Institutionalising Lifelong Learning

creating conducive environments for adult learning in the Asian context

edited by Madhu Singh

UNESCO INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATION, HAMBURG
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The Hyderabad Statement on Adult and Lifelong Learning

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Preface

The papers in this volume document the results of the three-day Policy Dialogue on Adult and Lifelong Learning held in Hyderabad India from 8 to 10 April 2002 to which 18 countries in the Asian region participated. It charts the ways in which Member States have taken action to meet the basic learning needs of adults and young persons.

The Policy Dialogue, co-organised by the UNESCO Institute for Education Hamburg, UNESCO Office New Delhi and the National Literacy Mission of India, was an important effort to reaffirm the commitments stated in the Hamburg Declaration and the Agenda for the Future that were adopted by Member States at the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTSEA). The Policy Dialogue was also an attempt to include adult and lifelong learning as an integral part of the Education for All agenda. Both conferences, the CONFINTSEA and the Dakar Framework for Action, made a strong commitment to the expanded understanding of basic education for all, within and outside schools and throughout life, as well as basic education as a foundational part of lifelong learning.

One of the central concerns of the UNESCO Institute for Education is the evaluation and monitoring of policies and institutional developments in adult learning from a lifelong learning perspective. Lifelong learning is not an abstract concept but a daily practice of ordinary people. It is universal and at the same time context and culture specific. UIE respects the view that lifelong learning is relevant not only to rich countries and individuals alone, but also to developing and least developed countries of the South. The policy dialogue highlighted the commitments in several Asian countries to re-organise their educational systems in the framework of lifelong learning. Not only should the individual learners be motivated to learn throughout life, but conducive socio-political contexts and institutional arrangements should be promoted to support learning.

Lifelong learning is the cornerstone of a learning society. It is about creating literate and learning environments so that women and men and their children can develop their learning potential and sustain that learning to become lifelong learners. For lifelong learning environments to become a reality, institutional arrangements on the basis of new alliances and coalitions are essential; learning and education strategies need to go beyond conventional education frameworks, and the multiplicity of learning contexts, experiences and competencies need to be recognised and promoted.

The policy dialogue also provided a venue for arriving at a common understanding on improving the quality of adult learning and to develop holistic and culturally sensitive indicators for assessing outcomes and impact, and institutional capacities for this work. This policy area is crucial to improving
basic education in general and literacy and non-formal education of adults in particular.

Lifelong learning is the simple and natural realisation of learning aspirations and projects of ordinary women and men but we are still a long way to make it a common understanding and practice enshrined in educational and development policies and practices. The review conducted in the Asian context and thorough debates it generated - as reflected in this volume - bear witness to the importance of the decisive contribution of adult learning through its different manifestations, be it learning to alleviate poverty, to participate in decision-making, to contribute to the governance of the city, to protect the environment, or to promote gender justice, peace and understanding among different societal groups. This book reflects the manifold building blocks of efforts to create learning societies by meeting the learning demands of all and creating institutional arrangements and just and motivating conducive contexts.

Adama Ouane
Director, UIE
November 2002
## List of Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACCU</td>
<td>Asia/Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO</td>
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<td>ACLEDA</td>
<td>Cambodian Local Economic Development Agency</td>
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<td>ADB</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
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<td>APPEAL</td>
<td>Asia/Pacific Programme for Education for All</td>
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<td>ARMM</td>
<td>Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Association of South East Asian Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASPBAE</td>
<td>Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAE</td>
<td>Centre of Adult Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBA</td>
<td>Centre Based Approach</td>
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<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community Based Organizations</td>
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<td>CEC</td>
<td>Continuing Education Centers</td>
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<td>CLC</td>
<td>Community Learning Centre</td>
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<td>CMC</td>
<td>Centre Management Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>DeSeCo</td>
<td>Definition and Selection of Competencies</td>
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<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development</td>
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<td>DNFE</td>
<td>Department of Non-Formal Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>DPEP</td>
<td>District Primary Education Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>EFA</td>
<td>Education for All</td>
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<tr>
<td>EFA-PPA</td>
<td>Education for All: A Philippine Plan of Action</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>EWLP</td>
<td>Experimental World Literacy Programme</td>
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<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organisation (United Nations)</td>
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<td>GIER</td>
<td>Gansu Institute for Educational Research</td>
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GTZ Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Technische Zusammenarbeit
ICT Information and Communication Technology
IEC Information, Education, and Communications
IFAD International Fund for Agriculture Development
ILO International Labour Organisation
INRULED International Centre for Rural Education and Training
IPCL Improved Pace and Content of Learning Method
IPEC ILO Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour
ISCED International Standard Classification of Education
M&E Monitoring and Evaluation
MDGs Millennium Development Goals
MER Monitoring, Evaluation & Reporting
MOE Ministry of Education
MoEYS Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
MWVA Ministry of Women’s and Veterans’ Affairs
NAEP National Adult Education Programme
NCERT National Council of Educational Research and Training
NFE Non-Formal Education
NFE A&E Non-Formal Education Accreditation & Equivalency System
NFEC Non Formal Education Centre
NGO Non-Government Organisation
NLM National Literacy Mission
NORAD Norwegian Agency for Development Co-operation
NOSS National Occupational Skills Standards
NSSO National Sample Survey Organization
ODE Open and Distance Education
OECD Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development
PALM Participatory Action and Learning Methodologies
PLA Participatory Learning and Action Programme
PLCE Post Literacy & Continuing Education
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>PRSP</td>
<td>Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>SIDA</td>
<td>Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency</td>
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<td>SLA</td>
<td>Sustainable Livelihoods Approach</td>
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<td>SZOPAD</td>
<td>Special Zone of Peace and Development</td>
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<td>TLM</td>
<td>Total Literacy Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>TESDA</td>
<td>Technical Education and Skills Development Authority</td>
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<td>TFMLL</td>
<td>Task Force on Measuring Lifelong Learning</td>
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<td>TLC</td>
<td>Total Literacy Campaign</td>
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<tr>
<td>TVE</td>
<td>Technical and Vocational Education</td>
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<td>UIE</td>
<td>UNESCO Institute for Education</td>
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<td>UIS</td>
<td>UNESCO Institute for Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>United Nations Population Fund</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children Fund</td>
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<td>UPE</td>
<td>Universal Primary Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>WTO</td>
<td>World Trade Organisation</td>
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<td>YMCA</td>
<td>Young Men’s Christian Association</td>
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We are also thankful for the co-operation that we got from the UNESCO Headquarters, other UNESCO institutes and regional and field offices. Particular mention needs to be made to Mr. Wolfgang Vollmann, Director, UNESCO Office in Dhaka, Bangladesh; Mr. Mohsen Tawfik, Director, and Mrs. Maria Malevri, Programme Specialist at the UNESCO office in New Delhi; Mr. Sheldon Shaeffer Director and Mr. Hameed Hakeem, Chief, APPEAL at the UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education in Bangkok; Mr. Simon Ellis, UNESCO Institute for Statistics; and Mr. Supote Prasertsri of the UNESCO office in Cambodia. Their inputs have been invaluable to the relevance and success of this policy dialogue. We are particularly indebted to the participants who travelled long distances to be part of the three-day deliberations and exchanges. It is their varied and rich experience and their substantive professional contributions to the policy dialogue that has made this publication possible.

The editor wishes to acknowledge Lezlee Dunn and Lise Boissonneault, from Winnipeg Canada, for the time and effort they generously contributed to assisting in the editorial work. This volume could not have materialised but for their interest and commitment. The editor owes a particular debt to her daughter, Anja for her support and encouragement in the venture from start to finish.
Introduction

Madhu Singh

The Asian Region faces a huge task of meeting the rights to education of 614 million illiterate adolescents and adults and over 60 million out-of-school children. Alone in South Asia there are 429 million adult illiterates and 50 million children in school going age who have had no schooling. The Fifth International Conference on Adult Education held in Hamburg (CONFINTEA V) in 1997 clearly stated that the global challenge of Education for All cannot be tackled without meeting the basic learning needs of adult women and men especially in developing countries. It re-established the importance of adult education as an essential part of the education system, and stressed the centrality of the adult learner and of learning as a lifelong process that takes place in many different contexts. It proposed a new vision of adult learning which was not only multisectoral and diverse, but which was firmly rooted in a framework of sustainable human development in terms of social justice goals such as democracy, critical citizenship, cultural diversity, social inclusion, human rights, peace and gender equality. This was coupled with the imperative to reinforce democracy by strengthening learning environments for ensuring the participation of all citizens for learning throughout life. The final outcome of the Conference expressed in The Hamburg Declaration and the Agenda for the Future was a strong commitment to promote the right to education and learning and the creation of a learning society.

In this sense CONFINTEA forcefully reiterated, echoed and extended the principles embodied in the definition of basic education proposed in the Jomtien definition which draws attention to basic education as including “both essential learning tools (such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy and problem solving) and the basic learning content (such as knowledge, skills, values and attitudes) required by human beings to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions and to continue learning.

It is in the light of the above two major conferences as well as the Framework of Action adopted by the World Education Forum in Dakar, a three day policy
dialogue was held on adult and lifelong in Hyderabad India, which aimed to bring together the CONFINTEA agenda, EFA goals and the lifelong learning perspective. The 18 countries represented at the policy dialogue reflected different kinds of experiences and developments in adult and lifelong learning. Participants with diverse background, interests and experiences engaged themselves in a free and open exchange in their own professional capacities. This volume documents the results of the policy dialogue. It examines three policy areas: the first deals with policies and supportive legislative environment for laying the foundation for learning throughout life. The second area deals with implementation strategies, programme modalities and institutional arrangements. The third policy issue has to do with promoting a culture of quality reflected in learning outcomes and impact on people’s lives, requiring periodical monitoring and impact assessments with the use of holistic indicators.

**A Lifelong Learning Vision and Framework**

One of the aims of the policy dialogue was to examine whether at the policy level the unified vision and framework of lifelong learning had become a matter of national concern and was high on the agenda of adult learning policy in the Asian region. This vision which is embraced by current educational discourse and thinking world wide has been underscored by practitioners, experts and policy makers as providing the organising principle and framework for educational policies. Countries have taken on a lifelong learning perspective to a differing extent, although this clearly depends on the surrounding context and the relative positioning of governments with regard to the broader framework of lifelong learning. There appears to be three types of interfaces. While some societies have an explicit policy and discourse on lifelong learning, in other countries lifelong learning is part of the national discourse, and although not legislated, it is used to promote practice. Then there are societies which do not yet directly espouse a lifelong learning discourse but where NGOs and individual associations have started to make inroads. In most countries represented in this volume, and as Manzoor Ahmed rightly points out, ‘although there are policies and programmes, in varying degrees of comprehensiveness, on adult education, literacy, basic education and non-formal education, these are building blocks of lifelong education, they do not yet add up to a national policy and programme in any of the countries’. A number of factors are germane to the development of lifelong learning framework and vision, including issues relating to expanded notions of literacy and continuing education; the recognition or otherwise of out-of-school learning and the type of mechanisms provided for that purpose; equity, organisational decentralisation and partnership building as well as quality and community ownership issues.

Despite the fact that there are differences among the countries considered, a number of interesting trends in adult and lifelong learning policies in a range of
Asian Countries are to be seen. Generalising at a high level of abstraction, national policies on adult education make increasing reference to broader international frameworks and key UN conferences that emphasise the role of learning and education in addressing sustainable human and social development. The general trend is to talk about adult learning rather than adult education and there is an understanding of the need to strengthen non-formal and informal modes of learning and develop policies, which build bridges between formal, non-formal and the informal modes of learning.

Adult learning policies and programmes in the Asian region have evolved through a number of stages. They began as simple literacy campaigns, but it was soon realised that even where basic literacy skills were acquired individuals could not practise these skills until the entire social group began to use literacy in its day-to-day activities. Societal literacy, in contrast to individual literacy, becomes a necessary reinforcing context for everyone participating in the different dimensions of social life, and motivates people to integrate their learning activities. A basic development in the aim of adult and lifelong learning policies has been, therefore, post-literacy programmes, the creation of literate environments and lifelong learning communities. This progression from literacy to lifelong learning is an interesting line on which the countries of the region can be placed.

An important dimension of policy is sustaining the motivation of learners and thus to be able to fulfil the goals of creating literate environments. This has engaged many authors in this volume, who stress that knowledge and skills need to be relevant and contextualised in the daily lives of the individuals and fitted into their developmental activities, be they health, environment, work, gender equality, democracy, community development, human rights, HIV/AIDS work or peace education.

The Historical Context

In respect of policy priorities, it is important to remind ourselves that the 80s and the 90s marked a shift from narrow school-based innovations to out-of-school flexible educational strategies. Helping to rectify growing disparities clearly was one of the central challenges to educational polices of the 80s.

But even though educational polices in the past emphasised equal access, many of the indicators of reforms did not take into account the provision of *equality of educational opportunity*, which would have to arrive at a recognition of the economic, social and personal value of an individual adult educated beyond the stage of mere literacy. Unfortunately, in many highly populated South Asian countries, even today basic literacy is the only major activity within the Non-formal Education Programme. Both Manzoor Ahmed and Claude Bobillier raise this central point; hardly any attention is being given to other learning objectives.
that are important for laying foundations of lifelong learning and critical for the continuation of an educational career.

While the Jomtien Declaration of 1990 was a landmark because it stated that complementary policies were needed to take into account both adult learning as well as basic education for children, this complementarity was not reflected in policies and programmes. Instead, one of the key indicators in the domain of official policy has remained the universalisation of primary education.

Although the concepts of mass education for all, in particular for all adults including the idea of continuous adult learning throughout life are not new, they were never implemented. Wolfgang Vollmann, of the nine high-population countries initiative, traces this failure of educational policies to the prevalence of the western-school-based model, strongly influenced by earlier philosophers such as Plato, who emphasised ‘exclusion and class-oriented thinking’ in education systems, to the neglect of egalitarian, democracy-minded and culturally determined model of mass education developed by Gandhi and other social thinkers in South Asia. Such failures in policies have in fact contributed to maintaining the stratified society and reproducing the dominant cultural models and ideologies. A similar dilemma surfaces in Tiedao Zhang’s paper, in which he points out that although the need for education is the greatest for the rural populace, ‘the current education system in China’s rural settings is primarily oriented to basic schooling in a formal manner and it is inadequately prepared as a system for meeting the varied and diverse needs of the rural community members’.

Several authors in this volume make it amply clear, that basic primary education for children and non-formal adult learning should not oppose or be placed in competition with one another. Neither basic education for children nor adult learning are ends in themselves, but they need to be seen as enhancing each other. It is critical that all decisions around policy and resources must therefore take into account both complementary programmes on equal terms.

**Changing Socio-Economic Contexts**

While the policies on adult and lifelong learning are not entirely new, what is new perhaps are the conceptual, political and socio-economic contexts in which these measures are being designed and implemented. Massive changes and socio-cultural transformations – intensifying processes of globalisation, technological knowledge, erosion of cultural and linguistic diversities, conflicts arising from social, economic and ethnic/religious differences, poverty, political instability, social exclusion and environmental degradation - have significantly changed the parameters for policy making in adult education during the mid 1990s. While education cannot be the answer to all the unsolved global problems, education has an important role to empower people to understand their realities and to transform
them. The *Hamburg Declaration* was a strong commitment to the social justice perspective, stating that the ‘the ultimate goal should be the creation of a learning society committed to social justice and general well-being’.

The driving force behind recent developments in adult and lifelong learning policies are a combination of economic (globalisation, reducing poverty, skills development) political (strengthening participation and democratic values), and socio-cultural forces (safeguarding cultural diversity and pluralism, sustainable human development and human rights, as well as combating social exclusion).

From the point of view of consequences for designing lifelong learning policies in countries of the Asian region, Chander Daswani points out that critical gaps exist particularly when it comes to making policies and programmes more meaningful in terms of greater emphasis on democratic understanding and activity, understanding and practice of egalitarianism, social justice, rule of law, peace and non-violence and values deriving from cultural and religious diversity. The other major lack is the need to give greater emphasis to traditional knowledge and wisdom, especially in rural society as well as paying more attention to the socio-psychological, emotional and ethical dimension of learners.

**Provision and Institutional Structures: Building Networks of Lifelong Learning**

While lifelong learning has started to make its way into public policy in the Asian region, in fact, the recent *legislation* related to adult and lifelong learning is quite substantial (See for example cases from Thailand, South Korea, Indonesia, Philippines, and Malaysia in this volume), what is perhaps more significant is grasping *institutional processes* involved in the transition of national education systems towards models of lifelong learning. Country cases clearly demonstrate the need for an institutional mix or multiple institutions (government, NGOs, intermediary organisations, i.e. those that forge important linkages with formal institutions, and community groups), in planning and implementing adult learning.

The crucial point in the transition to national systems from the perspective of lifelong learning, will be the way in which the entire system’s responses to meeting the learning needs of adults will be managed, taking into account the full range of learning programmes and projects and all stakeholders and contexts. It will require commensurate rethinking of organisation and management structures and functions, decentralisation, partnership building, technical and professional support mechanisms. In her paper, Anne Bernard argues that this institutionalisation and system building is important; the alternative is ongoing dependence on external, often ad hoc and not cost effective, technical advice and a sector left solely as an NGO and donor activity (See contributions on Cambodia, Nepal and Bangladesh).
A number of indicators can be highlighted which help us to grasp the extent to which lifelong learning is becoming institutionalised and operationalised in the field of adult learning in the Asian context.

Quite a few of the programmes and supportive institutions that are now being contemplated or actually implemented give recognition or otherwise to non-school learning. In a number of countries literacy, non-formal education and adult learning are being combined with the development educational environments highlighting the educational potential of different family units, local communities, work-places, the media, and museums and public libraries.

The number of adult learning programmes is increasing, trying to target varied and different types of needs based not only on what the system has to offer, but with belief and commitment from the learners who are actually involved in the practice of learning as active citizens. Many institutional arrangements recognise the need to increase supply to offer more flexibility of existing provision. In such cases information about the potential learner is vital. The case of Thailand with the Local learning Boards that co-ordinate, promote and develop comprehensive information services is a good example of how to deal with varied provision.

An important trend is the creation of cross-sectoral functions within Ministries of education. This implies that other sectors and other ministries in addition to education, and NGOs active in ‘life-wide’ fields other than education (health, agriculture, labour and social welfare) also get involved in adult and lifelong learning programmes. Vietnam is a case in point, where the National Committee for literacy articulates and co-ordinates with many Ministries such as Culture and Information, Family Planning and with organisations such as youth, women and farmer associations.

In creating learning societies and opening education to all, governments in several South Asian Countries are trying to decentralise responsibility for education development. In fact in many countries, local governments have been active in adult education policy development. It follows a general trend to bring decision making closer to adapt to local needs and requirements. Decentralisation makes co-operation among different partners easier because of the scale. At the local level it is easier to bring together education and health and social services working towards the same objectives. It is often the case that community learning centres are the places giving integrated services to adults, be it for health, training or other demanded services.

