institution – whether representing education or not. This is in particular due to constant and rapid changes that can be observed in the world of today. All institutions understand the need for development of employees competences however not all of them have the means to support it with any programs and initiatives. At the same time we observe that employee who presents his/her achievements when it comes to personal development shows that is very important for the institution and so is considered. In this light it becomes clear that potential employee is more valuable when has the "learning competence" developed already during the university time, which confirms the meaning of this project and its results to the development of contemporary high education methods in this field.

LELLE: Let's learn how to learn! - Raising awareness to the importance of and providing an innovative solution for the inclusion of the training of learning skills in existing higher education curricula

Web: http://lelle.gtk.uni-pannon.hu   www.facebook.com/lelleproject   www.linkedin.com/groups/8537515