



EXTRACT
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15. ON ENDORSEMENT OF THE CONCEPT OF LIFELONG LEARNING IN THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

To endorse the Concept of Lifelong Learning in the Republic of Armenia in accordance with the Annex.

PRIME MINISTER
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA
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CONCEPT OF LIFELONG LEARNING IN THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

1. Introduction

In the Republic of Armenia human resources and culture values are traditionally considered to be the country's main wealth and guarantee of the economic growth. In current unfavourable social-economic conditions, which have become even worse in the result of global economic crisis, human resources has become much more important to overcome the existing situation and insure further development of the Republic.

Armenia, which has very limited natural resources, should employ and improve the potential of its human resources and show educational-cultural achievements. And while this process is undergoing, the development of education and training system is considered as one of the priorities of the policy being implemented in the country. Some reforms have been undertaken in the country's economy during the last two decades, however the legacy of the Soviet era has still left some negative impact on the development of economy, as well as in education and culture. That legacy is mostly reflected on social approaches and mechanisms of the existing institutions, whose alteration is a complex and a long-lasting process.

One of the studies conducted by the European Training Foundation in 2004, showed that the appearance of private organisations has significantly expanded and enriched the market of educational and training services, and NGOs have made nearly half of the all 380 institutions providing education. At the period of study among the proposed trainings, the prevailing courses were Information Technology, Foreign Languages, Handicrafts and Trades (such as jewellery, hairdressing, carpet making etc.). In such a situation implies that the state must show equal attitude towards all education or training providers (regardless of their ownership or legal-organisational status) based on the quality and activities of it's real measurable outcomes.

The state should implement a balanced, co-financing mechanism and be responsible for supporting socially vulnerable stratum of society (poorly educated, unemployed, disabled and others), but currently its support is mainly directed to the educational institutions or education and training providers, and not the mentioned individuals or target groups. The state has to introduce new methods of organising adult and generally lifelong learning, as well as financing that process. State bodies, enterprises, as well as individuals and families can participate in co-financing mechanisms.

2. Concept of Lifelong Learning, functions of Lifelong Learning System

2.1 Concept of Lifelong Learning

In international practice, *Lifelong Learning* is defined as "all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of enhancing knowledge, skills and competence from a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective" Lifelong Learning includes the following approaches of learning activities:

- a) *purposeful* educational activity, which aims at improving behaviour, information, knowledge, cognition, attitude, values, skills and competences;

- b) educational activity *having continuous character*, which doesn't mean a random or irregular process, but rather a process containing components of continuity and certain duration. It is realised in an organised form and does not have any internal duration limits;
- c) educational activity *regardless of its form* (formal or informal), which includes different types of learning (such as apprenticeship, education and learning at workplace or out of it, self-education, intergeneration learning, "unconscious" learning based on observations, etc.),
- d) educational activity *regardless of financing source*, which could be financed by the state, juridical or natural persons,
- e) educational activity *irrespective of its mode of realisation*, which may be done through applying traditional or modern methods (such as information and communication technologies).

The whole population is involved in the educational activities, regardless of their sex, age or position held in the labour market and:

- a) includes nearly all types of educational and training activities starting from preschool education to post-retirement entertainments.
- b) shouldn't be limited to learning outcomes intended only to the labour market.

Lifelong learning should be perceived as a dominant concept consisting of the following elements:

- 1) Basic education, which includes:
 - a) A general education (preschool education, elementary education, basic general education and secondary (complete) general education),
 - b) A professional education (preliminary professional (craftsmanship) education, middle professional education, higher and post-graduate professional education).
- 2) Supplementary professional education and training;
- 3) Supplementary non-professional education (for all age groups- children, youngsters, youths and adults);
- 4) Informal education including self-education.

In addition, the first component is usually carried out mainly through formal education; the second -mostly through non-formal education with the elements of formal education; and the third -only through non-formal learning methods. The fourth component of the person's life and activity learning is accomplished through informal education; moreover, it may have its influence on each of the components.