The greater involvement of civil society in the organisation of adult and lifelong learning has helped to strengthen the activities of the government and to develop alternative programmes with a greater sense of local community concerns. But how are NGOs influencing public policies and empowering the State? Do they complement the role of the state or are they substituting it? The work of NGOs is essential to the building of lifelong learning communities. NGOs work more in the area of ecology, citizenship and human rights. They are also involved in activities that make people more aware that the global society is unequal and unjust and are involved in citizenship activities. They play an
important role in the institutionalisation processes involved in raising the literacy and educational levels of adults.

Many country cases, for example those from Vietnam, the Philippines (Non-formal Education System for Indigenous Peoples with Focus on Women and Girls) and India, show that targeted provision of adult learning opportunities can be a significant factor in stimulating and meeting learning demand on the part of social and economically privileged groups. Programmes that do not serve users are irrelevant and constitute wasted resources and time. Strongest emphasis in some countries such as Cambodia has been given to functional literacy, equivalency and re-entry programmes as these programmes focus on the learning needs and goals of the most excluded communities, who are not being served by any other education provision. In the same way, but in a different context, Muthulingam and Kandasamy consider the role of adult and lifelong learning in circumstances where the existing power relations exclude ethnic Tamils in Sri Lanka and women from access to education and other assets. They see the collective and active participation of cultural minorities and women in literacy and non-formal education as contributing to gender justice and inclusion. They emphasise active participation in organisations that makes things change and not literacy alone.

The issue of prior individual competence and prior collective learning experiences is one of the important issues of adult learning. A great deal of thinking is being devoted to more effective ways of organising learning processes rooted in local culture, making sure that previous experience and previous learning is being taken into account in the content of education, the pedagogical organisation of teaching and learning and the medium of instruction. The importance of ensuring diversity and plurality in content has also been highlighted in the context of peace education and the resolution of conflicts in the Philippines.

The papers in the volume show a decisive shift from an emphasis only on whether adults participate, to the ways in which the variety of learning opportunities impinge on participation. Questions are increasingly posed in the form of how to improve effective participation in learning? Anita Dighe argues that one way could be learning in a community, but sometimes the use of technology can be particularly effective for facilitating learning and creating a literate environment. Learning implies how to ensure that learning takes place in the education process, whether it be formal or non-formal or whether it takes place in other learning environments of daily life such as the family, the community, the workplace, the street, the community or neighbourhood association, the union, cultural centre, libraries, sports, civic participation or through the media. All these are instances and dimensions towards the advancement of a ‘lifelong learning community’. Like newspapers, the radio and personal communication, information technology is a form of literacy. In the Chinese case study this is developed to enhance agricultural productivity and is a
direct response to the basic learning needs of agricultural societies in a globalised world of information about markets.

Overall, there is a tendency to move to a greater recognition and response to demand through different programme modalities and institutional arrangements that take into account the needs of the adults in designing content and pedagogy. Quite a few of the programmes and supportive institutions that are now being contemplated or actually implemented are quite innovative within the particular contexts of their application. This also explains why it is that current practices seem to differ substantially between various countries and geographic regions within the Asian region even though one finds that the policies employ very similar ideas, concepts, targets and instruments. Some examples of these practices are: Rural schools as community learning centres and information driven further learning for farmers (China); Professionalisation of lifelong educators (Korea); Distance and open learning (Vietnam); Non-formal education accreditation and equivalency system (Thailand, Philippines); Learning activities centres (Indonesia); Centre management committees and their potential in the establishment of community based learning systems (Bangladesh); Promoting peace through literacy and community radio (Philippines); Proposals for gender justice and overcoming discrimination through lifelong learning (Sri Lanka); The literacy movement organisation (Iran); Continuing education centres for women in urban slums (India); Partnerships with the private sector (Uzbekistan, Malaysia) and civil society organisations (Nepal); and creating monitoring, evaluation and information systems (Bangladesh).

There is a diversity of contexts and projects. While it is too early to attempt a synthesis of the different kinds of lifelong learning that are beginning to emerge, one thing that has surfaced more clearly are the transitional processes of institutionalisation which various countries are going through as they move towards more holistic models of lifelong learning.

Building a Culture of Quality

One common challenge all countries in the Asian Region have is how to build a culture of quality reflected in the learning outcomes and the impact on people’s lives and well being. This requires periodical monitoring and evaluating with the use of credible and holistic indicators.

Evaluation is crucial to developing adequate policies. It can contribute to help detect what the adult learning needs are and whether they are being met or not. Evaluation can also contribute to rationalising limited resources and to better co-ordination of different actors across the board. In terms of adult learning programmes some appear to work for some target groups but not for others. Having answers to such question are important for policy design in terms of the need for tight targeting on participants. Currently, there are some countries which
lack effective institutionalised mechanisms in the Asian region for detecting needs.

There is also concern with the need for clearer classifications and definitions of different types of education, educational modalities and providers. If lifelong learning is to have a place in public policies towards the advancement of a learning society, then the measurement of lifelong learning will have to include the learning that is organised through non-formal educational activities and those that take place in the work place, family and community and cultural centres (S.K. Chu).

The impact of educational policies needs strengthening. Many reforms are failing because the intended policy was never implemented and that polices were often based on ‘good will’ rather than on research based relationships. Claude Bobillier’s pointed criticism of the NFE programme shows that although NFE has ‘created some awareness about health and sanitation, and in some places, contributed to increase the self-confidence of some women, it has hardly any impact on the living conditions of the 17 millions (out of the 40 million who were declared illiterate) who have actually been exposed to the programme’. In terms of impact, he argues more evidence is needed from the labour market, private lives or from the community, where adults have benefited from learning activities. In a similar vein, many authors have shown that policies directed to basic literacy skills may have improved literacy rates but have had little impact on functional literacy that can help young persons and adults to function effectively in the society. For Simon Ellis the next important step, especially in the context of reaching goal number three of the Dakar Framework of Action, will therefore have to be devising appropriate assessment tools for testing functional and life skills integrated in learning instruction.

Perhaps one may have to evaluate adult education programmes on a much wider socio-economic and political sense. Can they transform the society and economies and lead to greater democratisation of societies and equitable distribution of wealth and assets? Can it empower masses to fight for their rights and social justice? Can it lead to the improvement in the quality of life of the excluded and underprivileged (Iffat Farah)? In other words, although statistical data on literacy and adult learning are needed for effective assessment, a more pertinent question seems to be one related to the creation of lifelong learning societies and critical indicators pointing in that direction. A literate and lifelong learning society basically is an egalitarian society that ensures equity in provision of educational opportunities. It is a society where there are no disparities based on gender, caste, region and language. Lifelong learning communities are first and foremost made by people who need and demand literacy and education, and secondly institutions which facilitate the provision of opportunities for acquiring adult learning. Questions such as these are an important step in the right direction towards developing and refining indicators pertaining to a comprehensive and holistic notion of literacy and basic education for adults. The use of the wrong
indicators can put into question international and regional comparison. These are areas where much work will need to be done in the years to come.

There is one last note that needs to be said on the culture of quality and that is promoting an education based on humanistic values, critical and reflective of learning which is respectful of cultural differences. Adama Ouane has addressed precisely this issue indicating that the evaluation of learning will have to shift completely from an emphasis on narrow skills in teaching, transmission and memorisation to making generic or key competencies integral to learning. The key competencies that he highlights include critical thinking, being able to communicate, to live together, learning to learn, collective knowledge, scientific temper, creativity and emphasis on values. He emphasises that these competencies are crucial in order to make a transition towards the creation of lifelong learning societies.

**Conclusion**

The papers in this volume have clearly brought out the institutional processes involved in the transition of national education systems towards a lifelong learning society. There is a diversity of contexts and projects and hence a plurality of forms of lifelong learning in the range of countries in the Asian region.

Asian countries have followed different paths and strategies. A key dilemma that is being addressed in Asian countries as Anne Bernard puts it, is one of ‘enabling systemic development while at the same time acting to deliver programmes’. There are still some countries where the adult learning sector is underdeveloped and not considered an integral and important part of the national education system, where provision is insufficient, fragmented and ad hoc, and where clear linkages with other sectors such as work, agriculture, health are lacking. Here building coherent structures and linkages pose large challenges. Very often countries do not have clear and explicitly stated adult education policies that focus on desired outcomes. Governments sometimes continue to view adult literacy and basic education for adults as a social welfare benefit and not as an investment essential to development.

The review of adult learning policies, institutions and practices show that while groups of countries are broadly working towards the same long term goal of creating lifelong learning societies, they have different short and medium term policy objectives and programme priorities, relevant to their specific context, needs, and stages. Some are coping with the supply of basic literacy and post literacy while others have moved to consolidating and making existing infrastructures more efficient, flexible and better adapted to individual and collective learning paths, and integrated into national educational systems. Still others have created non-conventional institutions by upscaling and
institutionalising non-formal programmes to the national level and which are running on a sustained basis (See the case of Indonesia for example).

**Where do we go from here?**

Many challenges lie ahead of decision-makers and stakeholders dealing with the education of adults in the Asian Region. The largest challenge is the ultimate test of a country’s ability to establish an *inclusive democracy* by meeting the needs of literacy, post-literacy and non-formal education of under-represented groups. In addressing their learning needs, governments need to put into existence affirmative action policies and set up specific programmes, especially for women. There is a need to earmark funds and redistribute financial and other resources.

While it is important to build conceptual frameworks from the bottom up, it is critical that literacy for all - for adults and children - in both formal and non-formal settings be placed at the heart of national education systems. Literacy requires a twin track approach i.e. priority investments in formal schooling combined with literacy and non-formal education for adults.

While there is a lot to learn from the plethora of small-scale programmes and initiatives, the challenge is going to scale and influencing national provision and national performance. There is an urgent need to institutionalise groups, actors and agencies to perform the intermediary institutional processes both within the public and private domains to cater to the learning needs of adults. In particular there is a need to institutionalise the potential of intermediary groups from the long term perspective, as they are better able to penetrate the life-world of adults who are deprived and marginalised. This means that more attention needs to be given to building institutional capacity within the non-formal education system itself.

While from a pedagogical point of view adults learn differently from children, these differences are relative. There is need to encourage learning experiences between adults and children. In the same way it is important to stimulate joint experiences between youth and adults, and adult education especially in the sphere of AIDS education and reproductive health must address women and men.

A different sort of a challenge also presents itself. There are large differences between countries and regional constellations on how far adults are encouraged and allowed to enter into regular formal education. But integrating out-of-school learning into formal education also brings numerous challenges. There is a danger that the term adult basic education may get reduced to the equivalent of basic education in school. There is also the bigger danger that as it is being institutionalised and more and more influenced by the global economic market, it may lose its traditionally democratic and radical function. In-depth studies are needed in order to assess how equivalency programmes are managed and whether a balance is being maintained between school focussed and *life focussed* programming.
Knowledge assessment and skill validation have become more important issues but there is a danger that the reference standards for validation may still remain mostly strongly tied to the qualifications provided by the formal system. It may negate the practices, teaching styles and methods so far existing in adult education which have tended to be more democratic, free from competition, and less authoritarian and where peer group and learning from each other as a way of learning to live with each other are emphasised. There are examples where the development of adult learning is increasingly becoming narrowly skills and vocationally oriented. In these cases private providers are accepted and being encouraged. It may be necessary to reflect on the relationship between learning and the creation of learning societies with emphasis on democracy, critical citizenship and sustainable development, rather than on vocational education alone.

How countries can work together to create better and also equitable Information Technology (IT) based learning platforms is a another challenge. While distance education is an important alternative, managing new technologies will be indispensable condition for literacy. Such technologies need to be properly understood, and demystified and we need to re-value old technologies such as the book. Instead of lamenting the digital divide there is need to ask how can the digital dividend be shared. How to extend it and make it accessible and usable in other specific and different linguistic and cultural contexts? How to digitalise local languages and the underlying cultural practices?

A final and most important challenge is the issue of learning as a basic human right. This means that institutional frameworks for adult non-formal and lifelong learning are essential in order to move beyond mere rhetoric and discourse to one of action. The United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012) is more than ever a necessity because literacy is a fundamental human right, a basic human need and a key to learning to learn. It is important that the main driver behind the UNLD must be the national governments in collaboration with civil society and the private sector.

Concerned about the education of adults especially among the developing nations of the globe, the policy dialogue through the Hyderabad Declaration urged all countries, even the smallest and poorest countries, to adopt lifelong learning as an active principle for shaping education and learning policies and programmes. The Hyderabad Declaration, which appears in the concluding section of this volume, is an important statement that will guide the development of concepts and practices in adult and lifelong learning within the framework of Education for All.
Notes

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2 Two key documents emerged from the conference: the *Hamburg Declaration* and the *Agenda for the Future*, which contain a series of more specific and detailed proposals with respect to each of the 10 themes of the conference. See also the series of 29 booklets documenting workshops held at the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education, *Adult Learning and the Challenges of the 21st Century*, UNESCO Institute for Education, Hamburg, 1999.
1

Policy Responses

to Meeting Different Adult Learning Needs
Adult Learning: Emerging Issues and Lessons to be Learned

Adama Ouane

The purpose of the paper is to share a broad reflection on a few key issues that have a bearing on adult learning. The paper starts with three major assumptions. First, massive changes are taking place in all aspects of life which people all over the world are trying to respond to; these are elements of a great transformation. Second, adult learning is a key resource addressing the needs represented by these great transformations. Third, there is a wealth of experience and knowledge that is accumulated by activists, facilitators, NGOs and millions of learners to take up these challenges.

Three questions could be raised with regard to these assumptions: What is the basic condition, the sources of changes and key issues which adults must confront today in the 21st century? What is the role of education of adults and of adult learning in confronting these conditions and related key issues? What have we learned from previous experience and current practices in relation to policy formulation and implementation and the relevant strategies and structures?

The World Today

Some keywords that characterise the world today are ambivalence, ambiguity, risk, contradiction, turbulence, dangers and crisis. These words depict the world today, which is characterised by unequal share of gains and pains, both in relation to wealth creation and its distribution. Figures are unnecessary here. What is important is the fact that there are gaps in terms of resources and access to scientific and technological knowledge. Although globalisation is supposed to provide hope and create fantastic opportunities for people to connect, share and
interact, unfortunately in a majority places, it has raised a lot of disappointments and fears. It is known that the potential of new information technologies with the capacity to compress time and space provide for all of us to be a part of the digital revolution. Instead of the digital dividend there is a lot of talk of the digital divide. One major characteristic of the world today is that changes and transformations have become a permanent feature. It is also known that the world is facing a democratic deficit. Although there is an ongoing democratisation process, society is still facing a lack of critical and creative citizenry to confront or shoulder the responsibility of building a true and deep democracy, which will prevent and help the world away from conflict, wars and crisis.

Hopes and Promises: Adult Learning as a Key to the Challenges of the 21st Century

Education, or rather now, learning, is rightly seen as a pathway through this period characterised by uncertainty and confusion. According to the Hamburg Declaration adopted by the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education, adult education is indispensable in the quest to construct a better and fuller humanity. Adult learning is as broad as life itself (UNESCO 1997). Adult learning is people, collectively and individually, realising their potential. It is not only a right it is also a duty and a shared responsibility, to others, to society as whole, and of course to oneself. Governments, organisations and institutions alone cannot meet the challenges of the 21st century. The energy, imagination and genius of people and their full free and vigorous participation in every aspect of life is also needed. Survival strategies of resilience, resourcefulness and flexibility in the face of frequent indifference, occasional hostilities and many broken promises have served adult learning communities everywhere, whether in India, Africa or North America.

Adult education, as indicated during the International Conference on Adult Education, has to confront several issues. What are the issues at stake, how are they influencing adult learning, and how is adult learning responding to them? What are the transformations taking place in both institutional and non-institutional learning and how are these systems anticipating the changes and adapting to the speed of these changes?

As already indicated, society is facing a world of change and transformation. How are the formal education systems integrating this need and adjusting their policies, implementation strategies, structural settings, and institutional arrangements and mechanisms to meet them? What are the main trends in the adult learning provision? How do they match the increasing and diversifying
demands? Indeed learning projects and initiatives carried out by various stakeholders have found themselves trying to respond to greater demands such as skills and vocational training, continuing education, sports and leisure, parent education, public education dealing with health and sanitation, environmental issues, citizenship and participation in local life and governance, and an increasing drive for autonomy and self expression.

The Fifth International Conference on Adult Education had provided a sort of a forum to participants, countries, organisations and institutions, associations representing governments, NGOs, various sectors of the civil society and private sector with the opportunity to identify phenomenon and trends that are indicative of the way in which systems of education are responding to new social and cultural demands. The conference also reviewed developments in adult education as a field of intervention and inquiry, looking into the institutional methods, the media and material use, the content areas, the personnel involved and its preparation, and the evaluation and procedure for accounting. It also looked at the provision and demand from the standpoint of the providers, the role of the state, the private sector and civil society in their changing dialectics or the dynamic interactions.

The major issues revolved around issues of access to learning opportunities at all levels, and issues of quality continuing education programmes responsive to these changes, and of course the quality of fair participation in adult and training programmes. Adult, non-formal and popular education have often been promoted as an alternative to the inequalities and the divisiveness of the regular education system which reproduces social injustice in society as a whole.

There is empirical evidence however that the use and provision of education through adult learning actually intensifies social differences corresponding to the level of formal education among the population. What do practices and researches reveal about some of the differentiations, are also issues that should be looked into?

The economic, political and social conditions associated with structural adjustment policies, the transition to market economies and the drive for democratisation, self-determination and realisation are having in some places detrimental effects on public education to overcome educational marginalisation. Elsewhere, these tendencies are raising challenges, calling for innovation, plural strategies and consensus and partnership building. These issues raise new demands for creativity in both analysing the present realities and formulating new strategies for action, and anticipating prospective developments and changes.

The 90s have also experienced increasing segmentation of the social structure and social and regional inequalities. The industrial revolution and the diminishing role of the state have affected employment patterns and created a demand for lifelong learning. As in the previous decades, adult education is dialectically moving in the conflict range between compensation for the
inadequate performance and low efficiency of formal schooling, and new
demand for the so-called para-systemic education which entails courses not
included in the formal education aimed at improving chances in the hard
competition for jobs and other life skills. Areas of conflict are to be found also
between supply and demand of adult learning whereby supply both creates and
conditions demand making it homogenous and ignoring certain groups entirely
or leaving them by the wayside. Supply and demand are also diverging in their
dosage between vocational and general training, between popular culture and
academic culture whereby acquisition of critical knowledge and temper has come
in confrontation with popular knowledge and affected the shape of popular
culture. In this complex field of continuing education there are different modes
and approaches, some of them in fundamental disagreement. On the other hand,
there are a range of disparate popular education initiatives, which are enabling
people to look at their daily life critically, to bring to it their own values and
participate in creating and recreating their own lives. These are some of the
potentials of adult education, but it is also known in this relation that society is
confronted with some worrisome trends.

