



Association for the Development of Education in Africa

**Biennale on Education in Africa
(Libreville, Gabon, March 27-31, 2006)**

Effective Literacy Programs

Parallel Session A-5

**From Literacy
to Lifelong Learning**

**Operationalizing the Policy Discourses
of Lifelong Learning: Challenges for Africa**

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**Working Document
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DOC A-5.3

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
APPEAL	Asia-Pacific Program of Education for All
CBS	Credit Bank System
CLC	Community Learning Center
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Union
EFA	Education for All
EU	European Union
FTI	Fast Track Initiative
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
LSDS	Learning Support Delivery System
KEDI	Korean Education Development Institute
NFE	Non-formal Education
NFE A&E	Non-formal Education Accreditation and Equivalency System
NQF	National Qualification Framework
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
SADC	Southern African Development Community
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
UIE	UNESCO Institute for Education

1. SUMMARY

1. The policy discourse of Lifelong Learning was introduced in the international scene in the seventies with the Faure Report issued by UNESCO in 1972. Since then, the discourse of lifelong learning has been interpreted in different ways and consequently, operationalized in a variety of ways. Varied as the practices are on lifelong learning, the term itself is more widely used in Europe and in some countries in Asia. Briefly tracing the history of the discourse, the paper demonstrates the evolution of the term from lifelong education to lifelong learning as well as identifies the main issues that have emerged through time. By giving examples of the implementation of the policy discourse of lifelong learning, it shows that lifelong learning is relevant to all countries in the world. This paper argues that lifelong learning as policy discourse is inherently related to the Education for All agenda and therefore countries in the African region will benefit from integrating its principles in their educational visions and consequent operationalization in their educational plans and programs.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. Lifelong learning as a common sense principle of learning throughout life is differentiated from lifelong learning as an educational principle that needs to be operationalized in the different educational and training systems. The paper is divided in three parts, 1) the history of the development of lifelong learning discourse; 2) examples of implementation of some features of lifelong learning; and 3) lessons for a more inclusive operationalization of lifelong learning.

3. In the first part, a brief evolution of the policy discourse of lifelong learning is presented. Aside from explaining the context from which the different terms and understandings of lifelong learning has evolved, it also identifies the main proponents of such discourses. This chapter also shows how the principles of lifelong learning are related to the educational discourses of Education for All (EFA) and CONFINTEA (International Conference on Adult Education) and therefore the present policy discourse divide of Lifelong Learning for Europe and EFA for the South should be urgently addressed.

4. To show the relevance of principles of lifelong learning, examples of operationalization of some its dimensions are presented. To demonstrate its universal applicability, the paper has chosen to focus on 1) policy advocacy; 2) providing learning opportunities for all 3) bridging the gap between formal and non-formal education; and 4) provision of life skills. In policy advocacy, examples of how countries all over the world have incorporated lifelong learning in both their educational and developmental policies are shown. The experiences on creating an environment of learning and providing learning opportunities for all through community initiatives and learning festivals are then briefly discussed. In bridging the gap between formal and non-formal education, the implementation of accreditation and equivalency programs from a few countries are presented. Finally the example of life skills in HIV Preventive Education is offered to show how Africa is presently benefiting from the advocacy of life skills.

5. The paper ends with the challenges for the region to adopt lifelong learning as an educational policy and translate this into programs.

3. INTRODUCTION

6. The belief in learning throughout life is embedded in societies all over the world. The notion of learning from cradle to grave is as old as humanity itself and its value passed from generation to generation. This common sense understanding of the need and value of the process of learning through one's lifetime however needs to be differentiated from a more formal frame of reference for the development of education and training systems as a strategy to address social, cultural and economic changes in society.

7. Introduced thirty five years ago as a policy discourse, lifelong learning like any other discourse, has been the subject of contention, negotiation and multiple interpretations, and consequently appropriated in diverse ways by a broad range of actors. This paper will 1) outline the history of the development of lifelong learning discourse; 2) present examples of implementation of some features of lifelong learning; and 3) cull some lessons for a more inclusive operationalization of lifelong learning for Africa.

4. HISTORY OF LIFELONG LEARNING DISCOURSES

8. The growing dissatisfaction with the formal education system and the series of student uprisings in 1968, meant to protest the irrelevance of schools in addressing societal problems and its authoritarian processes, were influential in the shaping of the earlier discourses of lifelong learning. Paul Lengrand, who used to head the Adult Education Division of the Education Sector of UNESCO, presented the report “An Introduction to Lifelong Learning” to UNESCO in 1970 which resulted in the setting up of the International Commission on the Development of Education, made up of experts who were asked to make a study on the state of education.