In terms of priority and financing the education system should be well-balanced in all four components (basic, supplementary professional, supplementary non-professional, self-education), as well as in their implementation modes (formal, non-formal, informal). All forms, i.e., of learning - formal, non-formal and informal, should be regarded as equally important. It should be recognised and accepted that non-formal and informal learning activities of people are very important especially for involving groups who are in unfavourable conditions and for supporting those who do not have a formal education.

Consequently, Lifelong Learning can be obtained in educational institutions, at home, at workplace or in any other public place. It is not limited in terms of age, social status and education level of an individual. In this way lifelong learning should be viewed as a continuous and programmed activity, which contributes to the knowledge and skills acquisition and, finally, to the development of professional educational competences of individuals, communities and the whole society.

2.2 Functions of Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning system realises a number of basic functions in which, on the one hand, social, economic, political and on the other hand, main pedagogical components are densely intertwined. These functions are

the following:

- a) preparation for general and professional education,
- b) expansion of productive participation of the masses in public activities,
- c) person's comprehensive pan-cultural development,
- d) modernisation of basic education or current education system,
- e) increasing minimum level of knowledge,
- f) sensible organisation of leisure and rest,
- g) reduction of educational and cultural differences between generations,
- h) individual's vital and social adaptability to the surrounding environment,
- i) teaching the principals of self-education and formation of self-education skills.

These functions are successfully carried out in many countries having a developed Lifelong Learning system and traditions. Meanwhile, legal basis and corresponding infrastructures, as well as public proper attitude and mentality should still be formed for applying mentioned functions in the Republic of Armenia.

3. Lifelong Learning situation in the Republic of Armenia

According to the National Human Development Report (2006) of the United Nation Development Program (hereinafter referred to as UNDP), the education field indicators in Armenia are high: literacy among adults make up 99.4%. However, at the same time, no research has been conducted on the revelation of the pupils' abilities in secondary schools to be compatible with the researches conducted by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Neither was any similar research carried out on adult skills, which would have revealed existing serious problems inherent even for the most developed economies. High level of literacy in Armenia means comparable advantage from the perspectives of further education, training and lifelong learning.

As for the workers' skills and qualifications, the study on business environment conducted by the UNDP (in 2005) has shown that the majority of workforce in Armenia is employed in sectors of economy where simple skills are required. However, employers are concerned with the poor level of professional education and training system, as well as the qualifications of the professional education institution graduates, especially from the point of view of their analytical and problem-solving competences, as well as information and communication technology skills, etc.

3.1 The Structure of Lifelong Learning System

If we observe Lifelong Learning system according to the structure mentioned in 2.1 section of this Concept, in Armenia it is mainly based on the formal education system, which includes:

a) General Education, including:

- 1) Pre-school education,
- 2) Elementary general education,
- 3) Basic general education,
- 4) Secondary (complete) general education,
- 5) Special general education.

b) Professional basic education programs:

- 1) Preliminary professional (craftsmanship) education,
- 2) Middle professional education,
- 3) Higher professional education,
- 4) Postgraduate professional education.

At the same time, the "Law on Education" of RA also stipulates additional education for each of the

abovementioned educational level. All the mentioned education levels are regulated by the corresponding laws:

- Law "On Preschool Education" (2005);
- Law "On General Education" (2009);
- Law "On Preliminary (craftsmanship) and Middle Vocational Education" (2005);
- Law "On Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education" (2004).

All the abovementioned laws are based on the "Law on Education" of RA (1999).

Currently there are several other laws in Armenia, which are directly related to the regulation of education and training field. The most essentials are the followings:

- Law "On Ecological Education of the Population" (2001);
- Law "On Licensing" (2001);
- Law "On State Non-Profit Organisations" (2001);
- Law "On Education of Individuals with Special Educational Needs " (2005);
- Law "On Social Protection of Children without Parental Care" (2002).

One of the most important components of the Lifelong Learning system is a professional training (non-formal) of unemployed people, which is regulated by the RA law on "Population Employment and Social Protection In Case of Unemployment" (2005).

