

Strategy for Lifelong Learning in the Federal Republic of Germany

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 **Strategy
for Lifelong Learning
in the Federal Republic of Germany**

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and research promotion

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Strategy

for Lifelong Learning

in the Federal Republic of Germany

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At its meeting on 5 July 2004 the Bund-Länder Commission for Educational Planning and Research Promotion noted with approval the report entitled "Strategy for Lifelong Learning in the Federal Republic of Germany" and its two Appendices.

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Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 are only available in German.

Appendices

- 1 Results of a survey on lifelong learning conducted among the *Länder* and the Federal Government
- 2 Examples of good practice

- Short Version -

The purpose of this strategy paper on lifelong learning is to describe how all citizens can be encouraged to participate in learning during all phases of their lives and in all spheres of life, at different learning sites and through many different types of learning. Lifelong learning includes all forms of learning – whether formal, non-formal or informal. "Learning" is understood to mean the constructive conversion of information and experience into knowledge, insights and skills.

Pursuant to Germany's constitutional framework, the strategy for lifelong learning in the Federal Republic of Germany cannot be described as a "coherent national strategy", but as a jointly agreed strategy for lifelong learning which identifies the aspects and contexts on which there is a broad consensus between the different *Länder* as well as between the Federal Government and the *Länder* irrespective of their responsibilities.

The strategy has been devised to match not only the **life phases** of the individual from early childhood to old age but also essential aspects of lifelong learning, which constitute **development focuses**.

Within this framework, realistic and sustainable perspectives are being developed which are based on existing educational structures, activities and experience and which define a structured framework for lifelong learning that is flexible and open to the necessary continuous process of further development.

The development focuses of this strategy are:

- **inclusion of informal learning**
- **self-directed learning**
- **development of skills**
- **networking**
- **modularization**
- **learning guidance**
- **new learning culture/popularization of learning**
- **fair access.**

The chapters dealing with **children, adolescents, young adults, adults** and the **elderly** show the relevance of the development focuses to the different phases of life and reveal how these focuses are part of the lifelong learning strategy.

At the same time, the combination of **life phases** and **development focuses** seeks to counteract the separation of the individual educational sectors.

During "**childhood**" learning greatly influences access to education and thus the individual's chances of success in life. This is the period in which the foundations for lifelong learning are laid. The motivation and ability to learn are aroused and encouraged; children's abilities are enhanced and they are supported to develop an independent personality. The target groups include not only the children themselves, but also their parents, other central figures and teachers at day-care centres as well as teachers at primary school. Essential elements during this phase of life include the scope and quality of **informal learning**, the **development of skills** on the basis of new educational plans, the **networking** of kindergartens, schools, parents, child and youth service institutions, as well as **learning guidance** particularly for parents.

During "**adolescence**" most learning processes take place in school. Learning during this phase of life is characterized by educational programmes organized by others and by the obligation to learn. The **development of skills** is particularly important; this means that schools impart basic skills such as learning and action skills, social and personal skills as well as the ability to work in a team in addition to subject knowledge. Attainment targets and final qualifications will be comparable, e.g. by the introduction of educational standards. It is also very important to foster the ability of adolescents to organize their own learning and to make them practise independent learning (**self-directed learning**). Furthermore, mention has to be made of **learning guidance**, which is to help overcome learning problems and to provide orientation to schools and career guidance services, and of the development of a new **learning culture** that gives schools more scope for their own decision-making and for developing their own profile. **Fair access** is ensured by means of a wide range of supporting measures.

During the next phase of life, which begins when "**young adults**" enter the world of work or start their initial vocational training and which ends when they take up regular employment, the following focuses are of major importance: the inclusion of **informal learning**, **self-directed learning**, the **development of** (social, professional, cultural and personal) **skills** and the documentation of informally acquired skills. **Networking** takes place mainly between schools, companies, higher education institutions, associations, job centres and institutions of continuing education. By **modularizing** educational content, individuals are enabled to enhance their skills systematically, and **fair access** is improved. **Learning guidance** with respect to questions of vocational training, academic studies and continuing education or training plays an important role. In this phase, the main features of **the new learning culture** are relevance to practical work and orientation towards transferability. It is important to help young adults understand that entry into the world of work does not put an end to learning but means transferring to another stage of learning.

"**Adult life**" is a phase which is increasingly determined by change, and for some by breaks and interruptions – a fact which clearly demonstrates the need for lifelong learning. Because of their strong involvement in professional life and family life time is very scarce for adults. Therefore, the possibility to structure their own learning (**self-directed learning**) is very important for them. The skills

acquired through **informal learning** in the family, on the job and through leisure activities become employable qualifications through documentation and recognition. The **modularization** of learning content makes it possible to gradually build up individual competency profiles. Personal, social and occupational **skills** can be further developed in courses offered for continuing general, vocational and political education.