Some Worrisome Trends in Adult Learning

Lifelong learning today risks becoming an unfocussed and catchall phrase with a
need for substance and direction. Second and more importantly scratch below
the surface of most local, national and international policy documents and a
commitment will be found not to learning but to skills development. The
vocationalist drive and logic help to ensure that the requirement of business,
enterprise and other vocationally oriented goals are to be part of teaching and
research agendas of all educational institutions. One of the implications of such
a shift towards market and wealth generation raises the question of what counts
as education and adult learning. Preparation for paid employment seems to be
the short answer. The adoration of competencies and competency–based learning
with their emphasis on functional skills further narrow the focus of adult
learning, especially in the area of work based learning. It is the case of adult
learning being increasingly reduced to short-term, purpose specific, skills
regeneration and development. The larger problem is that the concern and value
underpinning such policies and practices belong not to the future but to the past.
They fail to take into account the transformation in the current period and fail to
engage with the social changes beyond some blunt reference to information
technology. While the focus is on global centres of economic and political
power, there are few communities that will not experience the cold winds of
change.
As in the earlier period of crisis, society should expect new patterns of social, material, authoritative and symbolic representation to emerge. From the vantage points of the early 2000 it is too early also to predict the future shape of the new era. It is much easier to analyse the extent of the changes already underway, although as many commentators have noted, it is unclear whether the increasing complexity of the problems that society face is outrunning our capacity to innovate or educate a citizenry to effectively grapple with them.

The issues relating to adult learning and education are not only contextual and developmental. They also pertain to adult learning itself. Here, three issues will be underlined. One is of course the issue of the delineation or the delimitation with lifelong learning. Adult learning is sometimes too broadly defined and coincides almost with lifelong learning. This of course is leading to both a conceptual and a policy issue. Educators need to address this issue very seriously. The second issue pertains to the articulation of adult education with basic education. There seems to be a sort of a competition between CONFINTEA 1997 and more recently the Dakar Framework of Action, both of which were attended by the international community with major commitments in both the conferences. There is a need to find a clear articulation into how adult basic education can fit into the Dakar agenda and how adult learning can be taken further and not left aside because of the new priority given to basic education.

The third dimension is the conflict within adult learning between work-oriented learning and citizenship. Here, it is necessary to come to what can be said about the future of adult education. The survival strategies employed by most adult learning agencies are an inadequate response to the complexities, dangers and opportunities ahead. Theoretical work as well as fieldwork is needed. In the debate, there is an absence of any recognition of the systemic nature of the changes, of the retreat and collapse of traditional solidarities and values.

**Conclusion**

The underlying dynamics of reforms is not one of organised modernity that is in crisis but one that grapples with a new phase of reorganisation and societal understanding. Learning citizens rather than skilled employers or knowledgeable individuals are emerging. A shift to citizenship learning enhances the scope and importance of the non-formal sector as well as acknowledges the eruption of knowledge and research sites through civic society work places, homes, voluntary associations, labour organisations, within environmental campaigns and through media. This, of course, should result in learning associations and learning networks that transcend national boundaries and that link the local and the international level.
References

Lifelong Learning and the Learning Society

Manzoor Ahmed

The concept of lifelong learning, leading to a ‘learning society,’ has been visualised and written about for several decades now. The UNESCO-appointed Faure Committee Report of 1972 entitled Learning to Be had made a passionate appeal to all nations of the world to reorganise their educational structures on two basic premises: first, that a learning society is one in which all agencies within a society become providers of education, and second, that all citizens should be engaged in learning, taking full advantage of the opportunities provided by the learning society.

Further impetus to the idea was provided in 1996 with the report by Delors et al, Learning: The Treasure Within. Pronouncing the four pillars of education in the 21st century to be learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together, the Delors Report laid strong emphasis on renewal of knowledge, skills and learning abilities of individuals to adapt to the new environment. The Report advocated the acquisition of a sound general education, learning throughout life, acting creatively in and on one’s own environment, acquiring occupational skills, and also more broadly, being able to face rapid social change and work in teams.

What do the concept of lifelong learning and the goal of a learning society mean for a community and an individual in the community? It means providing every individual with the conditions for learning further and learning continuously for improving his/her lot. Depending upon where one is positioned in the ladder of learning, it may mean different things to different individuals. For a non-literate, it would mean functional literacy combined with a series of learning programmes that would help him improve his awareness, capability, skills, confidence and participation in development. It would mean acquisition of
farming and farm management techniques to a farmer. For a semi-literate, rural woman who has been ‘pushed out’ from school at the primary education stage, it may mean the facility to learn a new skill that would enable her to enhance the level of living of her family or it may mean attending a short-term course on gender equity which would give her enough confidence to speak out against injustice.

Lifelong education is not something that is intended only for non-literates, neo-literates and dropouts. It is also for the so-called educated members of society. It should provide opportunities for teachers, housewives, truck drivers, social and political activists, local leaders – in fact every member of society to learn, and, where necessary, to unlearn.

The Context of Lifelong Education

The contextual trends and influences that have a bearing on national educational systems remain relevant for designing lifelong education. These influences include the normative principles such as the ethics of human rights and a common vision for the future of humanity reflected in the concept of human development. They also include conditions and circumstances that humanity faces at this juncture of history such as the forces of globalisation and the sweeping consequences of the digital communication technology. Education is both shaped by these forces and must respond to them. The concerns and priorities of rural people and the transforming rural communities, especially in the more rural countries of the Asian region, need to figure more specifically and prominently in the educational responses than it has been the case so far.

The human rights perspective

The emergence of a global consensus on education as a human right has become a powerful tool for advocacy, mobilisation of support and establishing accountability for educational systems. The last half of the twentieth century saw human rights accepted as a global ethical principle. The task in the 21st century is to ensure that this ethic becomes the measure of human conduct everywhere. Education itself is a right, but it is also the means for upholding and fulfilling all human rights.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, which proclaimed the right to education for all (article 26) has been followed by a regime of international agreements, treaties and declarations on various aspects of the right to education. The latest is the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted in 1989 enjoins states to ensure the right of the child to education ‘progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity.’
Over the years National governments and the international community have emphasised different aspects of the right to education. There is now a general consensus that while there may be questions of interpretation of specific means and scope of implementation of the right to education, less than a serious and determined effort to fulfil this right by every national authority and the international community is not acceptable. The human rights perspective of education is particularly germane in the context of educational deprivation of various disadvantaged groups and disparities in participation in education. The Fifth International Conference on Adult Education in 1997 (CONFINTEA) underscored both the right and the responsibility succinctly: ‘Basic Education for All means that people, whatever their age, have an opportunity, individually and collectively, to realise their potential. It is not only a right it is also a duty and a responsibility, both to others and to society as a whole. It is essential that the recognition of the right to education throughout life should be accompanied by measures to create the conditions required to exercise this right’ (UNESCO-UIE 1997: 22).

**The human development imperatives of education**

Unacceptable levels of deprivation persist all over the world, but certain groups such as the poor, ethnic and linguistic minorities, women and rural people bear a disproportionate burden of this deprivation. It is not just a question of income and consumption of goods and services, but also about access to means and resources that enable people to develop their human potential and to exercise the choices to live productive and creative lives. By this measure of human development, at least a quarter of humanity cannot live a life with human dignity or exercise many aspects of their human rights, not to speak of realising their human potential.

Access to education and the content and purposes of education are or should be a key element of promoting the concept and practice of human development. As the world entered the new millennium, the Declaration at the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations was another collective assertion of faith in a vision of human development in the new century. The millennium goals embracing specific targets for the next one to two decades pose daunting challenges but are pertinent to the objectives of national development as well as the educational activities serving these objectives.

**Economic globalisation**

Globalisation, while not a new phenomenon, has manifested itself in recent years in more extensive ways than could be foreseen. It has produced and continues to produce winners and losers. A large part of humanity, unfortunately, are at the losing end of the bargain and remain without a chance to voice their concerns about it or influence the decisions that set the rules of the game. At the same
time, there are potentially new opportunities that the global market place can open up for those who can participate in it.

The demands of globalisation put a premium on flexible and lifelong learning opportunities enabling learners to adapt to demands for new knowledge and skills. It also affects economies and lives of people in developing countries in unforeseen ways. Opening of markets and liberalisation of trade have made it possible for producers of primary products in remote rural areas to be linked with markets on the other side of the globe. Low-skill and labour-intensive production for export markets has become a new avenue for employment that draws workers from rural areas, who so far has been dependent on the dwindling opportunities in the farm. Below are excerpts from Amartya Sen’s article ‘If It’s Fair, It’s Good: 10 Truths about Globalisation’ in the International Herald Tribune, 14 July, 2001.

Even though the world is incomparably richer than ever before, ours is also a world of extra-ordinary deprivation and of staggering inequality…..

Debates about globalisation demand a better understanding of the underlying issues, which tend to get submerged in the rhetoric of confrontation, on one side, and hasty rebuttals, on the other. Some general points need particular attention.

**Anti-globalisation protests are not about globalisation:** The so-called anti-globalisation protests can hardly be, in general, anti-globalisation since these protests are among the most globalised events in the contemporary world. The protesters in Seattle, Melbourne, Prague, Quebec and elsewhere are not just local kids, but men and women from across the world pouring into the location of the respective event to pursue global complaints.

**Globalisation is not new, nor is it just Westernisation:** Over thousands of years, globalisation has progressed through travel, trade, migration, spread of cultural influences and dissemination of knowledge and understanding (including of science and technology).

**Globalisation is not in itself a folly:** It has enriched the world scientifically and culturally and benefited many people economically as well. Pervasive poverty and lives that were ‘nasty, brutish and short’, as Thomas Hobbes put it, dominated the world not many centuries ago, with a few pockets of rare affluence. In overcoming that penury, modern technology as well as economic interrelations has been influential. The predicament of the poor across the world cannot be reversed by withholding from them the great advantages of contemporary technology, the well-established efficiency of international trade and exchange, and the social as well as the economic merits of living in open, rather than closed, societies. What is needed is a fairer distribution of the fruits of globalisation.

**The central issue is inequality:** The principal challenge relates to inequality – between as well as within nations. The relevant inequalities include disparities in affluence, but also gross asymmetries in political, social and economic power. A crucial question concerns the sharing of the potential gains from globalisation, between rich and poor countries, and between different groups within countries.

**The primary concern is the level of inequality, not marginal change:** By claiming that the rich are getting richer and the poorer getting poorer, the critics of globalisation have, often enough, chosen the wrong battleground. Even though many sections of the poor in developing countries have done badly, it is hard to establish an overall and clear-cut trend…The basic concerns relate to the massive levels of inequality and poverty – not whether they are also increasing at the margin.

**The question is whether the distribution of gains is fair:** When there are gains from co-operation, there can be many alternative arrangements that benefit each party compared with no co-operation. It is necessary, therefore, to ask whether the distribution of gains is fair or acceptable, not just whether there exists some gain for all parties.
**The use of the market economy can produce different outcomes:** The central question cannot be whether or not to make use of the market economy. It is not possible to have a prosperous economy without its extensive use. But that recognition, rather than ending the discussion, only begins it. The market economy can generate many different results, depending on how physical resources are distributed, how human resources are developed, what rules prevail and so on; and in all these spheres, the state and the society have roles, within a country and in the world. The market is one institution among many. Aside from the need for public policies that protect the poor (related to basic education and health care, employment generation, land reforms, credit facilities, legal protections, women’s empowerment and more), the distribution of the benefits of international interactions depends also on a variety of global arrangements. [...] 

**Global construction is the needed response to global doubts.** The anti-globalisation protests are themselves part of the general process of globalisation from which there is no escape and no great reason to seek escape. But while we have reason enough to support globalisation in the best sense of the idea, there are also critically important institutional and policy issues that need to be addressed at the same time. It is not easy to disperse the doubts without seriously addressing the doubters’ underlying concerns.

**Development of information technology**

The new communication technologies including satellite TV, cellular phone and Internet have reached some of the remotest rural areas in developing countries. The pace of this penetration is growing rapidly. ‘One global village’ for humanity is no longer a far-fetched idea. The reality still, however, is that the ‘digital divide’ is as much a barrier between urban and rural populations and between the rich and the poor within developing countries as it is between the rich and the poor countries of the world. The new information and communication technologies (ICTs) present a potential for education and empowerment unprecedented in human history; and, by the same token, pose an enormous challenge of translating this potential into reality.

The ‘leapfrogging’ possibility of digital technology – accelerating the pace and bypassing stages of development that older industrial countries have gone through - by adopting the newest technologies is often mentioned. However, developing countries such as India and the Philippines that have made the farthest progress in harnessing the potential of ICT are those where certain ‘social fundamentals’ and wide access to education are in place, admittedly much more so in urban centres than in rural areas. The greatest gains from communication technologies and network participation will accrue to those best prepared to use the greater access to information that networking makes possible. ‘Education, in short, multiplies the advantages of networking. The educated are also better prepared to adapt to change, and even to welcome it…education cannot be leapfrogged. Nor can literacy. This is one way in which the new possibilities arising from connectivity and inherent in networking are not enough for development in themselves’ (ILO 2001: 61).

**The imperatives of sustainable development**

Protecting the physical environment and promoting the values and objectives of sustainable development have emerged as a key educational concern. From the
point of view of rural transformation, this is an especially pertinent theme. The fragility of the physical environment, myriad hazards to bio-diversity, and the growing pressure on non-renewable natural resources threaten to jeopardise livelihood, health and quality of life of all on the planet; but the impoverished rural people in many developing countries are particularly vulnerable.

Social and economic development are interrupted and impeded by both man-made and natural disasters - war and civil conflict as well as earthquakes, drought, desertification, floods, volcanic eruptions and forest fires. In recent years, the incidence of natural disasters has increased both because of social and natural causes. Population pressure on the carrying capacity of land has pushed people into hazardous and ecologically fragile areas. Natural factor such as global warming and the El Nino events are associated with more frequent floods, droughts and storms. Preparedness, better understanding of these phenomena and coping strategies against them, and how social and natural vulnerabilities can be reduced must be important concerns of the educational system.

In the words of Agenda 21 - Programme of Action for Sustainable Development: 'Education is critical for promoting sustainable development and improving the capacity of the people to address environment and development issues. While basic education provides the underpinning for any environmental and development education, the latter needs to be incorporated as an essential part of learning. Both formal education and non-formal education are indispensable to changing people’s attitudes so that they have the capacity to assess and address their sustainable development concerns’ (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) 1992: 264).

A Vision and a Policy Framework

The importance of a vision, reflecting the concept of a learning society and encompassing the broad goals and purposes to be served by a nation-wide network of non-formal education, has been repeatedly emphasised by practitioners, experts and policy-makers. The need for a policy framework that follows from the vision to guide decisions about priorities and choices in programmes, their scope and objectives, and operational and management aspects of implementation also has been underscored. This has been an issue in Bangladesh as it is in other countries. In the following some thoughts based on Bangladesh experience will be presented, which have relevance for other countries in Asia (Ahmed and Lohani 2001).

There may be questions about technical quality of a statement of vision and the policy framework – the coherence and internal consistency of these statements, how they take into account the lessons from national and international experience, and how they reflect the development priorities and
aspiration of the country. Experts and practitioners would make the major contribution in this respect. Critical examination of past and on-going programmes and a systematic effort to extract relevant lessons from them would be especially pertinent for this purpose.

Developing the vision and the policy framework, however, is not merely a technical exercise. If these are to become living documents to guide action, these have to be based on an understanding and consensus shared by a broad constituency of stakeholders. Apart from the practitioners directly involved in current programmes, community organisations, NGOs, researchers and academics, professional groups, government policy-makers and politicians, interested or potentially interested in non-formal education, need to be persuaded to participate in a consensus-building process. An important consideration also is the participation in this process of the external development partners. They have provided substantial financial assistance to past and on-going programmes and are expected to do so in the future. They also bring a perspective derived from international experience and lessons and often are critical interlocutors with the government and other interested national groups. All these stakeholders eventually need to buy into the consensus that emerges. It is unlikely to be a perfect process with outcomes clearly defined and achieved within a pre-set timetable. It will be more of an iterative and evolving process. The important point is that a genuine, systematic and participatory consensus-building effort is undertaken. It is also a continuous process, rather than a one-shot affair, that requires reviews and updating based on feedback from experience and evaluation of lessons.

The vision and policy framework will also have to reflect a time perspective. There are short-term and medium term needs and priorities, in a time frame of 3 to 7 years, for which the outline of what should be done and what is feasible is clearer. A longer-term perspective of 10 to 15 years would reflect the more ambitious national aspirations and how the educational system including the non-formal components of it can contribute to fulfilling these aspirations. The long-term objectives and priorities would be tentative and the content of programmes would be defined and elaborated progressively, informed by experience. The medium term programme activities have to be consistent with longer-term objectives and guiding principles, and in turn, would influence the shape and characteristics of the longer-term vision.

The issues much under discussion about the role of non-formal education in serving national development aspirations and the goals of individual self-realisation point to a number of factors germane to the development of a vision and policy framework for non-formal education in Bangladesh. So are a number of factors arising from the operational and management lessons of programme experience. These include: Objectives and scope of NFE (including the concept of basic literacy, post-literacy and continuing education; criteria of internal efficiency, external effectiveness and relevance); Target groups and coverage
(including equity and gender concerns); Organisational and management structures, functions, professional capacities, decentralisation issues, the policy-making and decision-making process, and partnership-building; Quality elements; and Sustainability and community ownership of programmes.

Objectives and Scope of Non-formal Education (NFE)

Three pertinent questions arise regarding objectives and scope for NFE in the future.

To what extent the narrowness of the learning objectives of a basic literacy campaign approach itself is the impediment to achieving the social, developmental and personal self-realisation objectives of the programme?

Summary reviews of major NFE projects, three of which consist of variations of the basic literacy programme, indicate that a large proportion of learners do not achieve a functionally useful and sustainable level of literacy skills. An increase in participation in income-earning and other development activities by the Total Literacy Movement (TLM) participants, as well as greater interest in children’s education and awareness about gender discrimination are reported on the basis of before-and-after comparison. There were no comparisons with control groups or more detailed quantitative and qualitative analysis of the actual impact.

Post-literacy and continuing education courses focusing on income-earning skills are expected to compensate for this deficiency. So far two post-literacy and continuing education (PLCE) projects, consisting of 3 months of literacy enhancement followed by 6 months of skill training, are designed to serve 3.2 million completers of TLM. The two projects are supported by IDA/SDC and ADB/DFID respectively (See Box 2).