Examples of non-formal education are:

- training courses provided for workers in enterprises;
- professional and non-professional training courses in commercial nature, which are provided by both profit and non-profit organisations, including state educational institutions;
- targeted courses realised by different international organisations and projects, including in charitable nature;
- various preparatory courses, including private tutors' activities. The calculation of the number of people involved in such courses has not yet been carried out in Armenia, but according to some experimental data, that number annually reaches up to several tens of thousands of people.

In practice, this field is not regulated by any legal act in Armenia, and similar educational activity is mentioned only in classes 80.41 and 80.42 of the classifier of economic activity types approved by the State Council on Statistics decree' 58 dated July 24, 2001.

However, numerous other types of professional and non-professional educational activities are also considered as Lifelong Learning system components that parallel with the formal and non-formal education, as well as abovementioned types of trainings are realised by many organisations and individuals, as well as through self-education of citizens (informal learning).

Thus, while speaking about Lifelong Learning system in Armenia it is necessary to take into account all types of learning: formal, non formal and informal, professional and non-professional, including services provided by different organisations and individuals as well as the persons' self-education. In this field, especially non-formal education stands out in terms of deregulation, for which, practically, there is not a state policy at all.

3.2. Last reforms carried out in education field in RA

In recent years, a number of reforms have been undertaken in the educational system in Armenia. These reforms were mainly directed to the improvement of building conditions and learning materials of the state educational institutions (secondary schools, preliminary (craftsmanship), middle vocational and higher professional education institutions), as well as enhancing relevance of educational content and teaching quality provided in there, increasing efficiency of system management and institutions governance. The mentioned reforms were implemented on accounts of the state budget as well as International and foreign

donor organisations funds. Several documents have been adopted in strategic and conceptual nature:

- Strategy of Preliminary (craftsmanship) and Middle Professional Education and Training of RA (2004);
- Concept of Higher and Postgraduate Education (2004);
- Concept and Strategy of Adult Learning (2005);
- Concept of Non-Formal Education in RA (2006);
- Sustainable Development Program (2008);
- Concept on Preliminary (craftsmanship) and Middle Vocational Education Development (2008) and Program and Timetable of Professional Education Reforms for the Years 2009-2011;
- Concept on Social Partnership in the Field of Preliminary (craftsmanship) and Middle Vocational Education of RA (2009).

All the abovementioned documents somehow have relation with the necessity of introducing Lifelong Learning ideology and system in RA. And the Strategy of Preliminary (craftsmanship) and Middle Vocational education and training defines one of the reforms in the following way: "Lifelong learning, which includes adjustment and updating of all types of workforce knowledge and skills, which are required from workers to keep their jobs or find the one if are unemployed. Labour force should have the opportunity to learn throughout the working life according to his/her wishes and/or labour market demand".

Nevertheless, none of the mentioned legal acts or strategic documents define or offer clear norms directed to the state policy and guarantee, organisation and implementation or other issues of Lifelong Learning sector in Armenia.

The following educational management, methodical support and quality assurance bodies were established:

- National Centre for Vocational Education and Training Development (2008);
- National Council of Vocational Education and Training Development (2008);
- National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation (2008).

However, it should be mentioned, that these reforms have been directed exclusively to formal education system and have mainly included the network of state educational institutions.

4. Existing problems in Lifelong Learning sector and ways to solve them

4.1 Problems in Lifelong Learning Sector

Existing Lifelong Learning problems in Armenia are due to a number of factors, from which, by their influence, the followings are distinguished:

- Scientific and technological rapid changes taking place in modern world;
- Socio-economic situation in the Republic of Armenia;
- Data deficiency concerning ongoing and predicted demands of the labour market in Armenia;
- Insufficiency of necessary conditions (including legal framework, infrastructure, professional and methodological support, proper state and public attitude) to introduce and develop Lifelong Learning in Armenia;
- Insufficient formation of non-formal education (learning) system;
- Non-sufficient flexibility of education system;
- Absence of recognition mechanisms of knowledge and skills gained through non-formal and informal education;
- Insufficient funding and not always effective use of available resources.