The term "the **elderly**" is defined as including mostly adults who will soon enter retirement or are already retired. Formal learning becomes less important; learners have greater freedom to decide for themselves whether, how and for what purpose they should take part in learning activities (**self-directed learning**). Achieving or retaining independence and autonomy even at an advanced age is one major goal of lifelong learning during this phase of life. With regard to the **development of competencies**, it is obvious that preserving skills and abilities is more important than developing new ones. The learning activities of the elderly also have a compensatory function, in particular for the last years of occupational life, for retirement and in order to make up for deficits. At the same time, older people also acquire new skills in order to pass on their experience and knowledge or to do voluntary work. The removal of age-specific obstacles in existing educational programmes is a prerequisite for **fair access** to lifelong learning also for the elderly.

It remains a task for all the responsible players in the *Länder* and in the Federal Government to apply the framework defined in this strategy paper in accordance with their respective educational priorities. The adoption of the report in the Bund-Länder Commission for Educational Planning and Research Promotion shows that those responsible are willing to actively promote the further development of education in the Federal Republic of Germany.

- Long Version -

Introductory remarks

The mission and its implementation

On 17 June 2002 the Bund-Länder Commission (BLK) decided to have a strategy paper prepared on the subject of lifelong learning which was to identify the changes necessary in the individual sectors of education (schools, vocational education and training, higher education, continuing education) in order to make lifelong learning a must in the educational biography of every individual. Two items the Commission considered important in this context were the increased utilization and recognition of informal and non-formal learning as well as the inclusion in the strategy paper of the results of the Expert Commission on the Funding of Lifelong Learning. At its meeting on 26 September 2002, the BLK's Committee on Educational Planning set up an ad hoc working group to prepare the requested lifelong learning strategy paper. The Committee specifically asked the Working Group to define the term lifelong learning, to make an analysis of the activities of the Federal and *Länder* governments in the field of lifelong learning – as a basis for joint action – and of relevant actions at the European level and, on the basis of such an analysis, to present proposals for structuring activities to foster lifelong learning.

In conformity with its assignment, the Working Group presented an interim report on 20 February 2003 and again on 8 April 2003, which describes the approach chosen and the working programme for implementing it. The Working Group organized a hearing of experts, evaluated literature and conducted a *Länder* survey on lifelong learning; at the same time, the Federal Government sent questionnaires to the federal ministries. At the time the Group completed its work for the strategy paper, the report of the Expert Commission on Funding Lifelong Learning was not yet available. Its proposals and recommendations will have to be evaluated and presented in a different context.

The present strategy paper has taken account of the many ongoing initiatives for fostering lifelong learning. It should be noted, however, that, due to Germany's federal structure and the great variety of educational provision, these initiatives and activities often do not have a nationwide character and frequently are at different stages of implementation.

In presenting its deliberations, the Working Group has taken this fact into account; frequently the wording chosen is both a description of the present state of affairs and a presentation of relevant options for action. The Working Group decided not to list specific demands or recommendations because it is up to the responsible players to take their own decisions to what and how much to do in accordance with their educational priorities. The Group considers that this type of presentation is appropriate to the stage reached in implementing the lifelong learning concepts pursued by the *Länder* and the Federal Government's funding programmes. It is also suitable for describing the progress achieved with lifelong learning in Germany in the international context.

The Appendix summarizes the results of the surveys conducted among the Länder and the Federal Government; for the purpose of clarity, it is structured in the same way as the present strategy paper (with development focuses and life phases as a framework). The examples of good practice show that the Länder and the Federal Government are already implementing a wide range of measures to encourage lifelong learning. More examples could have been added, but this was neither possible within the time available nor was it absolutely necessary for the purpose of this paper.

It is intended to systematically process the large number and wide range of the more than two hundred measures and projects described, to have them reviewed again and supplemented by the *Länder* and to make this broad compendium of lifelong learning activities undertaken by the *Länder* and the Federal Government available for publication at a date in the autumn of this year, together with a literature evaluation to be made by the *Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung* (German Institute for Adult Education).

A

Constitutional Framework

Germany's Constitution assigns most responsibilities for the content, organization and structure of the education system to the *Länder* and only a few to the Federal Government. The *Länder* are responsible for kindergartens, pre-school education, schools including part-time vocational schools, for most of the higher education system, as well as for continuing general and cultural education and, partially, for vocational education. The Federal Government is responsible for the general framework for higher education, for training assistance and for company-based vocational training. Furthermore, it is responsible for continuing vocational education and training as part of its responsibility for economic and labour legislation.

Regardless of these different constitutional responsibilities, there is a broad consensus on the goals which must be pursued in education in view of the rapid social, economic, scientific and technological changes. This consensus also applies to lifelong learning. Motivating and encouraging people to participate in lifelong learning, creating the necessary prerequisites for lifelong learning and an educational structure that facilitates successful learning are policy objectives on which all *Länder* and the Federal Government agree.

A strategy for lifelong learning in the Federal Republic of Germany cannot be described as a "coherent national strategy", but as a jointly agreed strategy for lifelong learning which identifies the aspects and relations on which there is a broad consensus between the *Länder* and the Federal Government irrespective of their responsibilities.

Lifelong learning is therefore both a general principle and an objective of educational policy.

B

General aspects and focuses

B 1 : Definition

Lifelong learning is defined as including all forms of learning - whether formal, non-formal or informal - taking place at different learning sites and extending from early childhood into retirement. "Learning" is understood to mean the constructive conversion of information and experience into knowledge, insights and skills.

B 2 : Strategic approach

Obviously, a strategy for lifelong learning should be devised to match the individual phases of people's lives. Learning takes place in each phase of our lives – for different reasons, in different ways, in different environments. Lifelong learning is not limited to educational institutions; it includes non-formal and informal learning in different learning situations and at different learning sites (in the family, on the job, during leisure time, etc.) in addition to phases of formal and non-formal learning in institutions (partly compulsory, eg in school, partly voluntary, as in institutions of higher education or in continuing education).

To a large extent, lifelong learning means learning for which individuals themselves assume responsibility. This means that learners have to find their own way through a complex network of learning programmes and learning opportunities. This is true even for early childhood when it is mostly the parents who choose where and what their children learn. *Self-directed learning* involves both self-organized learning and the use of learning offerings provided by others. Fair *access opportunities* and competent *learning guidance* are indispensable for such self-directed learning.

Learning programmes and learning opportunities can only be used in an appropriate and efficient way if individual learning skills have been developed and a suitable infrastructure is available. The successive stages of this infrastructure (kindergarten, school, initial and continuing education) and the learning programmes and opportunities at the respective level must be interlinked (vertical and horizontal networking); programmes must be based on one another and must complement each other (*modularization*). A *learning culture* which is geared to people's requirements and preferences and makes learning interesting and attractive for people of all ages and from all segments of the population (*popularization of learning*) will strengthen the motivation and willingness of individuals to participate in lifelong learning.

The above aspects are important elements during all phases of life, and they are also development focuses for a lifelong learning strategy. The development focuses, in combination with the various life phases, provide a framework which the present paper uses for structuring the activities of all those participating in the process of lifelong learning.

B 3: Objective

The purpose of this strategy paper on lifelong learning is to describe how all citizens can be encouraged to participate in learning during all phases of their lives and in all spheres of life, at different learning sites and through many different types of learning (an enlarged understanding of learning and the development of a widely accepted learning culture and of a learning society).

B 4: Development focuses

Inclusion of informal learning

Lifelong learning for all cannot be organized and promoted as a continuous series of formal institutionalized learning processes. As most learning takes place informally in everyday life and work situations outside educational institutions, informal learning must be included to a large extent in the fostering of lifelong learning. Learning within and outside institutions should be complementary; the interaction of both types of learning is to lead to an enlarged understanding of lifelong learning.

Self-directed learning

People's learning activities take different courses depending on their individual biographies; learning is influenced by different learning conditions, learning environments, learning needs and learning occasions. Increasingly, it is only the learners themselves who can direct their learning appropriately. Some of the learning programmes they use are organized by others, and to some extent they organize their own learning processes.

Development of skills

Independently finding the knowhow, information or knowledge required for a specific task through systematic searches and by using relevant computer-stored knowhow is a skill that is becoming increasingly important. We therefore need the broad development of the skills for successful utilization of modern information and communication technologies. Educational standards today determine the skills pupils should acquire during each stage of their school education. Subsequent continuing education programmes are mostly aimed at developing the skills necessary to meet the requirements of everyday life and work. The development of such skills must therefore be the main objective of our activities to promote lifelong learning during the entire life span.

Networking

In order to enable people to make efficient and appropriate use of all learning programmes and opportunities, it is also necessary to provide an infrastructure permitting self-organized learning in addition to learning organized by others. We do not need new institutions for developing an enlarged understanding of lifelong learning, but existing institutions must be linked and their tasks adjusted to the requirements of lifelong learning. The various stages of education as well as the educational programmes and opportunities at the respective level (including informal and non-institutionalized ones) must increasingly be related to each other (vertical and horizontal networking). Educational institutions must be open to including informal and non-formal learning.

Modularization

Modular learning programmes and learning materials with questions, topics and problems designed to encourage learning make it easier for learners to plan and adjust their learning processes to their own needs.

Learning guidance

A more self-directed type of learning, which uses compatible learning modules in cross-institution learning networks, requires a high level of learning motivation and learning ability, which many people can only attain through open learning guidance designed to develop the necessary skills.

A new learning culture/popularization of learning

Encouragement is necessary for effective learning aimed at the development of skills. We must popularize learning by involving the media in order to motivate people and develop a new learning culture. A strategy that fosters lifelong learning for all must help to prevent learning processes from lagging behind the increasing complexity of life and must also prevent people from giving up trying to understand and solve problems.

Fair access

Access to lifelong learning is a crucial prerequisite for life in a society based on democratic participation, a society in which personal development and the acquisition of knowledge as well as the socially responsible application of knowledge and skills is gaining increasing importance. No one should be excluded from the learning and education process at some point or other of his or her educational biography. For the new learning culture to be successful, we must create the conditions necessary to open up fair access to lifelong learning opportunities for all people, including in particular those difficult to interest in educational programmes.

C

Learning during the various life phases

The eight development focuses described above are not of the same importance during each phase of people's lives, because the respective learning environments and players differ from phase to phase. The following sections explain the relevance of these development focuses as part of the lifelong learning strategy during each phase. There are fluent transitions between the individual phases, and the development focuses overlap. This underlines the continuous character of lifelong learning and counteracts the separation of the individual educational sectors from each other.