Pilot projects of post-literacy and continuing education programmes, following the pattern of a 3 months’ literacy consolidation followed by 6 months of skill training, were conducted by 23 different NGOs with some 1800 participants during 2000. The evaluation of the pilot projects indicated various problems in the prescribed design and implementation mechanism of the projects. The evaluation stressed the importance of an integrated approach both in terms of the continuum of literacy, post-literacy and continuing education as well as the establishment of links between skill training and various supporting factors such as credit and technical advice. It is also necessary for programmes to be adaptable and flexible in design, and content responsive to specific conditions and needs of learners, determined by situation analysis and market assessment. Lastly, sustainability of programmes promoted by the involvement of the community as well as Union and Upazila Councils and making the
educational programme a part of local development plans and activities is stressed. (Recommendations of Pilot PLCE Projects Experience Sharing Workshop, 21 November 2001, Dhaka, Department of Non-formal Education (DNFE)).

The pilot projects as well as the two larger PLCE projects are based on similar premises about outcome of the basic literacy programme (TLM) and the presumed need for a narrow focus on income-related skills in continuing education. The evaluation of the pilot projects raises questions about these premises. The time sequence of implementation of the pilot projects and preparation of the two PLCE projects seem to have not permitted consideration and incorporation of the pilot project lessons in the latter projects.

Box 2: Main Features of PLCE Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLCE-I (IDA/SDC supported)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objectives:</strong> Consolidation of literacy followed by application of literacy skills in skill training for income generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Target:</strong> 1.6 million neo-literates (who completed the BL course) in 230 upazilas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <strong>Project Duration:</strong> 5 years starting from January 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <strong>Course duration:</strong> 3 months of post-literacy followed by 6 months of continuing education focused on skill training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <strong>Delivery:</strong> Programme implementing organisations (NGOs or other service providers) provide PL and CE training with tailor-made courses at 6,900 centres to be established in the project upazilas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. <strong>Implementation Arrangements:</strong> Five Divisional Teams provide support to upazila programme officer who provides assistance to programme implementing organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. <strong>Monitoring:</strong> Regular monitoring by Monitoring Associates and DNFE officials; in-house monitoring by programme implementing organisations; assessment of learners’ achievement and improvement in their economic status and quality of living; annual, mid-term and end-of project-reviews; focused studies conducted on the project components; and sample based in-depth studies on quality aspects of programme and impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. <strong>Costs:</strong> US$ 71.7 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLCE-II (ADB/DFID supported)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Objectives:</strong> Increased literacy leading to higher income generating capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <strong>Target:</strong> 1.6 million neo-literates (who completed the BL course) in 210 upazilas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <strong>Course duration:</strong> 9 months (maintaining the proportion of one third for post literacy and two-thirds for continuing education focused on skill training)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <strong>Project Duration:</strong> 6 years starting from 2002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. **Delivery**: Implementing NGOs provide PLCE training with tailor-made courses at centres to be established in the project upazilas

6. **Implementation Arrangements**: National taskforce develops curriculum and trains master trainers for each NGO and the NGOs train the facilitators

7. **Monitoring**: Activities conducted periodically by M&E section/DNFE; monitoring by contracted third parties reporting directly to DNFE; progress reports, annual reviews, mid-term review; periodic evaluations and studies; and impact monitoring

8. **Costs**: US$100 million

Source: Project Appraisal Documents

Contribution to poverty alleviation has been a key rationale of the government for the basic literacy initiative and its follow-up with a restricted view of continuing education focusing on income-related skill generation.

International NFE experience and that in Bangladesh suggest that there is rarely a direct and proportional relationship between the educational activity and improvement in income and poverty status of participants. Ancillary support and creation of necessary conditions that normally fall beyond the purview of the educational activity, for application of the skills in productive activities are essential. Moreover, poverty is not just a matter of income. Improvement in health and nutrition and protection from diseases, knowledge and practice of family planning, priority to children’s education, status of women in respect of decision-making in the family including women’s participation in economic activities outside home, information and knowledge of government services and people’s claim to these are only some of the factors that affect in important ways people’s economic well-being and quality of life. In fact, a greater impact on poverty is likely to be achieved by adopting a broad view of people’s learning needs and providing for these on the basis of demand and assessment of specific needs. This is especially pertinent, when the existence of necessary conditions and supportive elements for use of income-earning skills are at best uncertain.

A more thorough and objective analysis of the learning outcome and developmental benefits of the literacy campaign approach in Bangladesh would be in order. The burden of evidence from international experience overwhelmingly is that a broader scope of objectives in terms of functionality and sustainability of skills and links with opportunities for use of skills in real-life situations are essential ingredients of effective programmes. Vision and plans for the future must take in to account this lesson from accumulated experience. An expanded view of learning objectives also suggest a more integrated programme approach combining in a flexible way basic literacy, consolidation of literacy skills, and their application through involvement of learners in development activities, including income-earning activities and learning specific skills for that purpose.
It is essential to provide for maximum flexibility in the new PLCE projects in their design and implementation mechanism. Given the uncertainty about the premises underlying the project design and the empirical lessons of the pilot projects, greater possibilities of mid-way course correction, than customary for World Bank and ADB project implementation format, needs to be provided for.

2. Besides the literacy objective, what about the spectrum of learning objectives associated with NFE?

The learning objectives not given attention in current NFE efforts include early childhood development and pre-school education, non-formal alternatives for children not able to participate in formal schools and second-chance opportunities for basic education for older adolescents, not enrolled in school, or dropouts, with the exception of the basic education project for children engaged in child labour. NFE efforts also have not included lifelong learning opportunities for personal fulfilment, acquiring new productive skills and life skills, and enhancing knowledge and skills as a citizen and community member. Moreover, non-formal training in vocational, entrepreneurship and employment-related skills have not been provided, though some of these are anticipated in the newly launched PLCE-I and proposed PLCE-II. Attention has also not been given to enhancement of the informal learning environment through wider availability of reading materials, information dissemination and encouragement of cultural expressions in the form of reading rooms, multi-media centre, and self-learning and interest groups in the community.

The choice to concentrate on basic literacy was influenced by two factors. Bangladesh was a country with one of the lowest literacy rates in the world, and the government was of the view that resources were not available to offer a broad range of non-formal education on a substantial scale. This choice was backed by the presumption that a campaign approach would lead to the acquisition of sustainable literacy skills, which in turn would yield expected social and developmental benefits. If there are questions about the functionality and sustainability of the literacy skills supposed to be acquired through the basic programme and uncertainty regarding the developmental benefits, as it appears to be the case with the campaign approach, then it is necessary to go back to the drawing board regarding appropriate options for the combination of learning objectives to be served and the efficacy of the focus on ‘pure literacy’.

(See Box 3 on the Indian TLC experience).

3. A related question is what should be the place of basic literacy learning in the total NFE effort?

One part of the question is about the persistence of illiteracy in the population in the future and the scale of the continuing need for fighting illiteracy. The rate of progress in universal primary education, even under an optimistic scenario, is such that at least 5 to 6 million children in the primary-school-age group of 6 to
11, who are not expected to be enrolled in school, will join the pool of illiterate adults in the next five years. A similar number will drop out early before acquiring sustainable basic skills. The number of adolescents and youth, a priority group in respect of literacy skills, therefore, will be at least 10 million in five years or 2 million additional literacy clientele per year. There are some 17 million people in the 11-45 years age group still to be reached by the literacy programme. There are questions about reaching effectively all of those targeted in this age-range by the current TLM effort. A serious issue is the practice of assuming participation and completion of course on the basis of number of centres opened and calculation of progress in literacy rate on the basis of this assumption. It is more than likely that a substantial proportion of those who are supposed to have participated in the literacy course remain illiterate. A proper assessment of the real situation is necessary for sound future planning. It would be a reasonable conclusion that illiteracy will continue to be a major problem at least through the next decade and will have to be addressed by NFE activities.

A second part of the question is whether the goal of combating illiteracy should continue to follow the present pattern of campaigns with a ‘pure literacy’ focus. The overview of the NFE projects and the issues raised above strongly suggest that the option of a flexible and integrated approach adapted to learner groups and their circumstances deserves to be looked at seriously. The value and validity of ‘eradication of illiteracy’ and declaration of districts as ‘illiteracy free’ on the basis of symbolic (rather than functional) literacy need to be re-examined. The Dakar World Education Forum target of reducing global adult illiteracy by half by 2015 from the present level suggests that achieving a functional level of literacy for the large majority of the population will require a determined, dedicated and multi-faceted effort for a generation.

Box 3: The Total Literacy Campaign in India

The Total Literacy Campaign (TLC) in India was launched in 1988, after various experiments and programmes to fight adult illiteracy for four decades since independence failed to produce a substantial impact. TLC has been undertaken in over 550 districts with a target of making 100 million people literate in a decade in the age group of 15-35 years.

Overall responsibility for planning and implementing TLC lies with the National Literacy Mission (NLM), a central government agency. It aims at teaching basic literacy skills (‘reading a simple text related to learners’ experience, copying at the rate of seven words a minute, counting and writing up to one hundred, adding and subtracting three digit numbers, and multiplying and dividing two digit numbers). There is also a general objective of developing what is called ‘social and critical consciousness.’ A standard 200-hour course is taught within a 12-month period. The basic phase is expected to be followed by a post-literacy phase (24 months) and a continuing education phase (5 years). The TLC model rested on three premises: a) that literacy can be achieved through a short time-bound campaign, b) that the campaign can be carried out by mobilising volunteers,
and c) that the District Magistrate, head of the district administration, can be the linchpin in organising the campaign in each district. Underlying these assumptions regarding the operational aspects of the campaign was the fundamental premise that a modest level of literacy skills (plus raising the level of 'critical consciousness') that can be achieved through the campaign, in fact, enabled participants to acquire knowledge of a functional kind which led to power, providing access to a range of skills and communication competencies which ‘converts a half being into a full being’ through access to information’ (p.3).

The following excerpts from a report based on six field studies carried out under the auspices of the Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE) shed light on the validity and relevance of the basic premises that formed the rationale for TLC:

Campaigns can become ‘totally target oriented and any failure to achieve the target is dubbed as lack of effort and sincerity’… the concept of literacy per se was reduced to a ‘learn to write your name campaign’. And among those who did go beyond this stage, the relapse into illiteracy was quite significant (p.12).

The success of the campaign mode in a highly literate urban area such as Ernakulam, a district in the state of Kerala, allowed the TLC and PLC (post-literacy campaign) to move easily into structures and institutions for continued efforts. …However, the attempts to replicate the experience of Kerala in Ganjam district in Orissa did not work because a ‘cultural movement for literacy requires a vigorous people’s movement and a high literacy rate, both of which were absent in Ganjam.’… In Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh, increase in literacy rate was not ‘phenomenal’, but the campaign helped create two important social movements - the anti-arrack and thrift movements among women (p.13). ‘The particular characteristics of the Kerala model of literacy campaign were never meant to be applied across the board’ (p.23)...An essential feature of a suitable learning environment is to have primers and teaching methods to which students relate. ‘Unless you develop your own book, it is not owned by the people’ (p.25).

Perceptions on the Collector’s role and literacy achievement were sharply divided. The management system was ‘hierarchical and at times autocratic. The schoolteachers became the academic backbone of the campaign at the instance of the Collector, which limited NGO participation. The teachers had no say in planning, monitoring or supervising (p.17).

The high rate of relapse into illiteracy clearly indicates that much more [than a time-bound campaign] is required to impart and sustain literacy. ‘Those who would be able to retain sustainable literacy would form at a rough estimate approximately 12 per cent of the originally targeted non-literate’ (p.20).

One of the most positive impacts of TLC was the spurt in school enrolments … Despite feedback on overall positive effects of the campaign; inherent contradictions of all literacy and educational campaigns remain. How can the gains from such initiatives be sustained in the prevailing socio-economic environment of inequalities and disparities? (P.22)

The present focus of NLM on literacy has to shift and similarly its mission and time-bound thrust should give way to a more durable and sustained programme of adult education that responds to the needs of adults as individuals and also as members of disadvantaged groups (p.26) …responses to TLC have been uneven across the country…
On the whole…disappointment with the mobilisation neither transforming into a sustained social movement nor into a learning process has been a big let down for the grass roots level worker (p.28).

Source: Malavika Karlekar (ed.), Reading the World: Understanding the Literacy Campaign in India, Mumbai, Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE), 2000

Target Groups and Coverage

The range of learning objectives that could be served by NFE also suggests a parallel list of diverse learning clientele who would benefit from programmes related to the diverse objectives. The concepts of the learning society and lifelong learning and the imperative of meeting diverse learning needs of people in all age groups that cannot be met by formal education provide the rationale for NFE. An approach to identifying and matching learning needs and learners could be to visualise a matrix of learning objectives, learning clientele, and diverse development priorities and circumstances. From the point of view of the societal objective of poverty alleviation and fulfilment of human rights, priority has to be accorded to equity criteria in planning programme targets and coverage – especially, reaching the various disadvantaged groups, maintaining a gender balance in coverage, and adapting programme methods and content to suit the conditions of these groups.

Box 4: An Illustrative Matrix of NFE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Objectives</th>
<th>Clientele</th>
<th>Diverse socio-economic conditions and stages of development of communities/localities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Early childhood</td>
<td>Young children/care givers</td>
<td>(Situation analysis)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Non-formal primary education</td>
<td>Primary age children/adolescents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Second chance basic education</td>
<td>Older age adolescents/youth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Basic education for children in difficult circumstances</td>
<td>Working children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Life long and continuing education</td>
<td>Youth and adults with diverse interests</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Vocational/income generating skill training</td>
<td>Youth and adults with diverse needs/interests</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Occupational skill learning/upgrading</td>
<td>Occupational groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Post-literacy/remedial classes</td>
<td>Basic literacy completers/ youth and adults</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Inclusive learning</td>
<td>People with disabilities and special needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In terms of categories of learners, a strong case can be made for catering to young and pre-school children, adolescents and youth, who have missed primary education altogether or have dropped out early, to have a second chance for basic education, and youth and young adults receiving locally designed and market-responsive skill and entrepreneurship training. A re-examination of the Integrated Non-formal Education Programme type of agenda serving a diversified group and their specific needs would be in order. [The Integrated Non-formal Education Programme, the predecessor of the present Directorate of Non-formal Education, had taken a broader view of non-formal education with a wider range of programme offering.]

A scenario of differentiated groups of learners and programmes would raise many operational and organisational questions. It is not necessary that all of the programmes have to be managed by the principal NFE agency in the public sector such as DNFE. Many of the activities can be carried out by private sector, NGOs, and community organisations with appropriate financial incentive and technical support from the government and other sources. There are choices to be exercised regarding who among potential providers of services should have what responsibility and how all can contribute to meeting the critical and diverse learning needs of people. A larger role for various non-government actors would mean that the role of government agencies will be more in the areas of developing overall policies and priorities, creating supportive and facilitative mechanisms, providing finances and helping mobilise resources, helping set quality norms and enforcing these through overall monitoring and assessment, and generally protecting the public interest. There are important organisational implications of such an evolution of roles.

**Organisation and Management Structures and Functions**

The option of a comprehensive network of non-formal learning serving a wide clientele would require commensurate rethinking of organisational and management structures and functions. Major elements of such a rethinking would include various aspects of organisational arrangements, management
roles and functions at different levels and the relationships between the principal government non-formal education agency and all other stakeholders and potential partners and their respective roles.

**Decentralisation**
In line with the overly centralised structure of public administration and the educational system, in many countries, NFE in the public sector is also highly centralised. In Bangladesh, for example, the Directorate of Non-Formal Education (DNFE) is the executing agency for all the major projects and has the responsibility for planning and designing programmes, providing the finances, designing curricula and supplying learning materials, and exercising overall monitoring and supervision. In the national literacy campaign known as the Total Literacy Movement (TLM), district administration is given the task of implementing the project as designed by DNFE, without any authority to modify or adapt projects to local conditions. A broader range of activities serving various learner groups will multiply the complexity and difficulty of management tasks many-fold. An option would be to decentralise management to the district level in the form of District Non-formal Education Council as a registered society that receives government finances and technical support for projects designed and managed by the Council (or by NGOs and community organisations on behalf of the Council) for communities and learner groups in the district. DNFE, in this scenario, would become a facilitator and provider of financial and technical support rather than direct and manage programmes.

**Partnership-building**
In almost all NFE activities, NGOs have played an important role in Asian countries. In some countries, there are whole sectors of NFE such as non-formal primary education or early childhood education, in which NGOs are the major providers. Partnerships, between the government and NGOs, should become the norm, at least in areas where NGOs have demonstrated their performance. In a decentralised system, the focus of the partnership would be the district and the local level. Partnerships and collaboration would be important between providers of education and training and business and trade bodies, employers, providers of credit, and those who can help in entrepreneurship development and the marketing of products. This is facilitated when educational activities are locally designed, flexible, and adaptable to changing market signals.

**Technical and professional support mechanism**
For the management of a matrix of programmes and clientele, adequate technical and professional capacity at central and sub-national levels providing planning, implementation and capacity-building support is of paramount importance.
In the context of a broad menu of programmes and their decentralised management, institutional capacities are needed to be developed for research, training, and technical support staffed by well-qualified professionals and to maintain a repository of knowledge and technical resources for NFE. A related issue is the professionalisation of NFE personnel, especially at the senior level and deployment of senior officials based on interest and commitment and for a sufficient length of time, where civil service rules require periodic rotation and transfers. (See figure below of an illustration of management and professional support structure for NFE in Thailand.)

Assuring Quality in Programmes

Quality in educational programmes is best reflected in the learning achievement of participants in the programmes. It is the outcome of the combined effect of a host of factors. These include inherent soundness of programme objectives and design, adequacy of resources consistent with objectives, internal operations and management of the programme, circumstances that affect learners’ ability to participate effectively, and how quality indicators are defined and assessed.

The overview of the NFE projects in Bangladesh presents at best a mixed picture about the quality of the educational activities as it is manifested in the learning outcome. The projects indicate various deficiencies in respect of all of the key factors of quality noted above. In envisioning the future of NFE, the problems encountered and identified and the way these have been addressed or not addressed must be considered and the lessons taken into account.

The campaign approach of TLM itself presents difficult quality challenges. As project overview of TLM noted, ‘The focus on quantitative target, a rigid time-table for completion of course, a narrow emphasis on the mechanics of literacy, and the imperatives of declaring districts ‘illiteracy-free’ raise basic issues about the concept of quality applied in the project and how quality should be and is being ensured in it’ It can be argued that these characteristics of TLM represent a necessary management discipline for any large-scale programme. It is a question of balance between a quantitative target orientation and attention to quality and the essential measures to maintain acceptable quality in the programme.

Lack of sufficient attention to establishing performance and quality standards, developing necessary indicators to enforce quality standards, and mechanisms and capacities for actually enforcing quality standards are the common weaknesses of all of the projects.

Programme monitoring mechanism and capacity - including collection of relevant quantitative and qualitative information, reporting, analysing, consolidating and sharing the information with concerned parties, and most
importantly, use of the management information system for corrective measures – are similarly deficient in all of the NFE projects.