The main problems of Lifelong Learning in Armenia:

1. *Imperfection of Lifelong Learning sector management*

In the absence of law on Lifelong Learning and particularly on Adult Learning, currently there is not a certain system of state management for this sphere in Armenia. Centralisation, separation and not always effective use of resources (as well as other factors) make current situation more complicated and contradictory, which further hinders the overall system improvement of education and training institutions.

2. *Insufficient funding for Lifelong Learning*

If in the sector of formal education (general and professional education) the issue of funding is more or less solved, it is still imperfect in other sectors of Lifelong Learning and needs serious legislative regulations as well as financial and material large-scale investments from various sources (state, international organisations, NGOs, employers, individuals, etc.).

3. *Weak infrastructures of Lifelong Learning provision*

In Lifelong Learning sector (except general education and partially professional basic education programs) the infrastructures providing education and training still have not been determined and fully formed.

In many places the organisations providing education programs do not require modern materials and technical base, updated methodological documents, manuals, recommendations, meanwhile providing education with the old textbooks, manuals or teaching materials developed by the instructors, which often do not meet the requirements of learners or the labour market. Information system is weakly developed and only a very small part of the society is using e-learning opportunities.

Professional qualitative skills of the instructors involved in Lifelong Learning sector are very low, and the bodies that should organise their training and qualification improvement courses are not yet fully formed, which eventually leads to the non satisfactory outcomes of the teaching. It should also be concerned about the high average age of teachers (55 years old).

4. *The absence of National Qualifications Framework (NQF)*

Although, it is already about three years that the process of developing and introducing NQF (compatible with EQF) has started, it is still missing in Armenia. In addition, occupational descriptions existing in labour market and qualification characteristics of educational system graduates do not completely satisfy International and particularly European requirements. They definitely cannot serve as a basis for qualification recognition, since the qualification requirements (knowledge and skills) are not stated in any law, legal acts or methodological document and are not conditioned by the demand of labour market. Such situation leads to uncertainty concerning professional training requirements, low level of education which does not fully satisfy the demand of the labour market, as well as stunts the growth of employment level and, generally, economic development.

5. *Absence of statistical data regarding Lifelong Learning*

Current methodology of statistics, as well as studies and analysis based on it often do not meet the presented requirements, and International best practices and standards are not yet widely used in society.

6. *Too much centralisation of education system*

Current education system in Armenia is very centralised. That is the reason that in Lifelong Learning sector the social partnership and social dialogue are not developed enough. For their formation, it is necessary the collaboration of many partners – government, social partners, local self-government institutions and wide strata of society. It is not also supported by acting legislation, which is not flexible enough and does not manage to respond rapidly to the changing social-economic conditions. At the same time, educational

process is not yet student-oriented and often stems from approaches based on formal requirements.

7. *Insufficiency of International Cooperation*

International cooperation is weakly developed and the involvement levels of International experts are comparatively low in the Lifelong Learning sector. The coordination of foreign and International donor organisations' as well as local investors' activities are not also in an appropriate level.

4.2 Solution Ways of Current problems in Lifelong Learning sector

Following steps should be taken in order to solve the current problems in the Lifelong Learning sector:

- 1) Reduction of state direct interference in education field, gradual decentralisation of education system and, at the same time, increases of the state sponsorship;
- 2) Establishment of local, territorial and institutional self-governance in the Lifelong Learning sector;
- 3) Development of social partnership, more involvement of NGOs and citizens in the governing process of Lifelong Learning system;
- 4) Creation of national database and monitoring system for realisation of Lifelong Learning;
- 5) Sharp increase of investment volumes in the Lifelong Learning sector;
- 6) Development and introduction of NQF, recognition and certification mechanisms for prior learning (including all its forms) outcomes, as well as formation of the corresponding bodies;
- 7) Participation in various international projects and networks, wider cooperation with relevant organisations;
- 8) Development and implementation of statistical, monitoring and evaluation new standards;
- 9) Improvement of legislation in the Lifelong Learning sector and expansion of its coverage;
- 10) Formation of student-oriented system;
- 11) Organising of education directed towards the individual's self-expression;
- 12) Insuring public cultural education;
- 13) Encouraging all forms of educational activities;
- 14) Recognition of the prior learning outcomes;
- 15) Introduction of credit system in the vocational education and training system;
- 16) Continuous study of international experience of the lifelong learning organisation and implementation