C 1: Children

Childhood in this context is understood to include the period up to the age of ten.

Learning during early childhood and primary education lays the basis for lifelong learning. Early childhood in particular is a very learning-intensive period in the life of each individual. Learning opportunities at this age greatly influence the prospects of educational success and therefore also people's chances of success in life. The motivation and ability to learn, as prerequisites for lifelong learning, must be aroused and encouraged.

Most young and very young children are cared for in their families, but there is an increasing demand for various forms of part-time care for children under 3. From the age of 3, children can attend day care centres, mostly kindergartens. At 5 or 6, children start school.

Not only the young children themselves are a target group for lifelong learning during this phase. Another target group are the parents and other central figures or caretakers, because it is in interaction with these that learning processes take place at this early age. Developments in society, eg

- changes with regard to the extent to which parents assume responsibility for their children's education,
- changes in family background,
- an increase in the number of mothers wishing to reconcile family and professional work,
- the task of integrating all groups of society,

have an impact on strategy deliberations.

In no phase of life is the amount of informal learning larger and its quality more important than during the first years of life. The responsibility for what children learn predominantly lies with parents and other central figures but also with kindergarten teachers and teachers at primary school. All of them must provide a learning environment that fosters and encourages children's development.

Inclusion of informal learning

It is important to encourage and keep alive children's natural curiosity. If we want adolescents and adults to be able to take control of their own self-directed learning, we must foster such independent learning early on, in particular the art of learning how to learn. Self-direction is a principle and a goal being pursued and achieved by parents and teachers as well as in play, through use of learning and teaching material and in all learning and teaching situations.

Self-directed learning

The quality of teaching and materials in kindergartens and schools is consistently being improved. New educational plans for the pre-school sector no longer only contain recommendations but set binding educational objectives such as the following: enhancing children's abilities, fostering their personal growth, developing - through play - their skills of acquiring, organizing and applying

Development of skills

knowledge, developing language, social and motor skills, expanding the fostering of their creative skills also in music and the arts, developing an initial understanding of science, as well as learning to use the media. These new requirements make it necessary to train kindergarten teachers accordingly during their initial and in-service training.

Parents are offered the opportunity to bring their own ideas to the learning process in kindergartens and primary schools, which cooperate with the children's social environment as well as with child and youth service institutions. Educational plans coordinated between pre-school and primary education help to ensure a continuous process of learning. Children's transition from kindergarten to primary school is supported through cooperation between these two institutions.

Networking

In childhood it is particularly important that new learning modules are based on preceding ones and can be used flexibly, in keeping with children's talents. In pre-school education, learning modules are being introduced into educational plans in the same way in which modules have become part of the curricula for primary education. Both in day care centres and subsequently at primary school, the learning opportunities for children are being organized and structured in accordance with their individual learning needs and requirements.

Modularization

Preparing parents for their educational task and supporting them in training their children for lifelong learning are essential prerequisites for children's well-directed informal learning. For this purpose a wide range of parent courses is offered by parent and family education institutions, and schools also offer support. Midwives and paediatricians provide parents with information on early support or intervention, parenting advice and family education. Overcoming parents' lack of knowledge (eg of the German language) will be helpful for the integration of their children. Crèches and other care centres for young children assist parents in their educational task. In primary school, teachers together with parents give guidance and advice to children. Teachers' ability to diagnose the individual needs of a child is necessary for providing effective remedial support. At the end of primary school, school career counselling for each individual pupil is very important for parents' decision on their child's further school career.

Learning
guidance

By making good use of children's curiosity and their pleasure in learning, pre-school educators systematically foster and intensify children's learning. In primary school the next step is teaching children the basic skills for lifelong learning in a systematic way. Effective support is being provided by increasing the number of reliable part-time primary schools and all-day schools.

New learning
culture
Popularization of
learning

As a rule, children have fair access to kindergartens, where the foundation for lifelong learning is laid. Most children of an age group attend kindergartens (attendance is voluntary). Improving the development of skills in all children is an essential prerequisite for achieving fair access to lifelong learning. Children who need special support, for example because of a disability or insufficient knowledge of German, are helped to overcome barriers to learning by being

offered differentiated instruction, individual learning plans and special remedial instruction.

C 2: Adolescents

Most learning processes during adolescence take place in school; therefore measures to encourage lifelong learning during this phase of life focus on schools.

The situation of today's adolescents differs from that of previous generations. For today's young people, schooling is considerably more important than in the past (a higher percentage of pupils attend secondary schools; required achievement levels have been raised); the relevance of school education to occupational life and practical work has decreased; today's young people tend to emphasize their individuality; they are important consumers of goods but reach economic independence rather late. There are great differences between them depending on their social background, and therefore these young people cannot be defined as one homogeneous group. For them, learning primarily serves to enhance their opportunities in life. During this phase much depends on the parents' educational resources and their parenting style. A parenting style where parents encourage and make demands on their children, accept them and direct them will motivate adolescents to assume responsibility and to develop self-confidence, and will promote lifelong learning.

Informal educational and learning influences are being included in the teaching activities of formal education institutions. Increasingly, people are trained to make use of informal learning. Non-school learning environments such as clubs, youth work services and business companies supplement and encourage learning processes to which the formal educational institutions respond within the framework of pupils' training for lifelong learning. New teaching and learning methods make use of informal learning results: teachers set tasks linked to pupils' experience and create authentic situations from the young people's world, thereby increasing their motivation to learn and perform. Competitions and extracurricular activities in a wide range of areas encourage adolescents to pursue learning also outside school. The relevance of learning to practical work and social life is also important for future employability.

Inclusion of informal learning

Learning during adolescence is characterized predominantly by learning programmes organized by others and by the institutions of compulsory education. As part of pupils' training for lifelong learning, it is very important that schools impart the ability for self-organized learning and make pupils practise independent learning and that they keep alive the natural pleasure young people take in learning. The idea of lifelong learning has been expressly incorporated in the new curricula. Differentiating educational programmes that take into account different talents and capabilities are fostering interest in learning and in achieving results. Differentiating didactics and methodology for different target groups and an active involvement of young people in the learning process help to increase their willingness to learn.

Self-directed learning

Educational provision is continuously being updated and extended, and the content to be taught is being adapted to the requirements of lifelong learning. Learning skills, action skills, social skills, personal skills and team skills are taught as basic skills in addition to technical skills. Learning how to use the new information and communication technologies has become an element of all subject areas taught. Required results and final qualifications are increasingly made comparable (eg by introducing educational standards).

Development of skills

Parents and schools are called upon to cooperate more closely. Cooperation between parents and their children's school has a positive effect on young people's willingness to learn. Parenting problems impeding learning can be overcome through cooperation between school, parents and youth services. The vertical linking of educational institutions (schools, part-time vocational schools, training employers, universities and institutions offering continuing education) provides a basis for lifelong learning. Successful transition from general school to vocational training is of crucial importance for lifelong learning. Cooperation between schools offering different educational pathways focuses on the best possible support for their pupils. Opportunities for transfers between schools are inherent in the education system, and support measures are provided to facilitate such transfers. Cooperation between schools and external institutions is a useful addition to the offerings of schools. Career orientation as well as trainability and employability are all strengthened through increased cooperation between schools and business companies. This provides a basis for continued learning motivation.

Networking

The modularization of educational programmes for adolescents is in principle inherent in the system of interrelated and successive types of schools and qualifications. Increasingly, learning curricula are being offered in modular form. Additional learning modules, in particular those covering extracurricular areas, can be chosen according to individual interests.

Modularization

Pupils are helped to make the best possible use of schools' learning programmes through learning guidance offered by schools to enable pupils to overcome learning problems and barriers to learning or to give information on how to acquire knowledge not taught at school and to provide school career guidance. The assistance of school psychologists and social workers employed by schools as well as of staff from the youth work and youth welfare services is very important for preventing as well as coping with crisis situations. Linking of these various counselling services is important for finding individual solutions for each specific case. This is true in particular for career guidance because a choice of occupation matching the individual's interests and talents and an exciting working environment are the key to developing a permanent interest in learning.

Learning guidance

Systematic PR work is undertaken to reinforce the positive image of a "learning and achievement culture". The idea of "lifelong learning" needs to be popularized. This will be easier to achieve in the future because the topic of education has meanwhile gained increased significance. During their initial and in-service training, teachers are being familiarized with the new requirements for lifelong

New Learning culture
Popularization of learning

learning. The standing of the teaching profession with the general public is being enhanced. Schools are given more scope for their own decision-making and for developing their own profile. Teaching and learning materials are being adapted to the requirements of lifelong learning.

Fair access is ensured by means of a wide range of measures such as increasing the number of all-day schools, remedial teaching for slow learners, German language classes for migrants, strategies for the integration of disabled pupils, and opportunities to go back to school to earn qualifications..

Fair access

C 3 : Young adults

The transition from adolescence to adulthood has more and more become a continuous process. The life phase of “Young adults” covers a prolonged period of time. It starts with entering the world of work, during initial vocational education, and for others it starts with continuing their general education. The present paper defines this phase as the period up to the start of regular occupational life. The phase differs widely between individual adolescents. Young adults take more responsibility for their educational career, they gradually become more independent from their parents and assume financial and social responsibilities. Important decisions taken during this phase greatly influence personal growth and future occupational life. Experience gained during this period of life, in turn, affects the attitude towards learning. A successful transition towards the next phase of lifelong learning has been made when young adults perceive the start of their occupational life not as an end to learning but as an intermediate stage. This also applies to those young adults who are not successful in their first attempt at entering working life.

The educational institutions most relevant during this phase are schools, training companies and higher education institutions. Factors which greatly influence young adults’ decisions concerning the specific route for their transition from school to occupational life include their family situation, their social background and prevailing social trends.

Typically, young adults participate in a wide range of activities in social, occupational, cultural and private life. These activities include commitment in clubs, trade unions, political parties or charities as well as gathering experience through travelling, utilization of the new information and communication technologies, or social group activities. The skills acquired through these activities are an important basis for further learning and education processes. Informal learning is being further developed through targeted support of infrastructure measures. The documentation of informally acquired skills also fosters lifelong learning. In this way the special circumstances of people with an interrupted educational career can be taken into account and their vocational qualifications made visible. Such documentation can help to motivate these people and encourage them to re-enter education or training. Increasingly, educational organizations take up informal learning activities, securing them with supporting measures.

Inclusion of informal learning

The increasing responsibility of young adults for their lives also relates to organizing their own learning processes. Self-learning techniques are being refined, in particular for learning outside formal education processes. In this way learners are increasingly being encouraged to selectively combine methods, forms and content of learning in order to attain the learning targets they have set for themselves.

Self-directed learning

During vocational training and university studies, personal, social and professional action skills are taught in order to ensure that lifelong learning remains a normal part of everyday life during and after transition from school to employment. This is done primarily by offering transfer-oriented educational programmes such as practical work periods, project work, learning islands, etc. In order to enhance personal growth processes and to make them transparent for potential employers, the skills acquired are increasingly being documented. In the case of formal education, meaningful and comparable certificates are issued.

Development of skills

In order to pool existing resources better than in the past and to make transfers between the individual sectors of education as smooth as possible for individuals, cooperation between these sectors is being increased. Such cooperation takes place mainly between schools, companies, higher education institutions, industrial associations, job centres and institutions of continuing education.

Networking

The acquisition of a broad spectrum of qualifications is a fundamental prerequisite for further occupational and personal development. The necessary modules are being developed. A clear description of these modules will facilitate the selective enhancement of individual skills.

Modularization

Competent learning guidance is of central importance during this phase of life, because people's own goals of learning and in life frequently are not yet fixed. Although the social environment, the family and supervisors in clubs help young people to identify their individual abilities and determine their goals, specific learning guidance is necessary, first at school and then in vocational training or through social services at school. Counselling on questions of vocational training, academic studies and continuing education or training enables young adults to identify different educational pathways, to devise options and to make their own long-term educational plans.

Learning guidance

As the learning processes of young adults take place to a large extent at state-supported educational institutions (schools, part-time vocational schools, higher education institutions), it is particularly important that teachers during classes impart a new learning culture. Teaching should be relevant to practice, it should be transfer-oriented, and learning content should be offered in interdisciplinary contexts in order to counteract a limitation to "inert knowledge". Such a new learning culture will keep the willingness for lifelong learning alive. New learning cultures which are geared to the particular situation of young adults are also being developed for continuing education events. The motivation for and awareness of these learning processes can be increased in particular through learning festivals, awards and competitions.

New learning culture
Popularization of learning

Participation of underserved or hard-to-reach segments of the population is being increased. More transfer possibilities from the world of work to academic studies and to advanced training and continuing education measures are being offered. The provision of cooperative study schemes and consecutive study courses is being expanded. Supportive and incentive systems are being further developed, in particular for young adults without school leaving qualifications and for drop-outs from vocational education, in order to give them fair access to lifelong learning.

Fair access

C 4: Adults

Learning during adult life is characterized less than in the preceding phases of life by learning in institutions and must therefore be organized largely by adult learners themselves depending on their respective circumstances. Adulthood is a phase of life which is determined increasingly by change and sometimes by breaks or career interruptions (parental leave, different jobs, periods of unemployment, mobility requirements, etc.).

Various skills that are useful for the individual and for society are acquired through informal learning in the family and the world of work and through leisure activities. Certification and recognition of such skills will make it easier for people to go back to school to earn qualifications, and it will prevent unemployment more successfully. Thus, the opportunities for returning to occupational life following periods of parent leave or unemployment are being enhanced. In cooperation with companies, improved opportunities for the period of parental leave are provided by means of the new information and communication technologies. In this way it is possible to keep alive and develop the knowhow and skills acquired for one's occupation. Work structures that foster learning, and learning in the process of work facilitate and support informal learning so that people can continually develop their skills for coping with constant change in the world of work and in life. Voluntary work in clubs, associations, networks, etc. provides a wide range of learning occasions and opportunities, and their certification will offer additional incentives for commitment as a member of the community.

Inclusion of informal learning

For adults with a job and/or family duties, time is very scarce, but even during this phase new skills can be acquired because self-organized learning in distance education courses and e-learning offer flexible timing. Libraries function as centres of self-learning and, like companies, assist learners in organizing their non-formal acquisition of knowledge. Arrangements for release from work for continuing education purposes on the basis of a law, a collective or a plant agreement, eg introducing learning time accounts, provide time for self-directed learning.

Self-directed learning

The subjects offered in continuing general, vocational and political education are, as a rule, geared to the needs of participants. A wide range of personal, social and professional skills can be acquired in these courses. In addition to enhancing employability, the objective of these skilling courses is to foster the acceptance of shared values and a sense of social responsibility.

Development of skills

During this phase of life, learning in the process of work is particularly important. In this process the transfer of knowledge, technologies and skills is organized in a manner enabling job holders at all levels to improve their employability through informal and non-formal learning. In the employing companies, individuals and working units with different duties link up for the purpose of learning. Companies, educational institutions and job centres cooperate taking into account the specific situation of adults, which means that they meet the need for transparency and counselling in connection with a wide range of duties, mainly family duties with no time flexibility. This is also a prerequisite for the purposeful utilization and further development of learning modules.