It is essential to build a ‘culture of quality’ into the vision of non-formal education, emphasise quality assurance principles and measures in the policy framework, and not to be satisfied with the prevailing norm of somehow ‘making do.’ Particular attention must be given to incorporating quality objectives and means of achieving them in the scope, objectives and designs of programmes. It is also necessary to establish quality and performance standards and indicators with respect to learning outcomes as well as programme inputs and implementation process. Mechanisms and capacities for applying and enforcing performance and quality standards need to be strengthened including effective monitoring and use of monitoring and information systems for better management. Furthermore, internal and external, formative and summative evaluation needs to be built into the programme design and implemented with seriousness. Lastly, building and utilising technical and professional capacities and skills for quality assurance including monitoring and evaluation is essential.

**Sustainability and Community Ownership**

Sustainability of a non-formal education programme has different facets – viability in terms of costs and financing; sustainability in respect of institutional arrangements, management of programmes and their ownership; and the question of continuing relevance and effectiveness of programmes.

Long-term sustainability requires that eventually dependence on non-indigenous financial resources be reduced. In the medium term, at least, programmes that are cost-effective, of demonstrable quality and serve national priorities including reaching the under-served, can count on both national and external support.

Institutional sustainability requires, as the discussion above indicates, basic re-examination of the organisational and management model. The anticipated scope and diversity of NFE activities, the varying circumstances of the clientele that may be served, and a demand-driven approach that should be followed would demand a different order of responsiveness of the management structure from many national NFE management structures are accustomed to. The shift has to be in the direction of greater decentralisation, professionalisation of management, and capacity building at the national and sub-national levels. There has to be a network of partnership between responsible government agency and communities, NGOs and the private sector with designs of programmes and their implementation brought closer to where the learners are.

Sustainability in terms of continued relevance of programmes and their effectiveness will depend on, first, ensuring and maintaining acceptable quality
reflected in the learning outcome; and secondly, the capability of the programme
to be flexible, to identify changing needs and demands of learners, and to adapt.
The NFE organisation has to become truly a ‘learning organisation’.

Enhancing sustainability ultimately depends on an overall vision and policy
framework regarding the development of a nation-wide non-formal learning
network in the context of building the learning society. A comprehensive
approach will help the government and the development partners to move a way
from discrete and ad hoc projects, dependent on external assistance, the future of
which are always a question mark one the assistance ends. Individual projects
and external assistance will continue to be necessary, but a perspective of
medium and long-term development of the sub-sector will allow the projects to
fit into a framework of national priorities and will contribute to sustainable
development of NFE.
Diagram 1: NFE Administrative and Professional Support Structure in Thailand

National NFE Department
Administrative Divisions
Resource Centers

Kanchonapisek NFE Center
Voc Dev and Promotion Center
Informal Edn. promotion Center
National Science Center for Education.
Thaicom Distance Education Center

Center for Ed Technology
Inst. for NFE Standards
Sirindhorn Inst of CE and Development
Agric Training and Development Center
Thaicom Distance Education Center

5 Regional NFE Centers
(Support and Services)

79 Provincial NFE Centers
8 Vocational Training Centers
14 Science Centers for Education

855 District NFE Centers
(Support and Services)

10,000 + Multi-Purpose Community Learning and Other Centers
35,000 Learning Groups

Hill Area Learning Center
Self-study Groups
Vocational Centers

Adult/NFE Centers
Distance Education Learning groups/Centers

Conclusion

Based on the discussion above and a compilation of information about policies, programmes and delivery mechanisms in adult education in Asian countries done by the UNESCO Institute of Education some useful conclusions can be
drawn regarding the state of life-long learning and its effectiveness in the Asian region.

There is really no comprehensive policy for lifelong education in the Asian countries. Lifelong education as such as a national concern has not become a high priority agenda item in educational policy discussion. There are policies and programmes, in varying degrees of comprehensiveness and levels of priority, about adult education literacy, basic education and non-formal education. These are necessary building blocks of lifelong education, but they do not yet add up to a national policy and programme for lifelong education in any of the countries.

The countries can be described as still being in the stage of building the prerequisites or necessary conditions for lifelong education by putting in place literacy, basic education and post-literacy programmes. But these programmes have to develop further in terms of their coverage and offerings before they constitute nation-wide networks of lifelong learning. They need to be strengthened in terms of their capacity to maintain acceptable quality of learning, and in many instances, even in establishing measurable quality criteria, in reaching and serving many large disadvantaged groups, and offering programmes that go beyond basic literacy skills – such as, individual self-realisation, quality-of-life improvement, and income-related skill development.

Institutional structures and mechanisms are weak or even non-existent for managing, supporting and developing the major components of lifelong education, not to speak of comprehensive institutional structures for nation-wide networks of lifelong learning. Attention needs to be paid to providing effective professional and technical support for capacity-building at sub-national and local levels, programme development, assessment and quality control. It is necessary to create decentralised and participatory structures and methods for decision-making and management in order to make programmes flexible, responsive and adaptive to circumstances and needs of learners. Another important prerequisite is building partnerships of all stakeholders including non-governmental organisations, communities and the professional and academic institutions. Lastly, overall cohesiveness, complementarity and comprehensiveness of the support structures and functions is essential. These are areas that need attention to build the network of lifelong learning in each country.

References


Evolution of Adult Learning in the Asian Region

Chander J. Daswani

In the countries of the Asian region, as in the rest of the Third World, education has been perceived as an essential pre-condition for economic development, unlike in the developed countries where universal education was invariably an outcome of economic development. In their attempt to catch up with the developed world, the countries in the region have conceived and implemented a variety of educational and developmental programmes reflecting their commitment to bring about economic development through education. A direct consequence of this philosophy has been the planned growth of the formal school system in the second half of the twentieth century. However, the high rates of illiteracy among adults (in the age group 15-40) in these countries came to be recognised as a serious hindrance to development strategies only in the 1960’s, leading to planned literacy programmes for adults. Indeed, a number of the countries in the region have achieved significant results in programmes of universal literacy and are within sight of the goal of full literacy.

Evolution of Adult Learning Programmes

Progression from literacy to lifelong learning
The earliest attempts at adult learning in the region concentrated on providing basic skills of reading and writing to the illiterate adults. While these attempts were successful in some measure, it was soon realised that they were seldom stable or permanent. It was also discovered that the skills of reading and writing themselves were not enough to ensure functionality in the newly literate adult. In
other words, these literacy skills did not make an adult neo-literate functionally literate in the complex and changing social settings. Adult learners could not put the skills to any functional use and therefore such literacy was invariably short-lived with the adult learners quickly relapsing into illiteracy.

In order to address this issue of relapse into illiteracy, many countries in the region sought to integrate literacy with training for work and increased productivity. Literacy was linked with different aspects of economic development. Development linked literacy was labelled as ‘functional’ literacy and designed to fulfil the occupational needs of the learners.

Unfortunately, such functional literacy programmes were also short-lived because it was difficult to integrate literacy skills with technical, vocational, or occupational training. These initial ‘experimental’ functional literacy programmes were replaced in time by newer programmes of functional literacy. The concept of functionality was enlarged to link training in literacy with improvement of the human condition. Literacy programmes were built around issues of health, civic responsibilities, value education and positive attitudes towards economic development. In many countries such programmes were organised in the work place of the individual.

These functional literacy programmes are often seen as programmes of empowerment through education. In some of the countries in the region literacy programmes are designed to enable the learners to comprehend their social and economic change. Likewise, in many countries literacy programmes are designed to empower women and to liberate them from ignorance and exploitation. In some cases these programmes help learners develop critical consciousness and to explore possible solutions for their problems.

More recently, in many countries in the region literacy programmes are being linked to continuing education programmes. Initial literacy training becomes an entry condition for a variety of continuing education programmes, which are flexible both in terms of duration and format. Continuing education programmes are available in the distance, face-to-face or self study formats and can be accelerated or prolonged according to the requirements of the learners.

Literacy programmes in the Asian region, then, have evolved through a number of stages. Beginning as simple literacy programmes, they have been linked to development-related technical/vocational training. In the process, the concept of functional literacy has been expanded to go beyond occupational training. Literacy as a tool for self-empowerment as well as a step in lifelong learning is a natural outcome of the changing concept literacy.

The progression from simple literacy to lifelong learning through functional literacy and continuing education provides an interesting line on which the countries of the region can be placed.
**Eradication to empowerment**

The gradual policy shift from elimination of illiteracy to empowerment of the adult learner was influenced mainly by internal and external factor an internal factor, the progression from basic literacy skills to functional literacy of different kinds seems to have coincided with the low levels of success at each point in the chain. Basic skill-based literacy was superseded because of the relapse into illiteracy and development-linked literacy was modified because of non-availability of trained instructors and relevant materials. The concept of functional literacy has undergone continuous change because it is difficult to account for the innumerable variables which impinge on such literacy programmes. The concept of continuing education and lifelong education shifts the onus from the programme to the learner, at the same time making basic literacy the only entry condition for both continuing and lifelong education. There is circularity here: basic literacy was modified because it was not sufficient in itself, but it is posited as a necessary condition for continuing and lifelong education.

The external and more positive factor is the problem of adult literacy attracting world-wide attention for the past 15-20 years as not only a problem of the Third World, but of the entire world. Even in the highly literate societies in the western world, large sections of the population remain functionally illiterate, especially in the face of the rapid technical advances, which require new specialised skills of ‘literacy’. This worldwide concern with literacy has brought together countries, like those in the Asian region as well as those in the western world with special literacy needs, in their endeavour to address the issue of adult education. As a consequence, basic education, non-formal education and lifelong learning have come to be understood as basic ingredients of adult and lifelong education.

**Ensuring the right to education for all**

The Jomtien Declaration of 1990 was a landmark as well as a clarion call for the entire world to address the issue of *basic education for all*. The Jomtien Declaration provided a policy direction for all the participating countries to achieve well defined bench marks by the year 2000 in providing *education for all* – children and adults. The Jomtien Declaration challenged all the countries to put education on the top of their national agendas in order to ensure equity for all.

The Jomtien benchmarks were monitored periodically in the last decade of the twentieth century, culminating in the 2000 Assessment in Dakar, Senegal, which yielded the Dakar Framework of Action. This Framework further reinforces the need for continued effort for achieving the goal of education for all and places centre stage the concept of lifelong learning.
The Dakar Framework is a reaffirmation and a statement of collective commitment of the countries of the world to ensure the right to education for all humanity.

Policy Concerns

A review of the policies of adult education pursued by the countries in the Asian region clearly indicates the issues that are considered to be important by the various countries in achieving the goal of education for all. Some of these central issues are: The rural poor and the underprivileged sections of society; Out of school children and youth; Education of women; Education of ethnic groups and minorities; Skill training; Vocational and technical education; Agricultural extension; Poverty alleviation; Functional literacy; Post literacy; Health and family planning; Co-operative development; Industrial training; Education of the handicapped; NFE for – ‘second chance education’; Citizenship education; Value education; Entrepreneur education; Promotion of national and local languages; Continuing education; ICTs and globalisation.

The issues listed above cover the entire gamut of educational needs of adults. Clearly programmes of adult education continue to be located on the literacy-lifelong education line discussed above.

Innovations and Achievements

In the implementation of adult education programmes a variety of innovations has been attempted. As a result, several significant achievements have been recorded in most of the countries.

Many countries have successfully ‘handed over’ the responsibility of implementation to the local communities. This has engendered interest not only in the adult learner but also the literate sections of the society.

Community participation is best achieved through the agency of NGOs who work with the grassroots communities. In almost all the countries NGOs are encouraged to work with or on behalf of the state agencies.

In a number of the countries in the region programmes of adult education are aimed at providing a second chance to adults who were unable to attend formal schools. These programmes encourage adults to continue their education through special schools or through distance education.

Many adult education programmes are addressing the implications of globalisation and market forces for the rural communities and providing
educational opportunities to equip these communities to meet the challenges of the market forces.

Adult education programmes are making it possible for the adult illiterates to participate in and explore the potential of ICTs. Courses in computers and training in accessing information on the Internet have opened up new vistas in the area of adult and lifelong education. Rural cyber cafes make it possible for the rural communities to keep abreast of the latest information as well as to communicate with people anywhere in the world.

Computer technology and desktop printing has made it possible to produce materials and documents in all languages. This has led to the development of teaching learning materials in national and local languages, which has made learning more efficient for the adult learner.

Critical Gaps

It cannot be gainsaid that adult education programmes in the region have been successful in providing opportunities for adult illiterates to access educational programmes for their economic and social development. It is also true that through these programmes adult illiterates have been motivated to participate in the process of education. At the same time, it is necessary to recognise some critical gaps that need to be filled in order to make these programmes more meaningful and successful.

In many countries in the region the basic philosophy of adult education is based on economic development. Consequently, most programmes emphasise skill, technical and vocational training. A greater emphasis is needed for the socio-psychological development of the learners. Values that need to be reinforced through adult education include democracy, egalitarianism, social justice, rule of law, learning to live together, secularism, peace, non-violence, respect for others, and the like.

Most adult education programmes tend to be measured against the formal school requirements. Indeed, many programmes prescribe formal school equivalence for evaluation of adult education programme. This ‘formal school syndrome’ often constricts the non-formal character of adult education and tends to turn these programmes into poor copies of formal school courses.

Adult education programmes need to identify and utilise traditional knowledge and wisdom as well as informal societal learning processes, which are essentially an integral part of the lifelong learning process practised by any traditional, especially rural, society.

Lastly, adult education programmes are often overloaded with economic and development issues, which lead to low success levels of such programmes.
Creating Literate and Learning Societies

The basic aim of adult and lifelong education programmes should be the creation of literate environments and learning societies. Conventionally, most adult education programmes focus on the individual rather than the society within which the individual operates. Even when a particular individual acquires the basic literacy skills she/he cannot practise these skills until the entire social group begins to use literacy in its day-to-day transactions and interaction. When a literate environment is created, encouraged and nurtured, the social group as a whole becomes a literacy using society. Once practised literacy becomes a way of life, lifelong learning becomes a reality.

Future Directions

The countries in the Asian region have made significant strides in achieving the goals of adult and lifelong education as part of the education for all commitments. However, there is need and justification for redoubling the efforts to further strengthen adult education programmes. Some of the directions that seem to have emerged include harnessing traditional knowledge and wisdom, engendering socio-psychological values, making good parenting a part of adult and lifelong education, and encouraging literate environments. ICT education, providing for a reading culture through library movements and information sharing through effective networking is also encouraged. The co-operation of civil society in creating a learning environment and the encouragement of NGO participation in adult and lifelong education is essential and most importantly, commitment of state support and funding for adult and lifelong education must be ensured.

References

Sustainable and Transferable Learning Abilities: Building on Experience from the Field

Chij Shrestha

There is wide-scale conceptual agreement among adult educators and the continuing education community that learning should promote individual and collective change while engaging people in community based learning activities. The past twenty years has seen an increased use of experiential learning tailored to respond to sector-specific needs - health, agricultural, micro-enterprises, and to the contexts of learners - cultural, linguistic, geographic and economic. Yet, we find that practice is not aligned with rhetoric and, as a result, the landscape is replete with programmes that fall short of reaching a change in attitudes and practices that are critical to the application of new knowledge and skills.

This paper discusses experiences of the past two decades influencing practice and institutional policy towards greater internal consistency in adult learning programmes and impact on learner attitudes and practices across sectors. These experiences show the importance of building conceptual frameworks from the bottom up, the critical importance of fostering an enabling environment, and the value of experiential learning as the critical tool of individual and collective development.¹

Conceptual Framework: the Learning Model

Elements of a generic model and a specific set of sequential steps, or learning processes, have evolved over the years through practice and extensive testing in the field.
Foundation skills

The first step in the learning process is the building of foundation skills. These are the most fundamental elements of the learning model and comprise the tools that a learner needs to gather and process information, build basic knowledge, solve simple problems, and deal effectively with new and changing situations.

Foundation skills include skills in reading, writing, mathematics and science; speaking and listening skills; critical thinking, problem solving, and knowing how to learn, and personal qualities like self-management and individual responsibility.

Generic competencies

Foundation skills are linked with a number of generic competencies that are seen as enabling factors that help learners consolidate their foundation skills and enhance the potential for their application to learning opportunities. Generic or key competencies include time management and resource management; interpersonal skills like team work and how to teach and learn from others; the ability to acquire new information related to the specific content and skills taught in the programmes; and the ability to select equipment, tools and other learning aids and how to do problem solving related to the technical content that is being presented.
In programmes conducted by World Education in South and Southeast Asia, different ways to link foundation skills and generic competencies with sector-specific content or occupation-specific competencies have been experimented with. Sector-specific content is identified through close collaboration with technical sector specialists who are responsible for the veracity of the content and, as a result, for the must know information that is presented to learners. Occupation-specific content is derived from studying specific occupations, skills and subsets of skills as they are performed in the workplace, in farmers’ fields, and in other workplaces in the community. This content needs to be flexible to meet the changing requirements of the workplace.

Supporting the Model with a Focus on Quality of Education

In the process of building programmes that include these three sets of skills and competencies, focus has been placed on improving the quality of learning activities and training at every level in which they take place. Experience has shown that good curricula alone are insufficient and that attention to ‘enabling environment’ in which learning and action take place is critical to the development of sustainable and transferable learning abilities. Attention to the issues impacting on quality of learning has a long-term impact on what learners are able to do with the skills they have developed through programmes.

Practising integrated curriculum development and instruction
Integration is a key strategy for improving teaching and learning. Well thought-out and effectively delivered, integrated instruction can benefit learners by clearly targeting well-defined educational objectives and building foundation skills that facilitate learning and using the integrated content. Integrated instruction implies the systematic development of locally relevant learning activities and curricula and linking them to the local economic, social, health, environmental and political situation. It also means promoting authentic teaching - context-based - as the most powerful tool in improving learner/student performance. Integration also presupposes the use of pre-service and in-service training activities as the vehicle for changing facilitator attitudes, mindsets and teaching practices, whereby the focus is on the context of integrated instruction and a proper mix of methodologies. The chosen methodologies depend on the content to be presented and the skills that need to be developed and applied rather than solely on the traditional methods that facilitators are most comfortable using, which is often lecturing.

Maximising learning through reflection
Reflection is a conscious and planned activity in all learning activities. Reflection is done individually and collectively amongst facilitators, learners and the community. The act of reflection provides opportunities for creating both internal voices (self-
knowledge of what and how one is thinking) and external voices for reflection (demonstrate and practice listening skills, probing for clarity, asking thoughtful questions). Reflection helps in clarifying and amplifying the meaning of one’s life situation or work through the insights of others. It is a way of applying meaning beyond the situation in which it was learned. Moreover, it makes a commitment to change, plan and experiment. Reflection also provides opportunities for documenting learning and providing a rich base of shared knowledge.

