

ROLE OF EDUCATION IN REDUCTION OF INCOME INEQUALITIES IN LATVIA

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Abstract

Recent years have been challenging in finding solutions to address inequalities, especially in relation to certain branches of national economy. The purpose of the study: suggest a range of educational activities in lifelong learning to increase the employability for certain groups at risk – young people, people before retirement age and in retirement age. The analysis is based on data of the Labour Force Survey, databases of Official Statistics Portal. Methods used – statistical data analysis using time series analysis. The results indicate that lifelong participation has been gaining force in recent years, and a higher share of the population is improving their digital skills. Still, there is a significant part of inhabitants who are excluded from significant mainstream processes, and this tends to prevent them from having appropriate standard of living. This part of the population is typically characterized by low income, low level of information on possible participation in life-long learning activities, lack of access to information technologies (IT) tools and the internet, low level of digital literacy. Innovative solutions of social marketing and the application of positive cases publications are important tools for increasing social inclusion. Virtual contacts and social networking could be added to cultural and business activities. Life-long learning could be more initiated by municipalities and non-governmental organisations in Latvia as other countries have shown wonderful results. Combining complementary digital tools and platforms for the virtual interaction and networking of people from different age groups needs to be used alongside with an appropriate combination of face-to-face contacts.

Key words: social inclusion, digital skills, adult education, life-long learning, region.

Introduction

Implementation of life-long education is considered as one of the most effective tools for social inclusion and active involvement in employment, for communication with other members of the society and the authorities where it is important to have certain skills as well as access to the internet. In scientific publications, these important aspects are discussed as there are several ways to motivate persons for life-long education/learning as better educated people could be better employed and could be more socially active. International organisations have indicated that Latvia has to do a lot more to involve different parts of society in life-long learning as well as Latvia was criticized on low level of internet access in households. For this reason, also academic researchers pay considerable attention to different aspects related to life-long learning which is an important tool for increase of person's competitiveness and self-confidence and well-being. The current research paper is devoted to evaluation of various developments that foster the involvement of the population of Latvia in life-long education – by gender, by age group, by education level. The aim of the paper: to suggest several educational activities in lifelong learning to increase employability for several groups: at risk- young people, people before retirement age and in retirement age based on situation analysis and development in Latvia including access to internet as the internet is becoming one of very important tools in realization of life-long education. The tasks: 1) to analyse previously conducted scientific research results; 2) investigate participation and tendencies of participation in life-

long education programs different population groups in Latvia, 3) analyse trends in relation to access to the internet.

Materials and Methods

Academic researchers have investigated in detail various relevant aspects of the role of life-long education with regards to strengthening social inclusion in multicultural societies through information literacy (Oğuz & Kurbanoğlu, 2013). Researchers have analysed various assumptions regarding the life-long learning opportunities of older people using social care services (Hafford-Letchfield, 2010) with practical suggestions for improved social inclusion. Various aspects for the future of the workforce in the context of labour market in Italy and learning outdoors by creating global competitive economies with innovative approach have been discovered by researchers (Barbabella *et al.*, 2022; Aylward & Mitten, 2022) with developed practical recommendations for innovative applications. In recent years the internet and digital skills are becoming increasingly important using also online e-learning to address cognitive disabilities (Cinquin, Guitton, & Sauz on, 2019) where researchers have developed a systematic review. Different innovative projects are developed for social inclusion, like Emilia project for accessing lifelong learning and reducing the social exclusion (Greacen & Jouet, 2008). Other aspects of innovative approaches in Grundtvig project partnership case study 2009-2011 on life-long learning application for active citizenship and capacity building in the realised education project 'Lifelong Learning for

Active Citizenship and Capacity Building' (LLLab) which was created to make the knowledge triangle (education, research and innovation) accessible to employed people – to promote the concept for wider audiences. This project was created to build capacity of the employed persons in order for those employed persons better respond to the new challenges of the EU standards in a developing intercultural knowledge-based society (Grabowska, 2010). Approaches in 'nothing to lose and everything to gain' as a motto for neighbourhood houses and later life learners (Ollis *et al.*, 2018) could be applied also in other countries. Student living labs as innovation arenas for sustainable tourism (Jernsand, 2019; Sergejeva & Aboltins, 2020; Sergejeva, Aboltins, & Atslega, 2021) are suggested for application for life-long learning. Income and quality of life influence on citizens' participations in activities of local governments in Latvia (Savrina & Seimuskane, 2018; Seimuskane, Vilka, & Brekis, 2017), importance of financial aspects (Romanova *et al.*, 2018) as well as ergonomic aspects (Kalkis, Andza, & Roja, 2020; Kalkis, Graveris, & Roja, 2021) and effective marketing (Batra *et al.*, 2018) are also prominent trends. Digitalization in the Baltic States (B. Rivza & P. Rivza, 2020) is a meaningful aspect for social inclusion. Life-long learning activities for social inclusion is supported in several policy recommendations by several international organisations and especially by OECD (OECD, 2022; 2016; OECD/EU, 2016). Researchers have stressed the role of arts in life-long learning and social inclusion as well (Reiss & Pringle, 2003), also stressing the special role and influence of arts.

The methods used – statistical data analysis using time series analysis. The analysis is based on the data of Labour Force Survey, databases of Official Statistics Portal of the Republic of Latvia reflecting also Census 2021 data. For empirical research, the methods applied in this paper consist of the analysis on Labour Force Survey Population data aged 25-64 in education or training (number of hours spent on all taught learning activities within the last four weeks – COURLEN) as a share of the total population of the same age group (European Commission, Eurostat, 2022). Starting from 2016 Eurostat has changed calculation methodology of this indicator. It includes also persons who were on holidays during the last 4 weeks (Official Statistics portal, 2022; European Commission, Eurostat, 2022). Data collection methods used in the Labour Force Survey: 1995-2005 – face-to-face interviews using paper questionnaires (Paper-and-Pencil Interviewing – PAPI); starting from 2006 – face-to-face interviews using portable computers (computer-assisted personal interviewing – CAPI); starting from 2007 – CAPI and telephone interviews (computer-assisted

telephone interviewing – CATI); starting from 2018 – CAPI, CATI and online surveys (computer-assisted web interviewing – CAWI); as of 13 March 2020, with the aim to limit spread of Covid-19 – CATI interviews and online surveys (CAWI). The survey covers all persons living in the surveyed household, and questions on activity status asked to persons aged 15-89 (prior to 2001, to persons aged 15 and over, but from 2002 until 2020 (including) – persons aged 15-74). The questionnaires contain relevant questions characterising the activity of the population; these questionnaires were prepared in accordance with the internationally approved methodology of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) specifically in the area of labour force surveys that ensures comparability of information with other countries. The LFS provides information on the number of population including the active population (employed and unemployed) broken down by various characteristics (sex, age, education qualification, place of residence, employment status, etc.) (Official Statistics portal, 2022; European Commission, Eurostat, 2022). That creates confidence that data are representative and could be used for research. Data obtained are analysed with trend analysis to determine developments regarding the share of population involved in additional education.

Data on access to internet in households was based obtained material from conducted survey on the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in households and by individuals. The source of the data is the questionnaire No. ICT-persons 'Use of computers and the internet in households'. The sample of the survey is of a mixed design: 1) The CAPI (face-to-face interviews) part of the sample consists of two stages, with counting areas being selected in the first stage by using the principles of stratified systemic sample creation. The counting areas are divided into 16 strata, which have been formed by combining groups of territorial divisions; In turn, the second stage of the sample selects respondents according to the simple random sampling method. 2) The CATI (telephone interviews) part of the sample applies the stratified simple random sample for selecting respondents. Respondents are divided into 36 strata, which are formed as a combination of age groups (16-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65-74) and statistical regions (Riga, Pierīga, Vidzeme, Latgale, Kurzeme and Zemgale), in 2019 8500 households/persons were included in the sample, response was 5219 persons (Official Statistics portal, 2022).

Results and Discussion

As indicated by scientific publications and research results as well as policy document studies – life-long learning is relevant for social inclusion,

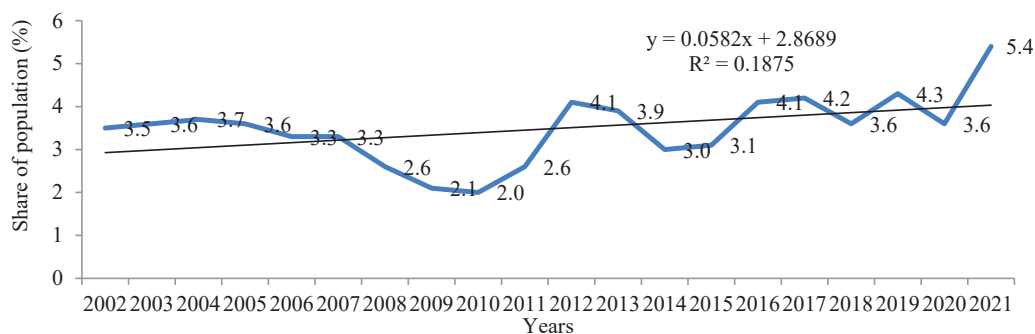


Figure 1. Share of population (in percent) aged 15-74 years by additional education in Latvia in 2002-2021. Source: Author’s construction and calculations based on Official Statistics database IZ1030.

Table 1
Share of adult learning participants by age group and sex in Latvia in 2012-2021 (in percent)

Gender	Age groups	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total	25–64	7.2	6.8	5.7	5.7	7.3	7.5	6.7	7.4	6.6	8.6
	25–34	12.8	12.3	10.4	9.9	12.6	11.8	11.8	13.0	11.8	13.4
	35–54	5.9	5.5	4.9	5.1	6.2	7.3	6.0	6.7	6.1	8.5
	55–64	4.2	3.4	2.2	2.6	4.0	3.5	3.0	3.4	2.7	4.5
Males	25–64	6.2	5.1	4.9	4.1	6.1	6.0	4.8	5.4	4.6	5.5
	25–34	12.5	9.7	8.7	7.7	11.3	10.5	9.3	10.9	9.4	9.7
	35–54	4.5	3.8	4.1	3.3	4.6	5.0	3.8	4.2	3.9	5.2
	55–64	2.7	2.7	2.1	1.4	3.1	2.8	1.8	2.0	...	2.0
Females	25–64	8.1	8.2	6.3	7.2	8.5	8.8	8.4	9.3	8.4	11.5
	25–34	13.2	15.1	12.1	12.1	14.0	13.2	14.3	15.2	14.4	17.4
	35–54	7.2	7.2	5.6	6.7	7.8	9.4	8.0	9.1	8.2	11.7
	55–64	5.3	3.9	2.4	3.6	4.7	4.0	4.0	4.6	...	6.5

Source: Author’s construction based on Official Statistics database IZ1030.

for increase of self-confidence of people. Life-long learning is becoming more and more important and therefore a lot of attention paid by different stakeholders – policy makers, non-government organisations as well as by academic researchers to investigate best possible solutions in practical application of life-long learning. In recent years, data on share of population involved in additional education in 2002-2021 in the Republic of Latvia are included in Figure 1.

Data indicate that the share of population involved in life-long education is increasing but still has a high degree of fluctuations in different years; also, there is a different situation by age groups and gender, see Table 1.

Data indicate that females are involved in life-long learning more than males; more active participants in life-long learning are persons in the age group 25-34 years old. Tendencies of developments for inhabitants

in Latvia regarding involvement in life-long learning are reflected in Figure 2.

Involvement of people in life-long learning by education level is different, but the share is increasing for the last year for all types of groups in relation to previously acquired education levels, as it is reflected in Figures 2–6.

Data in Figure 3 indicate that share of population aged 25-64 years (%) by additional education in Latvia with higher education by gender in analysed years remains approximately the same for the whole population and males are involved in additional education traditionally less than females.

It is worth noting that there are increasing numbers of people in Latvia involved in life-long education, also for people with no formal education, as it is reflected in Figure 6.

Data included in Figure 6 and tendency analysis indicate that the share of population by additional

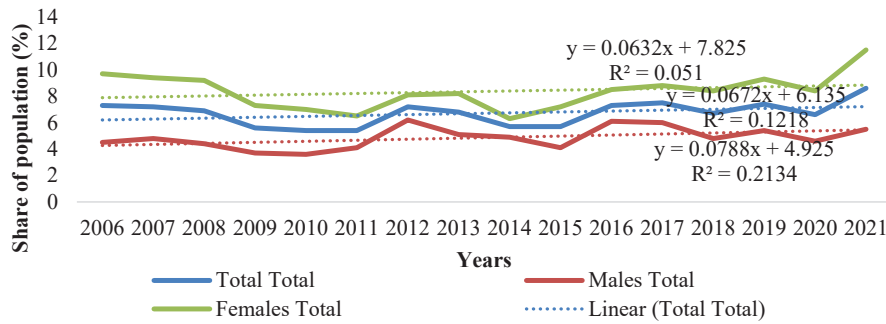


Figure 2. Share of population aged 25-64 years (%) by additional education in Latvia by gender in 2006-2021. Source: Author’s construction and calculations based on Official Statistics database IZ1030.

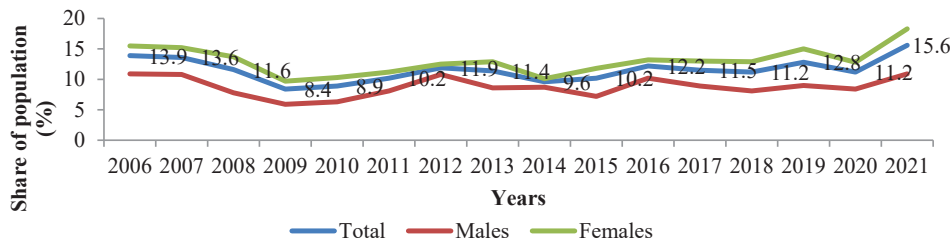


Figure 3. Share of population aged 25-64 years (%) by additional education in Latvia with higher education (ISCED levels 5 to 8) by gender in 2006-2021.

Source: Author’s construction and calculations based on Official Statistics database IZ1030.

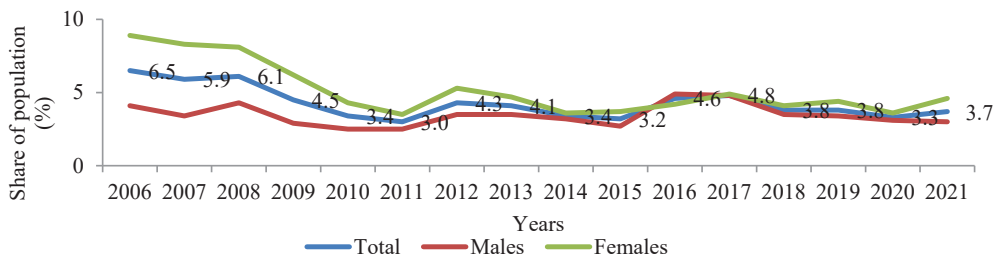


Figure 4. Share of population aged 25-64 years by additional education in Latvia with vocational education or professional secondary education (ISCED levels 3 and 4) by gender in 2006-2021.

Source: Author’s construction and calculations based on Official Statistics database IZ1030.

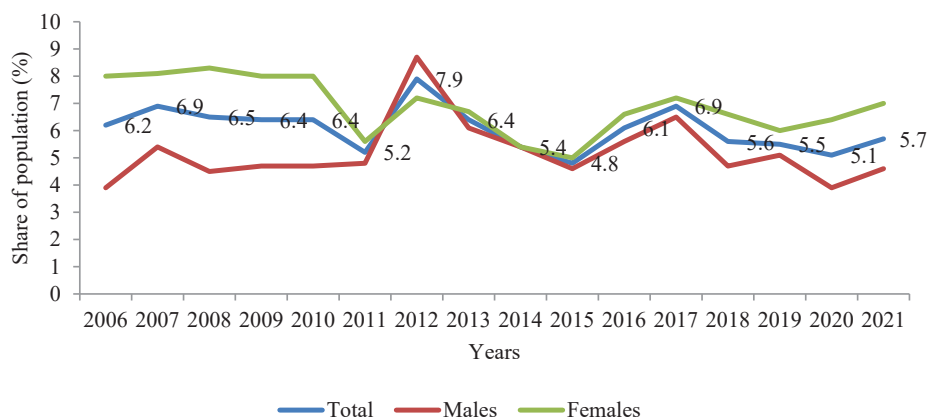


Figure 5. Share of population aged 25-64 years by additional education in Latvia with general secondary education (ISCED level 3) by gender in 2006-2021.

Source: Author’s construction and calculations based on Official Statistics database IZ1030.

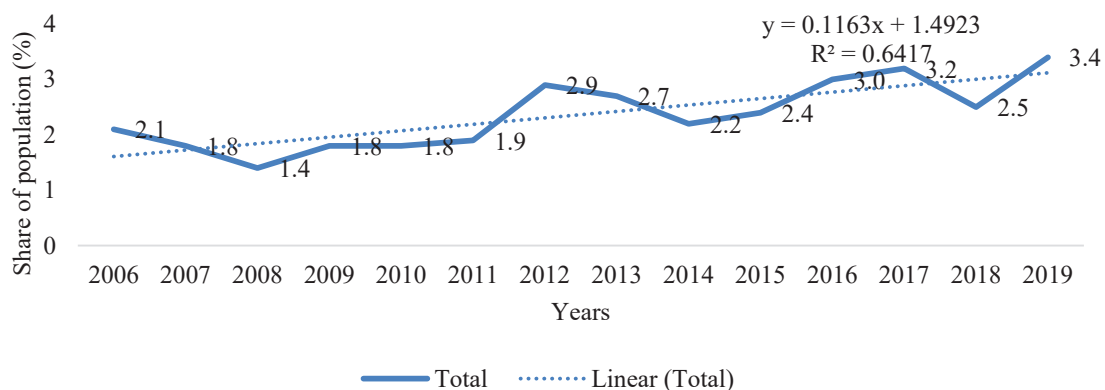


Figure 6. Share of population aged 25-64 years by additional education in Latvia with no formal education, less than primary education, basic or primary education (ISCED levels 0 to 2) in 2006-2019.

Source: Author’s construction and calculations based on Official Statistics database IZ1030.

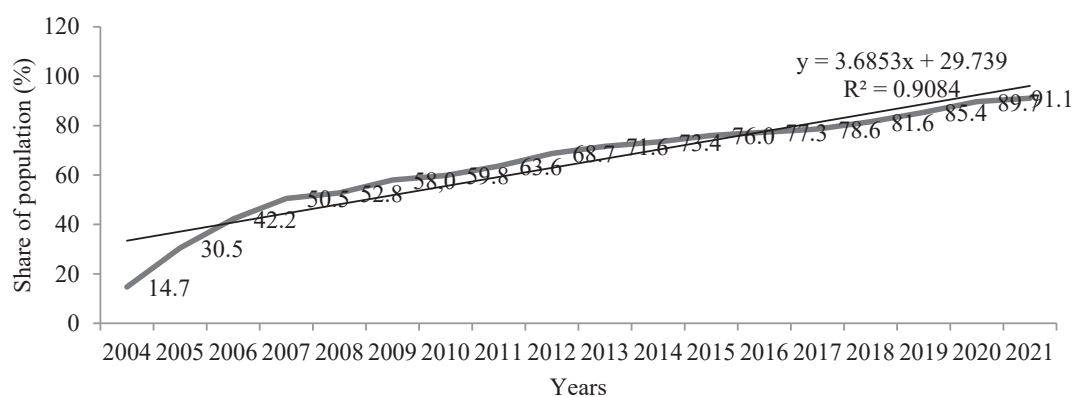


Figure 7. Share of households (%) by access to internet in Latvia in 2004-2021.

Source: Author’s construction and calculations based on Official Statistics database DLM060.

education in Latvia with no formal education increases annually on average by 0.12% points and coefficient of determination 0.6417 indicating that this tendency is significant. In recent years, the role of access to the internet is increasing as the internet is becoming a substantial requirement for life-long learning, for being socially active also during unusual conditions with restricted face-to-face contacts. Data on tendency of share of households in Latvia with access to the internet are included in Figure 7. Tendency indicates that access to the internet in Latvia is increasing annually on average by 3.7% points, the tendency is statistically significant as the coefficient of determination is very high (0.9084).

Results of analysis indicate that share of households by access to the internet in Latvia in 2004-2021 is increasing on average by 3.7 percent points with every year. This is important aspect for involvement of different age inhabitants in Latvia in life-long learning. The average increase of the participation in life-long learning is less than an increase of the access to the internet. The information technologies and

access to the internet itself is not enough. More social and informational efforts are necessary to help people and motivate them to join the life-long learning. The results indicate that participation in lifelong learning is gaining force in recent years and a higher share of the population is improving their digital skills, too. Still, there is a significant part of inhabitants who are excluded from significant processes allowing for more appropriate standard of living. These target groups tend to have low income, low level of information on possible participation in life-long learning activities, limited availability of information technology tools and internet access, as well as a low level of digital literacy.

Conclusions

Life-long learning is key for social inclusion, for increase of self-confidence.

The share of population involved in life-long education is increasing but has a high degree of fluctuations in different years; also, there are different situations in different age groups and gender.

Involvement of people in life-long learning regarding education level is different, but the share for the last year is increasing for representatives of all previously acquired education levels.

It is being observed that there are increasing numbers of people in Latvia involved in life-long education without prior formal education.

In recent years, the role of access to the internet is increasing, as the internet is becoming a substantial requirement for life-long learning.

Innovative solutions of social marketing and application of positive cases publications (promotion) are important tools to increase social inclusion. Virtual

contacts and social networking could be added to cultural and business activities, and life-long learning initiated by local governments and non-governmental organisations could be increased, both using face-to face and virtual forms of communication and interaction. Complementary tools for the interaction and networking of people from different age groups are relevant, as these tend to be mutually enriching.

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