9. Chaired by Edgar Faure, the Commission made public their findings through their report “Learning to be: The world of education today and tomorrow (1972). Also known as the Faure Report, it asserted the right and necessity of every individual to learn throughout life for his/her social, economic, political and cultural development. In this report, key principles on lifelong learning were laid down:

“Every individual must be in a position to keep learning throughout his life. The idea of lifelong education is the keystone of the learning society. The lifelong concept covers all aspects of education, embracing everything in it, with the whole being more than the sum of its parts. There is no such thing as a separate “permanent” part of education which is not lifelong. In other words, lifelong education is not an educational system but the principle in which the over-all organization of a system is founded, and which accordingly underlies the development of each of its component parts” (pp. 181-182)

“We propose lifelong education as the master concept for educational policies in the years to come for both developed and developing countries”

10. Similar to the vision of the 1990s Education for All (EFA) discourse, the Faure report also called for education for the largest number of people and emphasized the need to relate the different learning contexts whether it be formal, non-formal or informal. This being so, resources should be distributed fairly throughout these learning contexts. Such holistic approach and its vision for the learners to become more humane through quality education, put emphasis on the learners participation in determining the educational processes and therefore demanded greater flexibility.

11. A year later, the OECD came up with, “Recurrent Education: a strategy for lifelong learning” which focused on how learning could be utilized to respond to the demands of the market and for individuals to be able to compete with their newly acquired learning (OECD, 1973). Given that it was work-oriented, this concept of recurrent education was more associated with post-compulsory education and training. This interpretation marked the reframing of the lifelong learning discussion in largely economic and employability terms and OECD, together with the World Bank later, would continue to put forward the market-driven lifelong learning perspective, in contrast to the more holistic and more encompassing discourse of UNESCO.

12. In 1975, the UNESCO Institute for Education (UIE) came out with a series of monographs that were meant to conceptualize and operationalize lifelong education. In one of these monographs, a list of concept characteristics of lifelong education is elaborated. Among them are: a) education does not terminate at the end of formal schooling but it is a lifelong process; b) lifelong education is not confined to adult education but it encompasses and unifies all stages of education – pre-primary, primary, secondary and so forth, thus it seeks to view education in its totality; c) lifelong education includes formal education, non-formal education and informal patterns of education; d) the community also plays an important role in the system of lifelong education right from the time the child begins to interact with it, and continues its educative function both in professional and general

areas throughout life; e) the institutions of education, like schools, universities and training centers are of course, important, but only as one of the agencies for lifelong education. They no longer enjoy the monopoly of educating the people and can no longer exist in isolation from other educative agencies in the society; f) lifelong education seeks continuity and articulation along its vertical or longitudinal dimension (vertical articulation); g) lifelong education also seeks integration at its horizontal and depth dimensions at every stage in life (horizontal integration); h) contrary to the elitist form of education, lifelong education is universal in character. It represents democratization of education; i) lifelong education is characterized by its flexibility and diversity in content, learning tools and techniques, and time of learning; j) the ultimate goal of lifelong education is to maintain and improve the quality of life; and k) there are three major prerequisites for lifelong education, namely, opportunity, motivation and educability. (Dave, 1975).

13. Other voices joined the discussion and one of the more known works, “No limit to learning: bridging the human gap. A Report to the Club of Rome”, envisioned a society which was relying on individuals to critically analyze and take part in their society’s development through learning, very much along the lines espoused by the Faure Report.

14. The seventies’ discourse on lifelong education, however did not gain momentum for many reasons. Some argued that the UNESCO discourse was too idealistic and therefore impossible to attain. Recession and cuts in public expenditures in the mid-seventies were not conducive for the OECD discourse either, of providing more work-related learning opportunities. For several years, there was not much discussion and debate on lifelong education. It was only in the nineties, that the lifelong learning discourses re-emerged.

15. Arising from a totally different context as that of the seventies, the nineties lifelong learning discourse was both 1) a continuation of the tensions between the more holistic and more humane approach vis-à-vis the more economic perspective and therefore largely work-related; and 2) sharpening of the discourse in terms of its shift from education to learning. It also resurfaced in the world of education at the time where the Jomtien World Conference on Education for All (1990) had introduced the EFA goals and which would become the dominant educational discourse for the countries in the South. The nineties lifelong learning discourse then was faced with two challenges, first, the tensions within the discourse, between the more dominant economic approach on one hand and the more holistic and humane approach on the other hand; and second, the difficulty of finding its bearings in countries in the South, who were now following the EFA agenda. The latter, producing what has been observed to be a discourse divide, lifelong learning for the North and Education for All for the South (Torres, 2002)

16. As one examines the EFA goals of early child care and education, universal primary enrolment, life skills for the youth, adult literacy, it is clear that such goals are along the principles of learning at different stages in our life while the EFA goal on gender equality is consistent with lifelong learning principles of broadening access of learning opportunities. Unfortunately, as 15 years implementation of the EFA agenda primarily revolved around universal primary education, the other goals receded into the background and hence, the EFA’s inherent connection to lifelong learning has not been operationalized. Reduced to ensuring entry into the formal education system, the EFA implementation so far, did not give due credit to the contribution of non-formal education and the importance of literacy in laying the foundation for continuous learning.

17. By 1996, Learning: the treasure within (also known as Delors Report after the Chair of the International Commission), UNESCO reintroduced the debate on lifelong learning, this time acknowledging the latter’s key role in economy:

“A key to the twenty first century, learning throughout life will be essential, for adapting to the evolving requirements of the labor market and for better mastery of the changing time-frames and rhythms of individual existence”

18. At the same time, it articulated the same holistic vision of its precursor, Faure Report, by elaborating on three other pillars of learning aside from Faure’s learning to be, i.e. learning to do,

learning to know and learning to live together. Emanating from the rapidly changing globalized economic, social, political and cultural milieu, this latest interpretation of lifelong learning sought to bring together the multiple reasons for the demand for learning on the eve of the 21st century.

“... rethink and update the concept of lifelong learning so as to reconcile three forces: competition, which provides incentives; cooperation, which gives strength; and solidarity, which unites ...”

“... not only must it adapt to changes in the nature of work but it must also constitute a continuous process of forming whole beings - their knowledge and aptitudes, as well as the critical faculty and ability to act.”

19. Written after Jomtien, the Delors Report also makes several references to the EFA discourse and clarifying its relationship to lifelong learning. While asserting the importance of the framework of the basic learning needs which pertains to every person – child, youth and adult – it also cautions that “any tendency to view basic education as a kind of emergency educational package for poor people and for poor countries, in our view be an error. The broad definition of the function of basic education is not only applicable to all societies, but should lead to a review of educational practices and policies at initial level in all countries. What the world community endorsed at Jomtien was the universal provision of an education worthy of all, an education that provides both a solid basis for future learning and the essential skills for living a constructive life within society. The fact that much education, in both industrialized and the developing countries falls far short of that standard does not suggest that we should settle for less, but rather we should strive for more” (Delors, 1997, p.199)

20. By arguing for a maximalist interpretation of the EFA agenda, the Delors report points out that “formal education systems tend to emphasize the acquisition of knowledge to the detriment of other types of learning, but it is vital now to conceive education in a more encompassing fashion. Such a vision should inform and guide future educational reforms and policy, in relation both to contents and to its methods”.

21. In terms of implementation of the nineties lifelong learning discourse, as it was able to combine an economic and a humanistic interpretation of lifelong learning, it was easier for the discourse to gain acceptance in many countries, particularly within the European Union (EU). On the other hand, because of the predominance of universal primary enrollment discourse in the EFA agenda, the policy discourse of lifelong learning, even with its enriched four pillars, did not seem to be coherent with the mostly Southern countries implementation of the EFA.

22. For Europe, even before the Delors report, a series of documents on lifelong learning (the 1991 Memorandum on Higher Education in the European Community, 1991 Memorandum of Open Distance Learning in the European Community, the 1995 European Commission White Paper: Teaching and Learning: Towards the learning society) had come out from Europe, thus laying the foundation for a more pronounced and elaborated strategy of lifelong learning in the development of the region. By 2000, the Heads of States of the Union had agreed on the Lisbon Strategy where the region would be the most competitive knowledge society of the world by 2010 through lifelong learning. While couched in a predominantly economic terms, the view that came across was that lifelong learning also translates to personal fulfillment and enables as well the individual to exercise his/her rights as citizens. It was no wonder that given such encompassing interpretation, member states at the EU, with governments coming from a range of political parties, found it easy to integrate such discourse in education and training policies in their countries.

23. The same could not be said for other regions in the world. Except for a few countries like China, Japan, South Korea, Thailand, South Africa and Namibia, lifelong learning as key policy educational discourse did not attract the same attention as that of the European region. Aside from the earlier cited reason that most countries were following the EFA educational discourse, more particularly the goal on universal primary enrollment, and consequently have become short sighted in their appreciation of the lifelong and life wide educational and learning process, another reason was

that lifelong learning had assumed many other names - recurrent education, permanent education, continuing education, adult education - that it was not easy to precise which country had embraced the principles of the lifelong learning discourse. Moreover, while the vision and mission of lifelong learning seemed to have resonated in many other countries in the world, the operationalization of the discourse had taken on many different forms where only some features of lifelong learning were implemented.

24. Aside from the discourse divide, another feature of the lifelong learning discourse in the nineties is the shift from lifelong education to lifelong learning which was not only semantic but also substantive. Lifelong education as put forward by the Faure Report was associated with the more comprehensive and integrated goal of developing more humane individuals and communities in the face of rapid social change. On the other hand, the more dominant interpretation of lifelong learning in the nineties especially within Europe was linked to retraining and learning new skills that would enable individuals to cope with the demands of the rapidly changing workplace (Matheson and Matheson, 1996; Bagnall, 2000). Learning to earn was the slogan easily associated with this perspective. It also seems that lifelong learning as it is presently promoted has become more individual oriented whereas lifelong education often referred back to the community. On the other hand, the emphasis of lifelong learning on the learner could also be interpreted as assigning more agency to individuals in contrast to lifelong education's thrust on structures and institutions. The crisis within welfare states brought about by massive unemployment has been pointed to as one of the reasons for the resuscitation and subsequent transformation of the concept of lifelong learning (Griffin, 1999). By promoting individual agency in determining the learning agenda, the welfare states tries to abdicate its responsibility to provide economic opportunities.

25. For countries in the South, this shift from education to learning would pose challenges at different levels. Faced with millions of women and men who were lacking access to educational learning opportunities, the mode for addressing this was mass campaigns and their emphasis was on reaching the numbers rather than the multiple learning needs of individuals. How will the massive and centralized bureaucracies of the Ministries of Education respond to flexible and self-directed learning? How would the teachers who were trained to be at the center of the classrooms and therefore used to be in control of the learning agenda through the curriculum, be prepared for shift of the center to the learners?

26. In the end, more important, because of the nature and character of lifelong learning, it is a challenge to grapple with it both conceptually and operationally, an observation, already made in the early years of the discourse:

“... it is often difficult to conceptualize lifelong education in its entirety on account of its comprehensiveness and multiple modalities.” (Faure, 1972)

27. Yet this has not deterred countries and stakeholders from moving the lifelong learning agenda forward, as they have appropriated the discourse and tailor made it to their specific context and needs.

5. IMPLEMENTING LIFELONG LEARNING IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

28. At the moment, the more dominant explanation for the need for lifelong learning is for individuals to be able to adjust to the fast changing demands of the economy, by providing them the much needed skills and knowledge to compete in the labor market. It is also argued that individuals in the 21st century need to learn and equip themselves with skills to use and make meaning of information and communication technologies (ICTs), which has changed many of our societies. Previously in the background, the argument for learning new values and attitudes is however gaining ground.

“HIV/AIDS demands a lifelong learning approach. Its about sexuality and changing roles. We have to work simultaneously with children and adults to discuss in new ways. There’s need for partnership and linkages between government, private sector, civil society, between health institutions, schools, universities, workplaces. Teaching and preaching about AIDS has failed. No learning can take place until we take ‘learning’ seriously. The social status of women must change, their self-image must be such that they can negotiate sexual relations as equals. We have to think in more radical ways to ensure a prosperous future in the Southern African region” (Justin Ellis, Undersecretary of Lifelong Learning and Culture in Namibia, as cited in Walters, 2000).

29. With this background, the different features of lifelong learning has been implemented and a cursory review of four key areas of implementation in lifelong learning, 1) policy advocacy; 2) providing learning opportunities for all 3) bridging the gap between formal and non-formal education; and 4) provision of life skills, reveals both similarities as well as differences in the interpretation of the discourse.

5.1. Lifelong learning as policy

30. Aside from the European Union’s Lisbon Strategy where member-states have agreed on the need for lifelong learning policies as the strategy for the development of the region and therefore are taking policy and program measures towards this end, there are very few countries (e.g. China, Japan, Namibia, South Africa, South Korea and Thailand) who have clearly delineated lifelong learning policies.

31. In Thailand, the urgent need to reform the curriculum and the management of education due to economic, social and educational crisis was the context for the laying down of the legal basis of lifelong learning, the National Education Act (1999) where,

“Education is defined as the “learning process for personal and social development through imparting of knowledge, practice, training, transmission of culture; enhancement of academic progress; building a body of knowledge by creating a learning environment and society with factors available and conducive to continuous lifelong learning”

The law also states that

“Credits accumulated by learners shall be transferable within the same type or between types or from different educational institutions, including learning from NFE or informal education, vocational training or from work experience”

32. The guidelines for developing the appropriate lifelong education into a learning society are: a) provision of appropriate education to cover all age groups of learners (before school, schooling, working and aging groups); b) development of appropriate contents to meet the needs of the learners, to enable them to apply their knowledge in their actual vocations (learning to know, to do, to be and learning to live together); c) development of more varieties of qualified learning resources (family, society, resource centers and ICTs; and d) promotion of inter-related and transfer of knowledge in the three systems of education. (Suwantipak, 2001; Somtrakool, 2002)

33. In China, its 1995 Education Law stipulated that the State operates a lifelong education system and to create conditions so that its citizens learn throughout life. Three years later, the Education Invigoration Action Plan for the 21st Century states that a lifelong learning system be established throughout the country by 2010. Finally, in 1999, a decision on Deepening Education and all round promotion of quality of education provided for the strengthening of the lifelong learning system. Concretely, the four major drives to lifelong learning are: 1) to universalize literacy and basic education; 2) to popularize higher education; 3) to systematize vocational education; and 4) to practice community based adult education. Not only is lifelong learning seen as an important education perspective but more important it is the means for development where the end goal is for China to be a learning society. (Shuping, 2002)

34. On the other hand, Namibia and South Africa coming from a context of a post-colonial and post-apartheid regime have likewise embraced lifelong learning to respond to the reality of the large gaps of educational access. It is also important to note that within the region, through the Southern African Development Community (SADC) there is a Technical Committee on Lifelong Education and Training, whose main objective is to foster regional cooperation and integration by promoting Lifelong education and training as an integral part of all education and training. The Committee has defined lifelong education and its justification as:

“Lifelong education is a comprehensive and visionary concept which includes formal, non-formal and informal learning extended through the lifespan of an individual to attain the fullest possible development in personal, social and vocational and professional life. It views education in its totality, and includes learning that occurs in the home, school, community, and workplace, and through mass media and other situations and structures for acquiring and enhancing knowledge, skills and attitudes.”

Lifelong education, in response to the constantly changing conditions of modern life, must lead to the systematic acquisition, renewal, upgrading and completion of knowledge, skills and attitudes, as are required by these changes. (Technical Committee, 2001 as cited in Aitchison, 2002)

35. A more advanced form of operationalization of lifelong learning is the setting up of structures to ensure programs and resources. In Namibia, there is the Ministry of Lifelong Learning and Culture while in Japan, as lifelong learning has become a key priority, the Bureau of Social Education which had a low profile at the Ministry of Education was now changed to Bureau of Lifelong Learning. In South Korea meanwhile, there is the Lifelong Learning Policy Division under the Ministry of Education.

36. While it is clear that many of the policies have espoused a holistic approach of lifelong learning, in its implementation, there is unevenness in what features are operationalized.

5.2. Providing learning opportunities for all

37. Ensuring that learning opportunities are available for everybody is one of the key challenges of lifelong learning. Historically, even if all our societies embraced lifelong learning as a common sense practice, in reality many groups have been excluded from such learning opportunities. For example, girls and women have been marginalized from schools and in cases when they have

access to the formal system, the relevance, quality and outcomes remain within the stereotype division of gender roles. Today there have been many measures to address this historical as well as present day reality and the issue now is to assess how such are able to genuinely empower women.

38. One approach by which learning opportunities are democratized is through the community learning centers (CLC). In Asia, the CLC is a local place of learning outside the formal education system. Located in both villages and urban areas, it is usually set up and managed by local people in order to provide various learning opportunities for community development and improvement of the quality of life. A CLC does not necessarily require new infrastructure, but can operate from an already existing health centre, temple, mosque, primary school or other suitable venue. CLCs have been recognized as effective delivery mechanisms of literacy and continuing education programmes through community-based approaches. The UNESCO APPEAL has been instrumental in supporting this idea and facilitating the exchanges of experiences of several countries in the region.

39. In Africa, community schools are examples of how initiatives brought closer to the community are more flexible as they have adjusted their schedules, their facilities and provision of staff according to the needs of their intended beneficiaries. (Hoppers, 2000).

40. The Adult Learners Week Festivals is another mechanism of making visible the participation of learners and the need to democratize learning opportunities in society. One of the resolutions at the 5th International Conference on Adult Education in Hamburg, adult learners week (and its different forms, whether as learning festivals or literacy week) is now celebrated in more than 30 countries in the world, five of which are in Africa: Botswana, Mali, Namibia, Senegal and South Africa. One of the key outcomes of these learning festivals is their ability to mobilize all partners (government, NGOs, academic institutions and private sector) involved in learning. Moreover by celebrating learning through widespread use of mass media, the importance of learning throughout life is given high visibility.

5.3. Bridging formal and non-formal education through accreditation and equivalency

41. As a holistic perspective of learning, one of the key concerns of lifelong learning is the synergy of the formal and non-formal education and the most common mechanism for bridging the formal and non-formal is through accreditation and equivalency programs. In Southern Africa, for example, the National Qualification Framework (NQF) is the translation of the envisioned synergy.

42. In South Korea, the Credit Bank System (CBS) was introduced in 1998 to provide citizens with greater access to a variety of educational opportunities and to foster a lifelong learning society by recognizing their diverse learning activities. Its beneficiaries included high school graduates who were previously unable to attend post-secondary institutions and workers who hold professional certificates but did not acquire a university degree. Learners primarily acquire credits through accomplishing programs at educational and vocational training institutions, enrolling as part-time students in colleges or universities, acquiring various national certificates, and passing the bachelor's degree examination program for the self educated. The system provides associate and bachelor degree courses, based on the standardized curriculum and syllabus, which in turn, works as the criteria for the accreditation and credit approval.

43. The Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI) constitutes a committee for credit approval, composed of diverse social group leaders, for screening earned credits and/or learning experiences and activities of learners. In addition, KEDI provides a consulting system, an online service, resources and information for learners and educational institutions. Prior to the credit bank system, non-formal modes of higher education were not given formal recognition or credit since education was understood to be the domain of the formal school system. It is important to point out

that South Korea has one of highest attendance rates for tertiary education in the Asia, yet the government has decided to embark on this program as a concrete way of realizing its vision of open and lifelong learning. (Eun Soon Baik, 2000)

44. In contrast to the CBS which caters to the tertiary level of education in South Korea, in the Philippines, the Asian Development Bank has funded an elaborate Non-formal Education Accreditation and Equivalency System (NFE A&E) which is addressed to elementary and secondary levels. Launched in 1999, the NFE A&E is the national equivalency program which provides an alternative system of learning and certification and one of its challenges is to overcome the social bias so deeply rooted in Filipino culture that any learning experience, opportunity and pathway outside of the formal school system is considered second class, inferior or inadequate. It has four core components, 1) the curriculum framework; 2) learning materials; 3) learning support delivery system; and 4) accreditation and equivalency testing.

45. The curriculum framework is based on the definition of the functional literacy which is: “a range of skills and competencies - cognitive, affective and behavioral - which enable individuals to 1) live and work as human persons; 2) develop their potentials; 3) make critical and informed decisions; 4) function effectively in society within the context of their environment and that of the wider community (local, regional, national and global), in order to improve the quality of their life and that of society.”

46. A set of major indicators of functional literacy accompany this definition and form the basis of the 5 learning strands for the modules, which detail the range of competencies an adult Filipino citizen will need to possess to function effectively in Filipino society.

47. The learning materials meanwhile consist of 439 learning modules in the elementary and secondary levels in English and Filipino, 40 audio tapes and 5 video tapes which are designed to cover the competencies of the five learning strands. These aim to help learners progress along a continuum of learning from basic literacy to functional literacy and ultimately to self-learning level. The learning materials used at the different levels along this continuum reflect the shift from the facilitator-aided instruction towards self learning thereby increasing learner involvement in the instruction process. Except for communication skills, the four other learning strands may be taught in either English or Filipino at the choice of the learner as the learning modules are available in both English and Filipino versions. At the moment, however, the tests of competencies are only in Filipino.

48. The Learning Support Delivery System (LSDS) was developed as a mechanism to extend the reach of learning support service delivery beyond the Ministry of Education, through contracting of qualified service providers for learning support. The service providers may be NGOs, local government units, state colleges and universities, church based organizations, people’s organizations, and umbrella organizations which are NGOs with national networks and member organizations.

49. Finally, the certification system consists of tests which are paper and pencil based and consist of multiple-choice questions as well as essay writing. Recognizing the limitations of such tests, the Bureau has also developed a portfolio assessment for secondary level students. A portfolio is a collection of learner’s work that shows the learner’s efforts, progress and achievements; it is a folder in which the learner maintains records, test scores and other achievements, including work sample. Portfolios may be used as a work folder for formative assessment or as a presentation portfolio for summative assessment to recognize the learner’s accomplishments and assess the final level of competence.

50. In Africa, the most elaborated accreditation system is that of South Africa’s National Qualification Framework. It is interesting to note that at the moment, most of the countries that are in the process of developing and/or implementing accreditation programs are found in Southern Africa (Botswana, Namibia and South Africa) and East Africa (Kenya, Uganda).

51. The discussion on the relevance of accreditation, equivalency and certification is carried out at many levels. On one hand, it is presented as a means of recognizing and giving value to individuals' learning outside the school system. In South Africa, for example, the Congress of South African Trade Union (COSATU) was one of the key stakeholders pushing for the National Qualification Framework, coming from the apartheid regime where there was discrimination in terms of access to formal education and a lack of recognition of workers' competencies learned outside school. On the other hand, there are also those who question the real motivation of the mechanism for transferability and portability of skills. With globalization, recognized and accredited competencies could be linked to national and international systems, which in turn could be translated into a sophisticated global system of classification of flexible and mobile labor at all times (Preston, 1999). Another issue is the quality of the learning which takes place and the content and methodology of tests and assessments.

52. At the moment though, given the early stages of implementation of accreditation, equivalency and qualifications programs in Africa, it is not possible to discuss the impact of such programs in providing alternative pathways to learning that indeed are able to support learners throughout life.

5.4. Life skills and HIV prevention

53. One of the EFA goals of providing life skills for the young and adults has been gaining attention for the last years because of the new realities and problems that the population is facing. More and more, all over the world, we hear of life skills projects that are addressing conflict, gender relations, democracy and HIV prevention. Many times however, even there is the term "life" within life skills, such programs are not articulated within the framework of lifelong learning, i.e. in reality as life itself unfolds and societies change, it is necessary that the individual continuously learns new skills so that he/she is able to face the challenges.

54. In Africa today, it is easy to come across life skills programs on HIV prevention which are addressed to the young. More often, in these programs such life skills are encompassing and cover interpersonal, attitudinal and psychosocial dimensions. They are aimed at developing skills in communication, decision making, creative thinking, negotiation, stress management, values analysis and confidence building.

55. In a research undertaken by UIE, in collaboration with the ADEA Working Group on NFE on the Contribution of Non-formal Education to HIV Prevention, the preliminary results are showing an increasing number of non-formal education programs addressing HIV Prevention. For the young, most of these are labeled life skills projects while there are also "life skills" program (not labeled as such) that are addressing gender-based violence. In these kinds of programs, there is a component of consciousness raising the relationship of HIV infection and gender-based violence as well as other "skills" component of how to deal with violence in married and other intimate relationships. In addition, many projects are addressing gender-based violence not only at the individual level but also at the community level. In the said study, it has also been emphasized that when conceptualizing and implementing HIV prevention programs, it is critical that people living with HIV/AIDS are involved.

56. The proliferation of life skills projects, not only to address HIV prevention but also women's empowerment, citizenship is an indication that in our world today where the pace of change is overwhelming, there is a need to constantly learn new skills, not only among the young people but for everybody. The four pillars of learning mentioned in the Delors Report (learning to be, learning to do, learning to know and learning to live together) indeed form the basis for the minimum skills every individual in our world needs to equip himself/herself with to ensure that she/he is able to take control of her/his life and participate constructively in community and societal development processes.

6. LESSONS AND CHALLENGES

“No country has as yet achieved this full goal of a lifelong learning system and it remains a visionary call for an open learning society, operating through a multiplicity of educational networks. A key purpose of lifelong learning is democratic citizenship, connecting individuals and groups to structures of social, political and economic activity in both global and local levels.” (SADC Technical Committee on Lifelong Education and Training, as cited by Aitchison)

57. **On diversity, unevenness and lack of the understanding of the vision of Lifelong Learning:** For many countries, lifelong learning is understood mostly as a common sense principle operating in people’s daily lives as we make meaning and adjust to rapid changes. The vision of the Faure Report to make lifelong education as the master educational principle for developed and developing countries is still far from happening, although it has gained ground mostly in countries in the North. The fragmented way by which many stakeholders look at educational discourses (i.e. lifelong learning and education for all) has ensured that we are not able to conceptualize and consequently operationalize the intimate relationship between lifelong learning and education for all. For in fact, both discourses talk about democratizing learning opportunities and need to learn at all stages in our lives. Presently, there seems to be a convenient discourse divide, minimum EFA goals for the South and maximum, lifelong learning goals for the North. How this divide is translated to the international division of labor and services has already been raised many times. A challenge at the moment is how to clearly articulate the links between EFA, Lifelong learning and the present challenges posed by the Millennium Development Goals. People should stop asking if the vision of lifelong learning is relevant for Africa and instead consider how lifelong learning, if operationalized, could be a means for eradicating poverty, for ensuring universal primary enrolment, ensuring women’s empowerment and prevention of HIV. This brings us to the next question of how lifelong learning could be relevant in a society where groups of people have been denied literacy opportunities.

58. **On the place of literacy in lifelong learning.** One of the fundamental contradictions we are faced with in the world today is the unacceptable gap between those who have access to learning opportunities and those who do not have, which coincides with the poverty gap. So even as we speak of the need for lifelong learning because of the rapidly changing economic and technological changes, there is a lack of basic foundation for such learning to take place because of the illiteracy in many countries in the world. If governments are unable to address the large pockets of illiterate populations in their country, we will see a continuation of the gap and most likely still a widening of gap, as those who have also good foundations for learning will go and continue on learning (and of course, competing) while those who have no foundations and lack such a foundation will continue to be marginalized. Particularly important is the need to address the gender gap in literacy fueled largely by cultural norms which historically have systematically discriminated women to learn to read and write.

59. **On partnerships and funding.** Given that the character of lifelong learning is encompassing, it is necessary that all actors in the field are involved to ensure that learning opportunities for all are made available. Collaboration and coordination of government, community, civil society and the private sector needs to be urgently addressed to guarantee that all the stakeholders initiatives are mobilized and properly acknowledged. Finally, it is critical that the appropriate financial resources are allocated to ensure that the relevant content, methods, human resources and infrastructure are in place. Without the resources for the education of millions of citizens, the aspiration for lifelong education appears to be impractical and impossible to implement.

60. **On lifelong learning as an individual and societal project in Africa.** Learning takes place largely at the individual level even if in reality, we learn in different group contexts, the family, the school, the work place, communities. Many have written about lifelong learning as basically an individual project where the person prepares himself/herself for a world that could make use of his/her labor depending on his/her competencies. The argument of developing human capital through

education and lifelong learning does not resonate only in our development policies but also for many, an individual preoccupation that shapes our lives. However, if we argue that learning equips us to be more humane and to live together, we need to envision lifelong learning as more than an individual project but also as a societal project in the 21st century where development of social capital through lifelong learning could be one way of addressing our highly conflictual communities and societies. The challenge is to build a learning society where there is a conscious process of reducing all forms of educational exclusion at the same time that relevant and quality educational content and processes are put in place so that individuals could fully participate as active citizens in development processes in their communities and societies.

61. **Concrete steps that could be undertaken to realize the vision and principles of LLL:**

- 1) Make a clear policy of lifelong learning within the education and development policy framework. Part of this task is to make coherent the relationships of EFA, MDGs, NEPAD to the vision of lifelong learning. The role of literacy, adult education and non-formal education in this regard needs to be clearly articulated. Rather than coming up with a lifelong learning action plan as many European countries have been doing, it would be more effective to integrate and clearly articulate the LLL principle in existing educational plans and/or development plans.
- 2) Review existing structure or set up a committee/structure /mechanism which could be tasked with the promotion and coordination of lifelong learning at national levels. A parallel mechanism/structure could be put in place at the local/community level.
- 3) Conduct media and other popular forms of campaign to promote the importance of learning and to drum up support for individuals to actively participate in different learning opportunities.
- 4) Put in place flexible, diverse and relevant programs that are primarily addressed to those who have been perennially excluded for reasons of gender, class, age, ethnic affiliation and language.
- 5) Prioritize learning and education by allocating the appropriate level of resources needed to address the population most in need of education.

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