Background of the Lifelong Learning Concept

Lifelong learning (LLL) is one the key principles for education in Denmark. The idea dates back to the 19th century Danish clergyman and philosopher N.F.S. Grundtvig, who argued that a prerequisite for active participation in a democratic society is education for all citizens on a lifelong basis. Thus, the term lifelong learning has traditionally been linked to adult education. Today LLL is understood holistically: We shall all learn in our entire lifetime – children as well as young people and adults.

An official Danish LLL-strategy was first published in a report finalised by the Government in 2007 in connection to the European Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP). The Danish LLP report constituted the Government’s contribution to realising the common goals of the Lisbon strategy.

LLP is designed to enable people, at any stage of their life, to take part in stimulating learning experiences, as well as developing education and training across Europe. The activities of LLP continue under the new Erasmus+ programme from 2014-2020.

While LLL in Denmark earlier was seen as a means to increase socioeconomic equality, today’s LLL strategy recognises it as a crucial resource for economic growth.

National policy for lifelong learning

The national strategy for lifelong learning aims to make Denmark a leading knowledge society with strong competitiveness and cohesion. Education, lifelong skills upgrading, research and innovation are crucial to achieving this aim.

Nine LLL objectives for education of pupils, students and adults:

1. **A coherent and flexible education system** from preschool to higher education
2. **Equal opportunities** for everyone to acquire basic skills, a qualifying education and a solid foundation for lifelong learning
3. **World-class education** that fosters talent and accommodates weak learners. Quality is given pride of place, and education must match the needs of the society
4. **Adult education and continuing training** opportunities to match labour market’s needs. A particular emphasis is on those with lowest level of education
5. **Systematic competence development** for employees in all private and public workplaces
6. **Guidance and counselling** opportunities to ensure the best possible conditions for to choose education programmes and to participate in lifelong learning
7. **Strong interaction** between educational institutions, enterprises and other stakeholders

8. **A global perspective** to be included in all education programmes to strengthen internationalisation

9. **Strong education environments** in higher education to contribute to higher quality and knowledge development

The Government’s ambition is that 95 per cent of a youth cohort should complete an upper secondary education and 50 per cent should complete a higher education. The LLL strategy helps them fulfil it.

---

**Implementation of the Lifelong Learning Strategy**

**Responsible authority**

The responsibility of lifelong learning is shared between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education and Science. The Danish Agency for Science and Higher Education under the Ministry of Higher Education and Science administer Erasmus+, which the European LL programme in 2013 merged into.

A **Danish Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning** [1] was established in 2009 by an inter-ministerial group. The framework supports the goal of lifelong learning. It helps students and employees by giving them a comprehensive overview of the education system and visualising possible educational paths.

**Policy outcomes of the LLL strategy**

Implementation of lifelong learning reforms is based on shared responsibility and active contributions. This applies to national authorities, social partners, educational institutions, enterprises, liberal adult education providers, voluntary organisations and municipal and regional units.

The LLL-related reforms have focused on:

- Strengthening of guidance and counselling for young people
- Recognition of prior learning
- Partnerships in lifelong skills upgrading and education and training
- A more flexible and transparent education system

Among multiple examples of concrete LLL-initiatives, **centres** [2] have been created for guidance and educational provision for weak learners to ensure young people can complete a general or vocational upper secondary education.

In relation to early learning, **curricula** [3] are drawn up in all day-care facilities. An **early language assessment** [4] is made for all children at the age of three and again at the age of six at the start of the pre-school class.

**Partnership initiatives** [5] have made education programmes more profession-oriented. **Easier access** [6] between vocational education and higher education ensures a more flexible education system.
Additionally an agreement of easier access to skill upgrading has also been made. Besides ensuring a flexible adult education system, initiatives in the agreement also recognise the increasing need of digital competencies.

References


Danish Ministry of Higher Education and Science, 2015: *Principles for education in Denmark*. [Online] Available at: