

How is Lifelong Learning transforming the debate on resources for learning?

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1. There can be no doubt: Recent developments in economy and society have changed conditions for education and training: More, better and different competencies, including general qualifications, incorporation of learning in the work process, training not as a single event but as an ongoing process. This also affects the question of resources. How and with what consequences, this is disputed, also in the field of trade unions policy.
2. The core question in this debate is: In how far is education and training a “public good” and in how far can it be a subject to the market. In this context, we cannot ignore that a great deal of training – especially of further vocational training – is regulated by market process since long time. But it should be made clear that public funding must not be abandoned. This is especially true for compulsory, for primary and secondary education and – regarding the importance of early childhood for the fundament of lifelong learning – also for pre-school education. And one more item seems to be important: Education and training as a public good does not exclude the introduction of some market elements in order to make it more efficient.
3. The field of continued vocational training is regulated some more by market elements. In the framework of European industrial relations the traditional model of distribution of responsibilities was: Employers pay for training for the enterprise, workers pay for their individual career training, public authorities pay training for the unemployed. But this model was an analytical one, it never met reality: Increasingly, there are no sharp and clear borderlines between company and individual interests, and this has lead to shared organisation of resources by collective agreements since a couple of years. Furthermore, we find a lot of individual financial contributions to further training without public or employers’ support.
4. The New Economy and the Knowledge-based Society enhance individualised training needs. Against the background of European experience, two approaches for organising resources are under discussion: Collective funds, regulated by

bipartite or tripartite agreements, and individual learning accounts. Under the aspect of training as an ongoing process, related to decisions of the individual person, the latter seem to be an approach to support individuals and so to ensure participation in training. But it should be stressed that they cannot replace public funding or funding by the employers. They can contribute to better efficiency of training measures and they can open opportunities of choice for the individuals. That means, an intelligent combination of the different sources should be put on the political agenda. Regarding the costs of lifelong training, it seems that use of information and communication technologies will not reduce them considerably. Production of high quality training units for CBT is so expensive that cost reduction effects only will arise only in the case of mass production – but this would be a contradiction to the differentiated training needs of the New Economy.

5. The concept of resources must not be confined to the dimension of money, but has to include some other resources such as time for training, organisation of the training process (in the education and training bodies and at workplaces as well) and recognition and transportability of qualifications as the learning "output". All these different resources must be organised in order to make training an affordable investment not only for the economy but for individuals as well.

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