**Developing core groups of master trainers**

Master trainers or lead facilitators provide expertise and professional guidance on-site to other trainers on an ongoing basis. They serve as in-house experts who provide information, *modelling* and assistance to NGOs and programme implementation agencies. Each master trainer/facilitator who is selected has expertise, leadership skills and an image among peers as a legitimate leader. Expertise in a curricular area is chosen for the programme focus (for example, vocational skills on development, landmine awareness and integrated pest management). They have leadership skills, both the existing skills of the master trainer/facilitator at the outset and his/her potential for further development. Of great importance is having an image among peers as a legitimate leader. For this, it is necessary for the facilitator to be an expert in a curricular area and be accessible and a supportive resource for information and assistance.

**Strengthening local governance mechanisms**

Strong governance mechanisms of the participating local groups or organisations are crucial for promoting and advocating programmes. Strong governance mechanisms are necessary to ensure the improvement and sustainability of learning activities and development programmes at the local level. This can be done by involving service delivery providers with both ‘formalised’ learning activities as well as community outreach and education. Governance can be strengthened also by engaging stakeholder groups at the local level in dialogue with other development sectors in an effort to expand the resources available to learning activities. Also important is engaging civil society in advocacy for increased access to learning activities linked directly to development interventions and increased quality of learning and training activities.

**Experiential Learning Approach across Sectors**

Experiential learning is based on an understanding of how individuals and communities view their world, how they perceive outside *change agents* and how communities work - or do not work - to create local conditions that will enable them to achieve improved individual and collective well-being. Over the past twenty years, the experiential learning approach have been used in programmes across sectors, such as the development of savings, credit and livelihoods for women in rural areas. They
have been used to integrate community-based maternal and child health education, reproductive health and HIV/AIDS into literacy programmes for women or adolescent girls. Other areas in which this approach is used include training in practical vocational skills for rural youth, education in mine risk for youth and their communities, establishing and supporting educational systems in refugee camps, HIV/AIDS education in schools, promoting sustainable agriculture programmes, and introducing integrated pest management for women and men involved in rice farming or vegetable growing.

In the context of the cross-sectoral programmes a similar learning (pedagogical) process is used to deliver and support learning at the community level. The learning process is composed of a set of teaching/learning activities included in a set of curricular materials. These include facilitators’ guides, learner materials, teaching aids/materials, and assessment activities, backed up by a monitoring and evaluation plan that includes detailed guidelines for the monitoring and supervision of learning activities and for the use of feedback to improve teaching/learning methods.

The learning process is preceded by a learning needs assessment that is conducted to determine the types and levels of learners' needs concerning a given issue or topic. Through this assessment, it can be found out 'where the learners are', and this is the crucial starting point of education programmes using the experiential approach.

While the internal aspects of a specific step vary from programme to programme, the basic steps in the learning process cycle can be described as follows:

**STEP 1: Introducing new content related to learners’ daily lives**
This first step starts with where the learners are. The discussion brings out their level of familiarity and knowledge about the new content being presented. This provides a facilitator with important information about learners. Oral fluency includes the level of knowledge on a given topic. Receptivity is measured by attitudes toward the topic under discussion and openness to discussion of the topic. Manual and/or communication competency measures command of the requisite skills needed to take action on the topic. Finally self-confidence is judged by the willingness and ability to propose ideas for solving the issues and problems being addressed by the learning activity.

This first step is typically introduced through a guided group discussion where the facilitator uses one of a variety of participatory teaching aids, for example, visuals that are related to the topic under discussion, a role-play, or a demonstration.

Although a curriculum may already have been developed at the national or regional level, facilitators are trained in how to adapt their presentations to accommodate new information gleaned from the discussions in this step. This ability to listen closely to learners and then adapt and modify ‘prescribed’ learning materials is a critical skill on the part of community educators in general. Such listening, adapting and modifying skills enable educators to tailor a curriculum to meet the needs of learners in a specific geographic or socio-political setting.

**STEP 2: Clarification of content and concept**

In this step, the facilitator provides clarification and ‘the new information’ on the content or concept that is being presented in the learning activity. This step also includes clarification and new information on the skills that learners need in order to take action on new content/information. There are four objectives that are carried out in the following sequence. The first objective is to reinforce the correct information that learners stated during the guided group discussion (validation of existing knowledge, skills and attitudes). The second aim is to address any misinformation that emerged in the guided group discussion by adding new information with clarification. Thirdly, new information is linked to learner practice, knowledge, skills and attitudes. This entails connecting new information with current practices and the need for change in individual and/or collective practices. The fourth objective is to identify how change will be recognised and measured. The aim is to discuss with learners how they know whether the situation has changed over time. This then, gives the indicators of individual and collective change.

This step provides learners with ample time to reflect individually and collectively on current practices. The power of the inner voice and the collective voice are stressed in this step. Promoting individual and collective reflection is central to problem solving and helping learners become their own ‘best’ change
agent. Learners discuss how the new information introduced about the topic/concept can help improve the existing situation. They discuss, as well, how these changes could be recognised in their lives and in their communities. At the same time, they begin discussing what resources are available locally to assist individual learners and the group or community in addressing a specific problem and how one could access those resources.

**STEP 3: Application of new information, skills and attitudes**

In this step of the learning activity, participants are provided with an opportunity to apply what they have discussed and learned in the first two steps to a concrete development issue in their immediate environment. Learning is reinforced by concrete actions, application of new content to solving problems, seeing the implications of changing individual and community behaviours, and bringing about longer-term change at the community level.

The facilitator’s role is to manage the learning that takes place, but not control it. Learners take on more control of the learning situation as it moves into a practice mode rather than a knowledge dissemination mode. This change in focus of control is extremely important. It is a central factor that contributes to empowering learners to take control of their own learning and thought processes. It helps learners reach important decisions about actions that lead to not only successful learning, but to the application of new learning and skills over time to other issues in their daily lives.

In an integrated literacy programme, it is at this point that literacy activities are introduced. Learners will have already developed a level of oral fluency on the theme being discussed and will know what the words they are now learning to read and write, mean. They will have already established the connection between the theme and their immediate environment. Learning to read and write about the theme thus allows for expressing themselves on the theme in two new ways and demonstrates the linkage between literacy skills and the theme.

In a practical vocational skills training programme for rural youth, youth are engaged in active application of the knowledge and skills that they have learned to real life activities dealing with areas such as greenhouse or orchard management, small motor repair or basic masonry. In doing so, they integrate the necessary math and reading requirements, resource and time management with specific occupational skills.

In a farmer field school, farmers in the rice paddy engage in collecting information about the existing ecological system, studying the relationship between a variety of factors influencing the rice crop at its present stage of development, and carefully examining the balance between harmful and beneficial insects. On the basis of the information collected and analysed in the rice paddy, decisions are made about actions that need to be taken on the spot and at that time, rather than in a classroom setting.
**STEP 4: Identification of new learning needs based on reflection and application**

In this step, the facilitator organises an activity or set of activities that help learners individually and collectively reflect on and assess what they have learned and how the learning activities have helped them achieve the goals (indicators of change) identified during the third step of the learning process. At this point of the process learners are engaged in the identification of new learning needs that have emerged as a result of past learning and the application of that learning to specific development issues.

Assessment activities can take many forms. Assessment can be at the individual level with learners getting an opportunity to measure their progress in simple tests or exams, and through peer reviews or other forms of authentic assessment. Assessment can also be carried out by a group of learners. In the integrated pest management example, learners are constantly assessing, making decisions and taking action. In a community-based health education programme, learners engage in discussion to assess what they have learned. Based on these discussions, combined with a visit to the local health post and a review of practices there, they decide they do not want their children vaccinated using needles that are not sterile.

A well-trained facilitator will be able to help learners address ‘next generation’ or emerging learning needs and, in doing so, begin the learning process again with the steps outlined in this paper. This kind of learning promotes the development of sustainable and transferable learning abilities in which learners become engaged in systematically sorting through problems in daily life and learning how to work as a group, and as individuals, to address those problems in positive and proactive ways.

**STEP 5: Transferring new learning, skills and attitudes to the broader community**

In the more recent past, a new facet to programmes have been added where participants are engaged in learning activities to develop strategies for sharing what they have learned with members of the community who could not participate in the ‘formal’ learning programme. In mine risk education and HIV/AIDS education in schools programmes for example, school children regularly organise community education activities for out-of-school youth and other community members. In doing so, many of the same methods used in the school-based programme are adapted by school children for use with their out-of-school peers and other community members who cannot read and write. In some reproductive health-based integrated literacy programmes, women learners have worked with health service delivery personnel and with religious leaders to organise village-wide meetings about HIV/AIDS prevention and education. In
some vocational skills training programmes, youth have worked closely with their families on the adoption of new practices, such as setting up greenhouses, with the youth working with their teachers to become the providers of technical assistance to parents and other family members.

This community outreach and education activity is an information, education, and communication activity, in which the programme participants themselves disseminate the ‘message’ to a broad spectrum of the community. In taking this approach a critical step is being taken in helping build the sustainability of educational activities at the community level as well as in the transfer of learning abilities. The ability of programme participants and learners to successfully and accurately transfer new learning and skills is a clear demonstration of a number of critical elements directly linked to bringing about change. These include elements such as confidence in individual and collective mastery of the information and skills. It also includes the ability to identify and connect with available resources for addressing pressing community issues. Another important element of change is the ability to organise, manage and implement information sharing and education activities. All this is a clear demonstration that communities do care about important issues and are capable of taking action on those issues.

An Example from Cambodia: from Rice Ecology to Human Ecology

An excellent example of sustainable and transferable learning can be found in the Farmer Life Schools programme in Cambodia. In this programme, learning and skills gained through the development and implementation of a sustainable agriculture training programme are transferred and applied to public health education for HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention. By applying ecological principles and learning skills gained in integrated pest management Farmer Field Schools, farmers are able to develop contextually and culturally appropriate ways to respond to the growing HIV/AIDS epidemic in Cambodia.

Cambodia has an estimated HIV/AIDS growth rate of 4 percent. All the precursors for the epidemic are in place. These include structural inequities, widening socio-economic divisions, poverty, low levels of education and poor health. To assist the Cambodian people, the vast majority of whom are farmers, to combat this threat, UNDP and FAO are jointly sponsoring the Farmer Life Schools project, ‘Staying Alive Along Route 5.’ Route 5 is one of the major highways through Cambodia that links Thailand and Vietnam. It forms a perfect conduit for the spread of HIV/AIDS among the poor farming communities along its route.
In both the Farmer Field Schools and Farmer Life Schools the learning programmes build on existing knowledge, local networks, and the strength of the farmers’ own life experiences.

In the Farmer Field School approach activities begin with farmers learning to analyse the ecosystem of their fields and make decisions together about crop management. Understanding the balance between pests and beneficial insects in farm ecosystems is the technical basis for integrated pest management programmes. As a plant protection strategy, integrated pest management emphasises the growth of a healthy crop with the least disruption of agro-ecosystems, thereby encouraging natural pest control mechanisms. The integrated pest management Farmer Field School is an innovative training approach in which farmers gain this knowledge and skill.

The Farmer Field School approach stands apart from standard agriculture extension approaches in that training runs over the course of the entire growing season, takes place in farmers’ fields, and depends on an action-learning approach where farmers work together to observe, analyse, and make decisions about the status of field plots using a process called the Agro-Ecosystem Analysis (AESA). With the help of a trained facilitator, groups of farmers meet each week in the field school to study crops they are growing in their fields. In these study fields, they investigate issues such as plant health and growth stage in relation to water management, nutrients, weather, weed density, diseases, pests and beneficial organisms. In observing the life of the crop, farmers are able to see first hand what is meant by ‘ecological balance’. They also conduct field experiments, work together to solve problems, and make joint decisions based on their observations. This corresponds to a process of human resource development that recognises the primary importance of the farmers’ expertise and experience.

Farmer Life Schools are organised through the networks of farmers who have completed integrated pest management Farmer Field Schools. In a Farmer Life Schools, the farmers’ understanding of the life cycle of their crop is applied to their own communities. Like the Farmer Field School, the Farmer Life School is based on the learning cycles whereby farmers meet together on a regular basis. These regular meetings consist of sets of activities in the village - visits to families, presentations, discussions, special topics and group dynamics. Such activities help farmers recognise and analyse the inter-related elements of their lives in much the same way as they apply their mastery of ecological concepts to their crops. In the Farmer Life Schools, participants examine problems that threaten their livelihoods, assess various options available, and make decisions about actions to take to solve these problems. Issues addressed in Farmer Life Schools range from poverty, loss of land, occupational health associated with pesticide use, family planning, alcoholism, domestic violence, children’s school attendance, to specific diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

The core process within the Farmer Life School is the linking of ecology, group organisation, and student-centred learning applied through what is termed
Human Ecosystem Analysis (HESA). The HESA involves groups of farmers investigating various threats to their lives in the same way that crop pests are investigated in AESA in their fields. Solutions are also identified and categorised in the HESA. Supporting and non-supporting factors are divided in six categories of economy, health, education, social relations, culture and environment. Significantly, farmers themselves run the Farmer Life Schools. These farmers have formed a network along Route 5 to assist them in running Farmer Life Schools.

Farmers know how important health is to their ability to do their daily work. Helping farmers to make more informed decisions about their health is a critical step in helping develop communities that care, in every sense of the word. Communities need to care enough to address health, environmental and economic issues.

In conclusion, This paper has shown that change in learner attitudes and practices across sectors are crucial for sustainable human development. It has also shown how learners can transfer knowledge, skills and learning abilities developed in one sectoral context to other pressing issues at the community level. Communities must be at the centre of efforts to build community networks and resources to address health, environmental and economic issues in the context of educational activities.

Notes

1 This paper presents the views and experiences of Mr. Chij Shresta and his colleagues at the South Asia office of World Education in Cambodia. The field experience referred to is in the context of programmes conducted by World Education.

2 In non-formal education jargon, the ‘must know’ content of a training course is the core information and skills that trainees must gain to be able to perform the jobs or functions of the business or organization that sent them to the training course. The trainers should be held accountable for the ‘must know’ content. ‘Must know’ is contrasted with ‘useful to know’ content and ‘nice to know’ content. These latter types of content can be introduced after the ‘must know’ is grasped and if there is additional time and resources to spend on it.

3 ‘Authentic teaching’ refers to teaching methods that emphasize the use the local context for sources of problems to be solved, for experimental subjects, and materials to make teaching aids; For example: teaching ecology to primary school students in Southeast Asia through teachers and students maintaining and observing experimental rice paddies.

4 In ‘modeling’ a trainer practices, or models, the skills and attitudes that he/she is trying to teach or convey to the trainees.

5 ‘Governance mechanisms’ are the formalized structures and procedures that an organization uses to govern its operations.
‘Change agents’ are organizers, educators, field coordinators who act as catalysts and resource people for community development and learning.

This case example draws from ‘Staying Alive Along Route 5’ a brochure published by the Community IPM Programme, FAO, Phnom Penh, and ‘Guidebook for Facilitators in IPM Farmer Life Schools’ prepared for the programme by Dr. Ou Chhaya M.D. of World Education Cambodia

References

The Challenges of Adult Literacy in E-9 Countries

Wolfgang Vollmann

Mahatma Gandhi, an important politician and founder of the Indian nation, has provided the world with a thought provoking philosophy in the field of basic education, literacy and adult education. He considered education as ‘liberation’ well before Paulo Freire, as a moral path, as a service to the self, the community, and nation; he is also the person who coined the famous concept of the three R’s, a central concept in learning. According to Gandhi, any culture of mind, which includes education, is subservient to the culture of the heart, assimilated by Gandhi with moral and ethical behaviour, deeply rooted in traditional knowledge and culture. These and other statements are value judgements pronounced as such, consciously, with a view to convince the reader, party workers or decision makers, of the authors cultural, social and religious values and which provided him with a subjective, but very coherent history-bound perspective on society and education.

Gandhi looked at change, in the context of a national struggle for freedom and independence, and felt the need for constructing, very systematically a mind-set at national level likely to put educational concerns at the heart of development and nation building. Gandhi deeply felt the threat of the one-dimensional man, and all his writings on education, without exception, bear the stamp of a deeply rooted concern to preserve and even to develop, whatever this would mean or entail, local and national cultural identities. Surprisingly, recent events, such as the explosion of ICTs and Internet, described earlier as a potential threat of modern technologies, seem to have ironically contributed to

The E-9 Countries are China, India, Bangledesh, Pakistan, Indonesia, Nigeria, Egypt, Mexico, and Brazil.
the revival and strengthening of the quest for learning and specifically the
desire to read. For example, in France, the book-publishing sector is exploding
and has in fact doubled, in the course of the last ten years, the number of titles
published yearly. In this country with 60 million inhabitants, some 350 million
books are published every year. A similar trend has been observed in other
industrialised countries, indicating that ICTs and Internet are not destroying the
reading habit, but appear to foster the appetite for further reading and learning.

Gandhi and his writings about literacy are understood best when seen in their
complex historical context of pre- and post-colonial period, when the demand for
education was not perceived as a potential threat to religious, linguistic or other
socio-cultural identities or forms, but as a tool to preserve and to enhance
cultural values and traditions that would later become a binding cement in the
different phases of constructing a nation.

Similarly Gandhi and other thinkers in the field of education in South-Asia
have developed, essentially an egalitarian, democracy-minded, yet culturally
determined model of mass education, which to a certain extent stands in full
contradiction to the western school-based model, strongly influenced by earlier
philosophers, such as Plato, the Greek philosopher, who proposed the building of
a philosophers republic. According to the model of thought developed by Plato in
‘The Republic’, only the social elite of highly educated philosophers should be
entrusted with the difficult task to run the complex business of the state-republic,
such a demand implied the denial of access to education for the vast majority of
the people. This kind of thinking based on Plato’s philosophy of the state and
nation building has flourished under various forms and models of educational
thought conceived at a later stage of time.

Plato’s thoughts have relevance to the concerns of how societies are
responsive to meeting different learning needs. Although more than two
thousand years old, Plato developed two but contradictory lines of educational
theory. The first one stresses the value of education as a major if not the only
reliable instrument to govern the state, and in doing so he obviously became the
first politician-philosopher to declare education as the founding element for
those who are put in charge of governing a complex political structure. For the
first time the concept of education had acquired the status of a basic tool for
constructing and running a government. But Plato’s second thought, derived
from the first, was to restrain education to a small group of the society.
According to him and his followers over the centuries, too much education given
to too many people would, at one point in time, endanger the state and its
government as it was likely to lead to people developing new and critical
thinking, detrimental to the permanent forms and ideas of the state itself. Of
course one needs to consider the term ‘education’ in the Greek sense of the word
and in its historical context, whereby reading and writing, for example, were not
given the same status as they are given today; these two activities were clearly
assigned a minor task as compared to the conceptual and political thinking of
the governing philosopher. Although this ideal of a political and educational
republic, described by Plato and others, never materialised, the idea was
developed and reproduced throughout the centuries, to the extent that the idea of
the ‘philosophers republic’ found its strongest supporters in pre-industrial Europe when education and specially mass-education became a threatening possibility. Plato linked his thinking on education with a political vision of history, whereby ‘all change is evil and rest is divine’, and thus appealed very much to those, who despite their wish to praise progress and change, were reluctant to admit that such historical move could only materialise if fully shared by all members of society. In his book on ‘The Open Society and its Enemies’, the British philosopher Karl Popper has made an excellent demonstration of the very negative influence exercised by Plato’s philosophy on modern political and educational thought, in describing point by point basic elements of modern thinking about concepts of change, progress, development and governance, that find their source of inspiration in the thoughts of Plato.

During the period of colonisation, educational thinking that further developed Plato’s ideas essentially focused on the reproduction of social elites and education institutions were built for the sole purpose to fabricate the future political and social elites of the country. Later, after independence, (in South Asia and Africa) or after the second world war for many countries, the focus remained on developing primary education first; and to make matters worse, heavy investments and sacrifices were made in favour of secondary and higher education, at the cost of the vast majority of people who were essentially illiterate and confronted by a discriminatory policy of their own governments. It is at this point in time, at the confluence of the history of thought and the history of major political events that the nexus of the educational problems are confronted.

Many former colonial powers, as well as multilateral and bi-lateral donors, banks and other international NGOs, have encouraged the government in this region and elsewhere to consider formal primary education as the cutting edge or the sole engine likely to drive the educational locomotive forward. However, neither economic nor educational analysis can sustain such reasoning, which tends to be based on value judgements rather than factual evidence. Such mode of thoughts has its roots in those philosophical thoughts described above and reflected in theories about leadership and education based on preconceived social and political assumptions, which may be characterised by such terms as ‘exclusion, and class-oriented thinking’. For example, in Afghanistan, devastated by twenty years of war and confronted by an average illiteracy rate of more than 80 percent, some reconstruction efforts are being made to target ICTs, Internet, secondary and higher education, apparently with the aim to facilitate and even accelerate Afghanistan’s access to modernity. In reality however, such efforts, by willingly ignoring the educational needs of the masses, are in fact favouring the ‘social reconstruction’ of the urban elites. The time has come to acknowledge the fact that is substantiated by an enormous volume of evidence that only those countries have advanced on the road to progress and development, which have adopted a fully comprehensive and two-pronged educational strategy i.e. the simultaneous support to primary and literacy (adult) education and with forms of education be given the appropriate and equal share of available resources.
The concept of mass education and literacy for all, though developed in the West, in the course of the industrial revolution in the 19th century, and achieved to some extent because of the economic necessities, was taken up by literally all thinkers, freedom fighters and politicians involved in process of de-colonisation of numerous countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. (Bolivar, Fanon, Gandhi)

In taking up the thread of Gandhi’s thinking on this subject, which is supposed to lead to the present state of literacy and adult learning in Asia, it is important to question certain issues or concepts. To some the idea of mass literacy or education for all appears permanent or ‘all-time’ feature of educational thought and action. As is seen, this was not always so. The concepts of mass education for all, especially all adults, including the idea of continuous adult learning throughout life, are of relatively recent origin; but they already have become an all-prevailing social and political phenomena.

In the twenties and thirties, based on his profound knowledge of local and national constraints, and dominating currents of thought, Gandhi elaborated a theory of national action with a view to educate all adults, notwithstanding their creed, language or origin. Gandhi said, ‘that basic education must become literally education for life.’ At the same time he never forgot to remind his listeners or readers that such basic education for all, and especially for all women, should not and never shall, destroy the essence and values of traditional cultures and beliefs.

**E-9 Countries in Asia**

A good illustration of what has been so vigorously proposed by Gandhi and others, of the need, but also the difficulties, of achieving literacy for all by using traditional knowledge and local languages, are the E-9 countries in Asia, where considerable progress in EFA, and especially literacy, is matched by equally important commitments to EFA by all political leaders, whatever their political beliefs or strategies for national development. None of the five Asian E-9 could be accused of having neglected, when in the process of planning and implementing literacy policies and programmes, the urgent task to increasingly integrate and use traditional knowledge and social structures in the quest for literacy for all. After a long series of failures, due to ill-conceived national campaigns, the lesson has been retained and local or sub-provincial approaches have been developed very successfully.

Despite visible progress, the problem of staggering high illiteracy rates in South-Asia is seriously compounded by equally high dropout and repetition rates in formal primary schooling, to the extent that primary education has become a permanent provider of ‘unlimited’ numbers of neo-illiterates. What is really happening in primary education? School access and retention have been affected in the last years of school expansion by factors involving both in-school and out-
of-school elements. In-school factors may include low teacher quality, lack of equipment, long school distance, inadequate sanitary conditions, especially for girls; out-of-school factors refer mostly to direct costs and opportunity costs. Some countries have developed policies to improve the internal quality and efficiency of primary schools, while they have made the painful experience of not being able to influence out-of-school environs, particularly for poor and marginalised groups such as rural populations, girls and ethnic minorities. At the same time countries have found that NFE could be highly effective not only in addressing the inadequacies of formal schooling, in terms of retention and completion rates, adaptability and functionality, but also in catering to the specific learning needs of different target groups: school-drop-outs, or those children who did not get enrolled in school, youths and adults who relapse into illiteracy and those who have never been trained.

To achieve the literacy goals set by the World Education Forum in Dakar, (April 2000) which called for a 50 percent improvement in the levels of adult literacy by 2015, it estimated that the five E-9 countries in Asia taken together would have to reduce their adult illiteracy rate from the current level of some 45 percent to about 14 percent in 2015. Compared to the progress made during the past decade, i.e. since the Jomtien Conference, and in order to meet the literacy goal set in Dakar, the E-9 would have to increase the effort 1.3 times in general, and 1.4 times for women.

The challenge varies from country to country. While China and Indonesia could meet the Dakar literacy goal by maintaining almost the same level of effort as in the past decade, more efforts are requested for other E-9 countries. For Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India, future efforts required in increasing the number of adult literates should be more than two times the previous ones; in general, efforts required to meet the literacy goals would be relatively more important for women than for men, especially in terms of advocacy and awareness raising.

It is interesting to remark that for all the E-9 countries in Asia, the effort required is greater than that required for universalisation of primary education. This means that, in addition to the already heavy burden of universalisation of primary education, which represents the guarantee of the literacy skills for the young adults, more efforts are needed to develop adult and NFE so as to reach those children, youths and adults whose learning needs may not be adequately addressed by conventional or formal education.

Lessons from the different countries’ experiences show how difficult it is to implement policies for the eradication of adult illiteracy; to be effective, such policies require clear identification of priority illiterate populations, which, depending on countries, could be a particular age group, a disadvantaged group such as rural women, the disabled, rural or semi-urban poor, ethnic minorities or indigenous populations, etc. Obviously the literacy approaches need to be tailored to specific economic and cultural contexts so as to be relevant and
attractive for the potential learners. Another lesson learnt from recent studies on the consequences of literacy, is that local initiatives yield better results in general, as they are more attentive to local cultural, social, religious and linguistic needs, in addition they enhance their effectiveness when future learners are fully associated with the planning and implementation of learning programmes, including the production of literacy materials. The latter item is crucially important in rural areas, where a literate environment is not yet established or in existent. However evidence has also shown from recent studies carried out in Punjab, Pakistan, that change, in terms of improved income and livelihoods, is slow to come if not sustained by a dynamic local government willing to develop supportive literacy strategies, in terms of advocacy and attentiveness to the learner’s needs.

In addition to local programmes and initiatives, national level responsibility is more than ever a strategically important issue, in particular in view of nationwide advocacy and detailed monitoring of literacy developments. In addition governments need to be in a position to obtain precise information on literacy levels and developments, because of their direct and immediate impact on the quality of primary education. Indeed it has to be stressed that all trends in literacy will be strongly influenced by the dynamics both in the development of primary education, and in the ageing and mortality of the oldest age-groups, in which the majority of illiterate adults are concentrated. The moral and political responsibility of the central government to conceive and implement literacy programmes, especially at local level, also implies to promote and sustain national and sub-national debates on literacy, NFE and adult learning, and their intrinsic link with other fields of education, in particular primary education. Support from the international community is required, and in this connection the launching of the UN Literacy decade will have to play a considerable role, both in terms of advocacy and as an observatory.

References

‘Lifewide’ and Lifelong Learning: Linking Literacy to Sustainable Development

Kevin M. Lillis

Introduction

Literacy is the building block of lifelong and ‘lifewide’ learning. The question is therefore what policies and institutional arrangements need to be put in place at both the Ministry and community levels to promote multi-sectoral involvement in lifelong learning. This implies that literacy must respond to poverty, gender equality, HIV/AIDS, violence against women and inter-ethnic violence, environmental degradation, and other areas of sustainable development.

The paper has three main strands. Firstly, it suggests direct linkages between literacy and poverty and builds on the utility of the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach, as a conceptual framework for increasing an understanding of the synergies between ‘literacy’ and ‘livelihoods’. It suggests that this offers a potential way forward for adding value within the delivery of programmes linking literacy to sustainable development in Nepal. Secondly, it derives strategic directions from lessons learned and proposes a crosscutting approach incorporating ‘literacy, communication and information’ as central components of a rights-based methodology with potential to bring advantages to the poor. Thirdly, it examines the potential entry points for such an approach through new programme development or through a strategy of integration into existing or new initiatives.

This paper recognises and stresses that the most appropriate mechanism for achieving literacy is the national education system. The under-performance of this moribund system combined with the high incidence of adult illiteracy calls
for a twin-track approach. This requires priority investments in formal schooling combined with an approach to post-schooling ‘literacy, communication and information’ advocated in this paper. The paper is in two parts. Firstly it elaborates the concept of literacy and livelihoods. Secondly, it proposes an action plan.

Elaborating the Concept

The context in Nepal
The depressing development indicators of Nepal are familiar to those engaged with the development agenda. Whilst specific data may be elaborated and debated, the intention here is to illustrate the starkness of literacy indicators. Given the paucity of existing databases and a familiar tendency to manipulate data, there is a wide feeling that no reliable figure exists.

Table 1 Literacy in Nepal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interpreting the data is a challenge, as is interpreting the underlying causalities. What is clear is the massive incidence of ‘illiteracy’ as well as the wide gender differential. Regional, caste and ethic differentials do not appear above - but several studies illuminate them. The 2001 national census may provide a more coherent database, and assist the interpretations.

It has been argued globally that there are a similar number of poor people (1 billion), hungry people (1 billion) and illiterate people (1 billion). Whilst there may not be a direct correlation between them, the overlaps are likely to be large. Considerable evidence exists to indicate that these groups are indeed likely to be the same people.

Globally, illiteracy is seen as both a symptom and a cause of poverty. Endeavours to overcome illiteracy are likely to have discernible effects upon poverty eradication with explicit linkages to the international development targets, over and above the specific education targets. For example, there is substantial data on the links between illiteracy and ill health, taking years of schooling as a proxy indicator for ‘education’. There are close linear relations between infant mortality and years of schooling. Most significantly, this approach can ensure that women’s empowerment and gender equality are
actively pursued in the mainstream of key development activities, in accordance with the gender target strategy paper.

Although it is not difficult to perceive that the Nepal picture reflects the global picture, there is still very little specific research done so far to map profiles, correlation and causalities between literacy and poverty.

**The fundamental challenge**

The low human development indicators for Nepal present a positive fundamental challenge. The first and foremost challenge is to develop people’s abilities to fluently read information about new possibilities, instructions, warnings and important public notices; accurately calculate and read large bills, debts, loans and interest; write confidently to give or request information or to seek redress; and to use these abilities to encourage and benefit one’s family and community.

In the day-to-day living and ceaseless socio-economic developments of today’s societies, to lack or even to have less than adequate mastery of them constitutes a handicap amounting to exclusion and deprivation. This is particularly true of Nepal, where a well-schooled minority is able to reap the advantages from the ramifications of development. By contrast, the majority - poorly schooled or unschooled - remain unable to capitalise on available and new knowledge, including ICT and opportunities presented by globalisation. Enabling more men and women to master and use the four abilities suggested above is clearly part of the holistic development for the country.

This re-iterates the need for the twin-track approach. In the absence of a quality system of education and training, a more radical and fundamentally different alternative is explored in this paper.

**Limitations to the concept of literacy**

There are two strands to the notion of ‘limitations’. One of them is the limited conceptualisation and the other is the limits to the potential for implementation. Both suggest the need for realism about ‘literacy for livelihood’ for responding to the enormity of poverty elimination.

The terminology concerning the literacy debates has shifted considerably. Just as the concept of ‘livelihoods’ has different connotations, so different people use concepts of literacy with different degrees of meaning. The terms ‘literacy’ and ‘illiteracy’ often create a stigmatised effect. Moreover, it is known (not least from the Community Literacy Project) that people often described as being ‘illiterate’ in fact have their own social practices of ‘literacy’ and its usage. The paper broadly discusses ‘those people considered by the State to be ‘illiterate’- but is wide open to challenge on this dimension. In addition, it is important to avoid the risks of reifying ‘literacy’. It is a dynamic and changing process - not a static, unchanging state. It is complex and multi-dimensional.
For a number of reasons, no clear overall picture exists of the national provision of programmes of ‘Literacy’ in Nepal. There is a plethora of programmes, massively under-conceptualised and wildly uncoordinated. As with the global picture, these have had a very limited impact in terms of reducing the high incidence of illiteracy or having a wider impact on poverty alleviation. A national audit might be an initial step towards answering why there have been such limited returns to investments in programmes of ‘literacy’. Without such an audit, it remains unsafe to argue confidently or otherwise about ‘returns’ in the Nepali context.

Some research in Nepal suggests that significant minorities of ‘graduates’ of programmes in Nepal have derived considerable benefits (Comings, Smith, Shrestha 1995). Better empirical evidence is, however, awaited and may emerge from these on-going studies. Some features of existing programmes are clear enough: the technical orientation of the State-driven model of NFE; a centrist, supply-driven approach; poorly trained, supported and rewarded instructors; the absence of a rigorous curriculum model that builds over-dependence on inputs and materials; inappropriate non-contextualised ways of teaching and of materials development; and weak analysis of type and scale of the demand.

Given the scenario of extremely low rates of literacy, it is important to stress that although there are many examples of good practice, much of that good practice is contained within small, innovative projects that are highly geared and can demonstrate significant rates of return within small-scale areas. These are likely to be demand-led, flexible and highly responsive, particularly to considerations of local language. They contextualise literacy within the lives of the poor in terms of reading materials, relevance and ways of learning and finally they are integrated within other development work.

A key issue here is responsiveness to demand. Research evidence clearly shows that higher outcomes are likely when literacy work is linked to people’s own identified needs and aspirations.

These small-scale programmes fit the conception of an ideal community-focused poverty alleviation model. The successful approaches may almost all depend upon the charisma and vision of the lead agent of change. Whilst there is a lot to learn from such local, small-scale initiatives, the conditions of their success may be the very reasons why they are unlikely to be replicable. A great challenge lies in going to scale, influencing national provision and national performance. Lessons can be learned from successful examples of rapid scaling up. It might well be that achieving accountability and good management is more important than the idiosyncrasies of small-scale initiatives.

However, it should be stressed that there are enormous expectations of what the national programmes of literacy can achieve. These have been and might remain unrealistic. Clearly approaches and systems of NFE and literacy cannot fully compensate for the school system incapacity to deliver universal cohorts of educated graduates. The most appropriate mechanism for inculcating literacy,
values and attitudes remains the national system of education and training. This re-emphasises the calls for priority investment in sectoral planning and development.

**Sustainable livelihoods principles**

A major part of the argument about ‘limited returns’ from literacy initiatives was that the programmes were ‘de-contextualised from peoples lives’ (DFID Kathmandu Report 2000). Sustainable livelihoods principles offer a potential way forward, providing the very opportunity to contextualise literacy within the livelihoods of the poor. ‘The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) comprises a set of main principles of best practice and a framework in order to help understand and analyse people’s lives. Many of the lessons learned [about] ‘best practice’ for literacy programmes…cohere with the underlying principles of the SLA such as being people-focused, holistic, building on people’s strengths, dynamic and sustainable. The SLA framework can provide a useful tool in helping locate literacy within people’s livelihoods, in relation to their assets, the livelihoods strategies which they pursue and the wider environment in which they operate, [although] there is a need to modify the framework to different contexts.’ (Kathmandu Report 2000: 13).

Interestingly, traditional conceptualisations place literacy firmly within the ‘human capital’ box. However, literacy is more than a ‘human capital’ asset. It also contributes to people’s self-esteem, and their ability to participate in networks. It is thus a ‘social capital’ asset. Moreover, it enables people to enhance their access to social resources - enabling them to exploit resources better, as the introduction argued. Such benefits of ‘empowerment’ extend beyond the individual and into the family and neighbourhood. Studies show that literate women have more influence in family decisions and confidence to speak up during community discussions. In the absence of higher-level opportunities through formal education, these participants can gain substantial benefits through access to targeted programmes of literacy, communications and information.

There remains a considerable challenge to undertake further mapping of the SLA to demonstrate the wider implications of the place of literacy within and across the ‘assets’ within the SLA model. Such mapping may determine the sustained added-value that can be derived from the SLA. What is eye-catching is the resonance and synergies between the experiences contained within much contemporary literacy research - widely referred to as the ‘new literacy studies’ - and the livelihoods principles. Whilst there may be an advanced understanding of what constitutes financial and social capitals and potential links to income-generation, the human capital dimension of the SLA remains a relatively unfilled back box. This becomes exceedingly important in view of the urgent concern in carrying forward literacy within a livelihood approach.
The strengths of sustainable livelihood in this context are the principles it entails which enables building on the best practice and communicating to ‘non-literacy experts’ the approach to adhere to. It is also presents an overall framework that helps systematise thinking which enables practitioners to locate where literacy fits into peoples lives and with other development activities. As a dynamic tool, it helps to organise thinking and to systematise complexity rather than, as it stands, it gives a definitive map of where literacy may always fit into peoples’ livelihoods. Finally it also serves as a potential vehicle for cross-sectoral communication.

**Strategic directions based upon lessons learned**

Whilst accepting that the agendas have moved forward, this paper argues that the lessons learned from experience must lie at the heart of any endeavour to improve programme performance in the literacy domain. More attention should be given to context and relevant and appropriate teaching styles and materials. Literacy must be placed within coherent national and local policy, planning and frameworks. This is important for ensuring a supportive institutional base. Evaluation systems need strengthening - with attention to both qualitative and quantitative impact data. More attention should be given to programme conceptualisation and design. It is important for new programmes to seek relevant entry points. Programmes need to be based upon recognition of existing knowledge and on an understanding of how adults learn and they should be responsive to the language of the learners and incorporating the perceived need for pluralistic language approaches in multilingual communities. Literacy can be an effective vehicle of empowerment for poverty reduction.