Networking

Modules taken from formal education curricula make it possible to gradually build up individual skills profiles. This also applies to adults who have not completed all parts of their vocational training. In this way adults can, over a prolonged period of their lives, acquire professional skills which will also help them maintain and enhance their employability.

Modularization

Equally important in this connection are:

- the further development of continuing academic training
- the extension and use of opportunities for second-chance education
- possibilities for giving undergraduates credit for parts of the vocational training they have completed under the dual system.

Learning guidance services for adults address very different target groups. They offer advice to people in a wide range of occupations, with differently developed talents, differing interests and in different situations. By providing comprehensive information on the opportunities for enhancing qualifications and relevant funding, these services help people seeking advice to organize their own learning arrangements on the basis of realistic learning objectives and occupational goals. These advisory services for adults cooperate with other institutions, which means that they offer information on assistance in specific situations and refer people to contacts in the appropriate agencies. They offer assistance to learners in crisis situations with regard to the learning process. Such guidance and assistance covers all sectors of education.

Learning guidance

New, individual and modular learning opportunities and improved opportunities for informal learning will create a new learning culture motivating people, particularly in everyday routine in companies and families. Newly learnt skills are being documented and rewarded. Activities to popularize learning, eg the dissemination, through the media, of individual learning success stories, learning festivals, competitions in companies and further training awards should all have one message: "Success in learning will lead to success in life. Learning pays off". This also applies to continuing general and political education.

New learning culture
Popularization of learning

The inclusion of all segments of the population in the process of lifelong learning is a social and economic necessity. It becomes even more urgent in view of the demographic development. Adult literacy courses and programmes for acquiring

Fair access

school leaving qualifications as well as integration courses are being offered to particular target groups. Voucher systems, learning time accounts and educational saving plans can help to foster lifelong learning.

C 5 : The elderly

The term “the elderly” is defined as including mostly adults who will soon enter retirement or are already retired. The deliberate inclusion of learning in this phase of life involves new learning requirements and needs for the integration of older people into our society. A new concept of age will become generally accepted: the elderly will no longer be regarded as a burden on the welfare state and will not be excluded from the mainstream but will be considered members of society who have still a useful contribution to make.

During old age, formal learning becomes less important. Therefore, informal learning needs to be supported by means of continuing education courses which respond intelligently and flexibly to the specific needs of the elderly in their specific situations and with their practical needs.

Inclusion of informal learning

During old age, people have greater freedom to decide for themselves whether, how and for what purpose they should take part in learning activities. Thanks to their knowledge and experience, they can and will participate in shaping cultural and social developments. This is their motivation for participation in learning processes, for self-organization and self-fulfilment, also by forging new social ties.

Self-directed learning

Achieving or retaining independence and autonomy even at an advanced age is one major goal of lifelong learning during this phase of life. During the process of aging, preserving skills and abilities is more important than developing new ones. Intellectual, physical, mental and/or social skills will be lost unless they are constantly being stimulated. In order to meet the educational needs of less mobile older people, more programmes for self-directed learning using the media are being developed and offered. Learning under the changed circumstances of old age helps the elderly feel more content with their lives and enables them to participate in shaping society and to enhance the skills necessary for coping with their everyday life. Lifelong learning at this age can still be useful for the economy and for society at large. The learning activities of the elderly also have a compensatory function, in particular for:

Development of skills

- the last years of occupational life
- retirement, for which specific knowledge, skills and abilities are necessary
- overcoming a lack of knowhow, eg concerning new communication and information technologies.

At the same time the elderly also learn new skills in order to pass on their experience and knowledge or to do voluntary work.

In order to actively organize the learning processes of the elderly while they are still working and during the first years of retirement, special learning programmes are being developed and interlinked by institutions offering vocational and general education. This helps to achieve better interlinkage between the imparting of knowledge, practical occupational and general experience and research and intergenerational learning.

Networking

Modules that are flexible in terms of time and content can make learning much easier for the elderly. Programmes are being developed which differ with regard to organization and methods applied, taking into account the socialization and the circumstances of learners.

Modularization

The quality and volume of learning guidance for the elderly is being improved so that they can see the value of lifelong learning, in particular for everyday routine, and are motivated to take part in learning activities. Counselling is provided mainly at a personal level and will consider both the individual and specific needs in old age.

Learning guidance

As the need for the elderly to continue to learn after retirement is not generally recognized in our society, public relations work is being undertaken with mass media support in particular. Selected examples are presented to demonstrate the usefulness of learning during old age. Teaching the elderly makes increasing use of their positive learning experience and can thus preserve or increase people's creativity or productivity in organizing and shaping their lives and daily routines. Getting this message across will increase the learning motivation of the elderly.

New learning culture
Popularization of learning

In order to meet the demand for fair access to lifelong learning also for the elderly, age-specific obstacles are being removed in existing educational programmes. These obstacles include:

Fair access

- physical barriers for those who are less mobile
- inflexible time schedules, excessive duration
- long distance from their homes
- lack of knowledge of the German language in migrants
- lack of self-confidence.