4.3 Main Principles and Conceptions of Lifelong Learning

To insure effective functioning of Lifelong Learning system in Armenia it is necessary to follow some basic principles, each of them separately and together with others is significant, vitally crucial for the constructing system:

1. ***Principle of supremacy*** (for achieving common goal of forming a versatile harmoniously developed person, it is necessary to use, employ all the diverse forms of education, content, methods and means).
2. ***Principle of individual's self-expression*** (it takes into account the learner's activity, which means the learner manages and directs his/her learning process mostly by himself/herself).
3. ***Principle of continuity and longevity*** (the necessity of receiving education should not be restricted by any age or education level, even by the highest one. According to this principle, it is expedient to create a chance to develop human competences in some way in order to satisfy constantly existing cognitive claims occurring throughout the human life).

4. **Principle of democracy** (all citizens should have equal rights to receive education and enjoy equally the benefits that education provides. Liberalisation of admission rules and procedures will promote further educational activities, linking all members of the society without any exception).
5. **Principle of comprehensiveness** (Lifelong Learning is possible only in case of unifying all educational resources of the society and putting them in action for educational purposes).
6. **Principle of preparation or insuring succession** (it is possible to ensure the propagation of Lifelong Learning only when the majority of the population is ready to participate in it).
7. **Principle of completeness** (each stage of human learning is regarded as a chain of general educational process where, on the one hand, knowledge and skills gained from previous education are enriched and, on the other hand, basis are created for learning in the next stages).
8. **Principle of periodic recovery and discrete realisation** (continuity of learning is generated from the discrete stages of learning with forms specially created for it, which are interrupted and completed with self-education).
9. **Principle of voluntary participation** (in the process of Lifelong Learning any compulsion is unacceptable and could cause opposite, quite negative attitude towards education, leading to social serious losses).
10. **Principle of responsibility** (society is obliged to use all possible mechanisms of material and moral stimulations in order to create sustainable motivation to continue education and self-education. Promotion measures can be, for example - provision of paid educational leave, provision of the possibility for social, professional and employment growth to those who have significantly risen their cultural and professional levels, and so on).
11. **Principle of concrete satisfaction of the specific educational requirements** (in the framework of Lifelong Learning system, while setting the goal of educational any activity, it should be taken into account the requirements of a particular person, harmoniously combining public and individual interests).
12. **Principle of coordination** (it proclaims the necessity of well-balanced and reasonable integration of all Lifelong Learning system sections in a unitary complex, as well as the necessity to coordinate efforts of the whole society in that direction).
13. **Principle of successive institutionalisation** (new, progressive forms of education, that are developed and tested in practice and proven their viability and effectiveness, gradually should be involved in Lifelong Learning infrastructure enhancing public education arsenal).
14. **Principle of diversity** (it implies provision of wide creative initiative to develop, test and introduce new forms, methods and means for different levels of Lifelong Learning system).
15. **Principle of structural and organisational flexibility of Lifelong Learning system** (it implies provision of wide creative initiative to develop, test and introduce content and management approaches for different levels of Lifelong Learning system).
16. **Principle of correspondence** (it highlights the significance of learning outcomes for the individual).
17. **Principle of selectivity** (the learner is free to choose study programs, forms and types, also can get advice for self-orientation).
18. **Formal education** (usually it is provided by educational and training institutions, has a structure (in terms of learning goals, terms or support) and leads to granting of recognised diploma or qualification).
19. **Non-formal education** (it is provided by some basic (official) education system and usually does not lead to official certification. Non-formal education can be provided in workplace, through the activities of civic society organisations and groups (Youth Organisations, Trade Unions, Political Parties). It can also be

provided by the organisations or services that were established for the completion of formal systems (e.g. courses of art, music and sport, or private classes for exam preparation).

20. **Informal education** (it goes naturally with everyday life. Unlike formal and non-formal education, informal education is not necessarily purposeful and individuals can even be unconscious about the contribution for the development of their knowledge and skills).