Conclusion and outlook

The present lifelong learning strategy for the Federal Republic of Germany, which

- adheres to the constitutional framework,
- covers all phases of life from childhood to old age,
- does not patronize individuals or educational institutions,
- uses the great wealth of existing educational structures, activities and experience,

develops realistic and sustainable perspectives rather than presenting utopian concepts. This strategy for the first time outlines a structured framework for lifelong learning in Germany. This is a task for all those with relevant responsibilities in the *Länder* and in the Federal Government as well as in municipalities, local communities and educational institutions as well as for each individual. The next step will be to apply this framework: The strategy points out the direction into which the learning society is developing. The framework is flexible and open to the necessary continuous process of further development.

The adoption of the “Strategy for Lifelong Learning in the Federal Republic of Germany” by the Bund-Länder Commission for Educational Planning and Research Promotion has a clear message. Those responsible are willing to actively promote the further development of education in the Federal Republic of Germany. This willingness is also demonstrated by a number of specific decisions recently taken: eg the decision to draw up a report on education in cooperation between the *Länder* and the Federal Government;; the agreement on uniform educational standards in all *Länder*; the establishment of a *Länder* institute for quality development in education; the agreement on concrete fields of action concerning quality development and assurance and, last but not least, the educational campaign launched by the Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs entitled “Education – our ticket to the future”. The present strategy paper is intended as a road map to this future.

Glossary

Certification

Certification refers to a written assessment by a third party of specialist skills which is usually made on the basis of an external examination. An assessment made in the form of a certification is independent of learning pathways, attendance and time invested; it assesses the results of formal, non-formal and informal learning processes. As a rule, the assessment is made on the basis of minimum standards and reference levels. Usually the certification documents are generally recognized and entitle their holders to enter a further stage of education or to be paid a salary of a certain pay scale. Certificates earned as a result of certification include for example school certificates, diplomas, certificates of vocational qualifications or language certificates.

Development focuses

Elements which are essential for the lifelong learning strategy outlined in this paper and which are of varying importance during the different phases of life.

The development focuses are: inclusion of →informal learning, →self-directed learning, →development of skills, →networking, →modularization, →learning guidance, →new learning culture/popularization of learning, →fair access.

Development of skills

One of the →development focuses. The term development of skills is used in this paper for the development, preservation and transfer, through →informal, →non-formal and →formal learning processes, of people's ability to act in each phase of their lives.

Fair access

One of the →development focuses. It means enabling people to participate in education and acquire knowledge regardless of their family background, sex, nationality and social and economic situation.

Formal learning

A form of learning which, as a rule, takes place at general or vocational education institutions, which is structured (with regard to learning objectives, duration or learning support) and which leads to →certification.

Informal learning

A form of learning which takes place in everyday life, in work situations, in the family or during leisure activities. It is not structured (with regard to learning objectives, duration or learning support) and does not normally lead to →certification.

Lifelong learning

Lifelong learning includes all forms of →formal, →non-formal and →informal learning at different learning sites extending from early childhood into retirement.

Learning is understood to mean the conversion of information and experience into knowledge, insights and skills.

Modularization

One of the → development focuses. Modularization means combining material or topics to form separate, time-limited examinable units, for which credits are granted.

Networking

One of the → development focuses. (Regional) networks of cooperation between players who offer or facilitate learning processes are established, extended and maintained by means of networking processes. Vertical networks link up institutions involved at the various stages of education (eg kindergartens, schools, vocational training, higher education institutions, continuing education), in which people participate in the course of their lives, while horizontal networks link up institutions at one specific stage of education (eg institutions of continuing education).

New learning culture/popularization of learning

One of the → development focuses. This development focus is aimed at improving the image of learning in order to make learning more attractive for people by efficiently involving the media. New teaching and learning cultures are characterized by flexible time patterns, open processes, changed tasks for teachers and educators and organizational conditions that foster learning.

Non-formal learning

A form of learning which does not take place at an institution of general or vocational education. Nevertheless, non-formal learning is a systematic form of learning with regard to learning objectives, duration and learning material and leads to → certification more frequently than informal learning.

Phases of life

The various phases of life together with the development focuses provide the framework for this lifelong learning strategy. The strategy distinguishes between children, adolescents, young adults, adults and older people.

Pre-school education

Pre-school education is offered by municipalities and non-state providers, which admit children between the age of three and the age at which children enter school. Pre-school education covers the years prior to compulsory education and does not form part of the state-maintained school system.

Primary education

Primary education is provided by primary schools comprising year groups 1 to 4 (1 to 6 in Berlin and Brandenburg). Compulsory education at this stage means that all children attend primary school together.

Self-directed learning

One of the → development focuses. The key term “self-directed learning” is primarily used today to refer to the fact that increasingly learners themselves assume responsibility for the objectives, forms and pathways of their learning. This means that people deliberately choose (“direct”) and combine different learning opportunities and programmes according to their own aims, needs and previous learning experience.

As part of their increasing self-determination with regard to lifelong learning, learners can organize their own learning processes in accordance with their immediate needs (“self-organized learning”) or can make systematic use of learning arrangements organized by others (“learning organized by others”). This means that self-directed learning can include different organizational forms of learning in an increasingly self-determined learning strategy according to individual needs.

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