Contextualisation and improved design considerations are fundamental and axiomatic. If that were to be achieved, however, all programmes might demonstrate greater returns. This is not specific to literacy. Most importantly, there is urgent need for a re-interpretation of ‘Literacy’; to assess prior knowledge and build upon it; to understand ‘how adults learn’, and theories of cognition of poor adults. There is need to take into account uses of literacy; and fundamentally to locate an approach based upon strategies for communication and information, over and above ‘alphabetisation’.

There is an urgent need to re-emphasise the result of the Kathmandu conference which suggested that the concept of ‘Literacy’ needs clarifying within the concepts of ‘communication and information’ strategies; ‘Literacy’ and ‘illiteracy’ are not only about reading and writing skills; oral literacies and oral/aural skills are fundamentally important. People use a whole variety of ‘literacies’ in different contexts and increasingly diverse uses of literacies will be influenced by the impetus of technological change. Strategies for ‘Literacy’ could therefore profitably build upon existing communicative practices, which are many and varied - and not often conceptualised as ‘literacy practices’.
These potentially provide the building blocks for a re-conceptualised approach to literacy, to overcome the poor rates of return characteristic of the past. These emerge as the fundamental principles around which ‘new’ and ‘better’ initiatives may be designed. That is not to argue that everything is clear-cut.

**Literacy for livelihoods**
In exploring the linkages and synergies between the concepts of ‘literacy’ and of ‘livelihoods’ there is need in cautioning that neither concept is amenable to simple definition and there remains a lack of precise and collective understanding of the concepts, linkages and approach. The brand name ‘literacy for livelihoods’ that has emerged as a potential orthodoxy is in danger of being used too dogmatically and inflexibly. An endeavour to interpret literacy too narrowly would not be constructive - particularly until a much clearer picture exists about how literacy and communication practices fit into the SLA. What is important is the recognition of the inter-relationship and synergies and the potential contributions of those to poverty reduction strategies.

**Literacy and poverty reduction**
Investments in ‘literacy’ or ‘literacy-for-livelihoods’ programmes alone will not eliminate global poverty or poverty in Nepal. However, it should still be recognised that reducing illiteracy will contribute to the reduction of poverty. The argument for ‘reducing illiteracy’ is less persuasive as a means for reducing poverty than the justification: ‘providing knowledge and information along with the tools to get and make use of more knowledge and information’. Hence the importance of placing the literacy debate within the wider communication and information debate.

This presents a dilemma. The poor are acutely conscious of the opportunity costs of their time. Individuals are constantly faced with trade-offs. For example, rural electrification may be determinant of opportunities to access literacy. Individuals must choose whether daylight is best used for schooling or other livelihood activities. They need to be convinced of the benefits of investing their time in activities associated with learning how to read, write and calculate. Women especially trade these off against the multitude of household chores they face. A convincing connection between these activities and their livelihoods will need a clear demonstration. If a livelihood derives from labouring exclusively in somebody else’s fields, such a connection might prove difficult.

The evidence suggests caution about subscribing simplistic causal relationships between ‘illiteracy’ and poverty. Research highlights a correlation between poverty, economic development and a ‘traditional’ view of literacy. The recent World Bank report, *Including the 900 Million+*, shows that substantial numbers of adult learners in a range of literacy (viz. ‘learning’) programmes
make gains in key areas that impact upon poverty reduction. Findings by Easton (2001) that ‘mastering the technology of writing’ balanced and harmonised amongst other larger environmental elements marks a threshold in local abilities to make decentralisation work.

The Literacy for Livelihoods approach provides an opportunity to address gender disparities. It accepts the horrifyingly gender insensitive nature of much provision. This presents a phenomenal challenge. There are examples of successful work in Nepal portrayed in the December 2000 research. This paper also flags the Kathmandu summary (p. 11-12) of specific gains made by women as a result of participation in literacy programmes.

It is important to stress, however, that all these gains require rigorous verification. The World Bank is endeavouring to assess how instruction in the skills of literacy and numeracy may be linked to the development of skills to enhance livelihoods. Some feel that there are dangers that this may prove narrowly technical rather than interpretative. An allied danger is that it may lead towards a restricted ‘literacy/vocational skills’ approach, rather than the broader conceptualisations underpinning a ‘literacy and livelihoods’ strategy. Importantly, early signals from this research are of the surprising extent to which agencies (ILO, FAO, IFAD) include numeracy and literacy instruction in their skills programmes; but how little inter-agency sharing there is of this experience.

Towards an Action Plan

The above discussion raises substantial questions about the nexus between Communication, Information and Literacy, as well as their loci within a livelihoods framework. This now requires clarification about entry points and courses of action.

There is a basic question of whether entry points are through ‘literacy’ initiatives or ‘literacy for livelihoods’. Is it ‘either/or’? Is it into wider thematic areas, or into sectors? Should entry be through ‘new’ initiatives, start-ups, pipeline projects and programmes? What is meant by ‘communication and information’? Where does the mass media fit? Newspapers? Wall newspapers? Radio? Suitcase radios? Where do informal networks of exchange fit? These are challenges for clarification. Two possibilities are suggested. One is new programme development; the other is a strategy for integration.

New programme development

This supports for new programmes of literacy, based upon the principles suggested above and appropriately designed. Given the limited returns to the plethora of literacy initiatives and the relatively moribund approach of many
programmes as well as the state the Non-Formal Education (NFE) sector, there appears to be little point in attempting to band-aid them and subsequently replicate on-going initiatives. A national audit should be a pre-requisite for engagement and subsequent needs analysis, possibly leading to reform of these programmes. However, this would require the political will from the government and its institutions to undertake that as a basis for planning a national literacy policy. Without the Department of NFE as a key stakeholder, only limited leverage can be applied by NGOs and CBOs, and/or civil society alliances. Given the weak state provision as reflected in the low impact indicators illustrated at the beginning of the paper and without a coherent national framework within which to undertake programme development, it is pointless to suggest a programme development strategy. The concept note, therefore, does not support a strategy of new programme development. However, elsewhere, there are important lessons to learn.

A strategy of integration
A fundamentally different approach is the one that suggests integration of ‘Literacy, Communication and Information’ strategies as incorporated within a range of cross-sectoral activities - either existing initiatives; or planned initiatives.

(a) Integration within existing initiatives.
Many on-going programmes undertake activities associated with human development, training, capacity building, communication and information either for their project staff or for their ‘user groups’. However, the human capacity of many of the programmes appears unable to respond to the innovative demands. Are their training designs sufficiently sophisticated? How well informed are they about theories of cognition of poor adults? Often, it appears, the protagonists fall back upon ‘accusations’ of the poor performance of the formal system of education and training. Often they lament and blame the poor entry and exit skills of their users, without the capability to address this.

Nevertheless, there is a relatively tight fit between this work and the concept of ‘communication and information’ being proposed. Indeed, some have now recruited communication specialists to their teams; others buy them in. Almost all this work is both project and sector-specific in focus - albeit generic and non-technical in approach. There is little cross sharing of approach, although the Community Literacy and Community Forestry projects partnership is one visible exception. There is also very little bona fide multi-disciplinarity, although there are visible examples. The already determined frames, goals, strategies and mind-sets of existing programmes present barriers to the adoption of the notions portrayed in this paper. The dangers of attempting a superficial bolt-on are all too familiar. Substantial post hoc improvement of the human development work
of existing initiatives appears unlikely. The paper, thus, rejects this option in favour of the integration strategy proposed below.

(b) Adding value by integrating with new or planned initiatives.
Many new programmes have an explicit concern to address the areas of human development seen as critical to delivering the poverty reduction agenda. A new wave of projects carry multi-disciplinary teams to address such overt goals. ‘Communication’ and ‘social mobilisation’ are high in the rhetoric and there is concern to meet the human rights agenda. Certainly, lack of access to ‘information’ is likely to be a significant livelihood constraint; as well as a major impediment to meeting the international development targets goals.

It thus, seems, feasible and potentially productive to explore the ways in which the concepts discussed here may add value to this new work. The paper advocates the integration of ‘Communication + Information’ strategies within ‘new’ projects, programmes and initiatives as a potential means of answering urgent concern that ‘literacy be addressed within a livelihoods approach’. In addition, the partnership and inter-disciplinary approaches provide the potential for sustainable long-term impact. For example, the Community Learning Programme, which adopts much of this approach, requires partners with a longer-term horizon.

The rapid changes of globalisation bring threats and promises, as the White Paper Globalisation for the Poor, highlights. The increasing impetus of technological change will also add increasing complexity to literacy practices and processes, including pressures for ICTs. Finding leverage upon this extremely complex new and changing environment proves a challenge.

**Conclusion**

This paper advocates an innovative ‘Communication + Information’ approach to avoid past pitfalls and respond to the challenges of the rights-based environment. The approach, it is argued, will enable responses to unmet challenges in this environment. A cross-cutting approach, in which programmes rather than projects take priority, provides an ideal vehicle for taking it forward. Within this, the complexity of inter-relationships of partnerships must be recognised and given priority.

This is not to under-estimate the considerable challenge of getting people to adopt a flexible, cross-cutting, innovative approach as well as overcoming ingrained assumptions and attitudes, and the barriers of fears.

This paper also proposes a potential methodology to enable the poorest to use the tools of literacy to identify, seize upon and develop opportunities for improving the lives of themselves, their families, their communities and wider societies.
References


Non-Formal Education for Inclusive Democracy: Enabling Systemic Development in Cambodia

Anne Bernard

The Government of Cambodia is committed to the goals of basic education for all by 2015 and to a significant reduction in poverty and growth of democratic institutions beginning immediately. None are policies that can be met unless the non-formal education sector becomes a capable and legitimate partner. The Department of Non-formal Education (DNFE) is a potentially crucial player in this. To be so, it needs to be able to implement progressively more efficient and comprehensive outreach to those seeking basic primary education through complementary programmes, as well as to those seeking to move out of poverty and participate fully as citizens through literacy and life skills programmes.

This paper analyses the policy and institutional environment of non-formal education in Cambodia. It also presents recommendations which focus on situating non-formal education strategies globally and nationally to address poverty and social exclusion, generating partnerships, setting programme priorities, developing implementation plans as well as evaluation and monitoring systems. It addresses the key issues of enabling system development and institutionalisation of effective initiatives in non-formal education.

Non-Formal Education within the National Policy Context

The relationship between national policy and non-formal education in Cambodia is a direct and a necessary one. The people to be served by NFE are those who
also matter most in terms of overall national development. Most of them live in poverty in the rural areas, the geographic base of much of the country's development potential. Most are vulnerable, poor and socially exploited women and girls, the people most responsible for the well being of families and of the next generation. A majority of ethnic minorities and those living in remote areas are represented in this population, people who will be the ultimate test of the country's ability to establish an inclusive democracy.

Under EFA, all of these people have the right to the basic learning necessary for independent action to improve the quality of their lives. The more fully they are able to achieve this, the more fully they will be able to contribute to and participate in all other pro-poor and democratic development initiatives. All action to increase incomes, promote participation and enhance health and family security require increasingly broad and better knowledge, skills and attitudes on the part of all citizens if they are to be effective and sustained. Non-formal education has the potential to contribute directly to policy priorities of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and democratic development by increasing the ability of adults and out-of-school youth to take advantage of work opportunities, to create their own and to accommodate innovations.

The most efficient and cost effective means of educating the population is probably through an effective and inclusive formal school system for the young. But it is long-term. Non-formal education is also important in making an immediate difference to enabling policy outcomes to be achieved now, not just in 10 years time as children complete their schooling. The need for creating a strong base of human resource capacity is too urgent to make investing in only one education channel a viable option.

Increasing the effectiveness of non-formal education also contributes to the development of this formal system. The two are not in competition. The formal system is now far from complete or fully effective; it will not be so before 2001. Nor does it have a place for youth and adults for whom formal schooling is too late, too expensive, inaccessible or inappropriate. While the non-formal system is mandated directly to reach these excluded populations, by doing so, it also enhances the capacity of the school to reach and retain children. Parents (especially mothers) who have the opportunity to gain the knowledge and confidence of their own learning come to see learning as a more valuable activity, and seek to involve their children, increasing demand and chances of parent-school collaboration. More people that are able to read, calculate and access information creates a generally more ‘school-friendly’ enabling environment.

Cambodia’s education strategic plan on non-formal education

The goal of Cambodia’s Education Strategic Plan (ESP) is ‘to develop an inclusive, easily accessible and high quality service, which is available to all’, as
a means of enabling, ‘economic growth, improved employment prospects and income-generating opportunities’. The Plan also recognises education as necessary, to realising improved family wealth and nutrition and family planning, and to ‘engendering democratic traditions’ (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) 2001: 7). As such, it is clearly right in making education a ‘central tenet’ in all efforts to end the marginalisation of vulnerable and under-served groups. It is rather less strong in appearing to limit inclusive education to ‘inclusive schooling’ (MoEYS 2001: 12). A critical gap in the framework is in not giving due recognition to education as a system made up of core delivery components of formal schools and non-formal programmes. As parts of a whole, each needs to act ‘in-tandem’; to evolve in terms of its own organisational and professional pedagogical requirements, but with an open and effective link between them.

As suggested above, the need to make education more available, and the education system more inclusive, is indisputable. The problems underlying this need are enormous and the implications of not taking action will certainly be tragic. The estimated functional illiteracy rate (combining the fully and semi-illiterate) of 15-45 year olds is 63 percent; the annual school dropout rate 350,000 (and many of these are the youngest children). The 1999 survey estimated that only about 2 percent of the adult illiterate population is being effectively reached. In such a situation, it is critical that all decisions around policy, legitimacy and resources must take equally into account both delivery systems.

The Environment for Non-formal Education

Overall the environment for non-formal education in Cambodia remains a relatively fragile one. It is recognised in policy as a crucial tool for strategic socio-economic development, but tends to be still under-recognised as such in practice. It is a sector to which considerable expectations are applied, in being mandated to overcome the poverty and exclusion facing a majority of the population through its education programmes, but one which continues, in practice, to be under-funded and accorded too few professional resources. As a result, its programming remains somewhat of patchwork of discrete activities with limited reach and impact.

As described in the earlier reports, and confirmed by the present review, this situation seems less the result of failed political will, than of the enormity of the problem and the very scarce human, institutional and financial resources available to address it. The scope of illiteracy and exclusion from basic education remain overwhelming. In quantitative terms, the numbers are daunting: 63 percent or 3 million people are illiterate or marginally literate, with more being pushed into this category annually by a school system unable to provide either
the physical facilities or the quality of teaching needed to serve all children. In qualitative terms, the suffering created is equally severe. Those affected lack both the immediate knowledge and skills to take the best advantage of any opportunities their environment might offer, as well as the tools needed to change that environment. The country also suffers, unable to realise its development and stability goals as long as the majority of its citizens are denied the capacity to contribute.

The situation is improving. The new pro-poverty (PRSP) policy and increasing attention to the analyses coming out of the EFA-Dakar process are beginning to create a greater awareness of the critical role out-of-school learning plays in enabling sustained development in all social and economic sectors. These are leading to higher policy profile and greater donor commitment to providing education opportunities to the most excluded communities, especially focusing on functional literacy and programmes for helping children get into school. A number of smaller participatory NFE projects, especially those managed through the NGOs and with donors are maturing sufficiently to be seen as worth pursuing on a national scale.

The challenges persist. While previous analyses have all recommended the types of actions required to address the illiteracy problem, not enough emphasis has perhaps been given to the crucial matter of capacity development within the non-formal education system itself. As a result, while there is considerable evidence that officers know what needs to happen, there is less evidence that many know how to make it happen or have the skills needed to follow through. Coupled with the persistent lack of reliable and comprehensive information about where the effective programmes are and what kinds of factors are involved with them, the limited capacity to create, share and expand effective methods is seriously diminishing the extent with which the ‘best practices’ are emerging or leading to coherent, co-ordinated and cumulative impact.

**Institutional barriers remain**

The full range of government departments could play a significant role in advancing the NFE sector has not yet been fully recognised. While the DNFE and Ministry of Women’s and Veterans’ Affairs (MWVA) are moving ahead, on their own and in joint action, there is little evidence of other key Ministries doing so: health, social affairs, rural development, and agriculture, for example are key as both community learning themes and potential delivery agencies. Though the review was not able to include discussions with these sectors, the DNFE did not indicate examples of collaborative or systematic involvement with them.

At the same time, there is also evidence of a certain degree of competition within and among responsibility centres in terms of target groups and programme areas. Two areas where weak co-operation has potential to prove problematic in terms of effective use of scarce Education Sector Support Programme (ESSP) resources are those of work-related training and support to learning of young children. Basic vocational training in support of subsistence income generation for out-of-school youth and illiterate adults is not yet
adequately distinguished in target, content or delivery agency from that of the more sophisticated secondary school level technical-vocation training. Similarly, early childhood education delivered as parenting skills through family intervention remains insufficiently recognised as very different in venue, design and methodology, and delivery agency from pre-school education for those children wanting preliminary exposure to primary school.

Capacity development strategies can create their own barriers to effective organisational development. Given the decimation of much of the professional capacity in Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge period, it is not unreasonable that many of the inputs over the past twenty years have concentrated on technical assistance. Much of this has without doubt been of good quality; certainly many of the analytical and programme design documents produced through, and used by, the DNFE are theoretically valid and technically sound.

At the same time, many of these include policy directions, programming areas and activities, which are still well beyond the capacities and resources available in most of the NFE system to implement them. The balance between technical assistance input and local absorptive capacity is a critical and delicate one. Good ideas provided in a flexible, facilitative way and cast just beyond the level of current practice can be both a good catalyst and a necessary support to organisational learning. Those same ideas, provided through less easily accessible or adoptable ways, and cast at a level far beyond current practice, can have the opposite effect.

To some degree, this latter seems to be happening in the Department. Many ‘best practice’ strategies, designs and methods are available, largely through UNESCO, but tend to be looked at and applied as all-in solutions before local-level development problems and learning needs have been thoroughly assessed. They are being used less effectively than they should be as ‘good options’ to be tried and tested incrementally as and when appropriate. This is leading in some cases to an over-estimation of what can realistically be done in the Cambodian context and to a certain degree of impatience within the Department of Non-formal Education to the idea of piloting locally designed approaches.

**Education and poverty**
Another type of challenge facing the non-formal education sector is to establish more clearly how it understands the relationship between education/illiteracy and poverty. On the one hand, the links are clear. Illiteracy and lack of basic education do not cause poverty, but are directly correlated with it. The burdens are multiple. People are illiterate because the poverty which limits their access to all other social and economic benefits also prevents them from having access to systematic, organised learning. Similarly, higher illiteracy rates are associated with other socio-economic causes of exclusion: gender, ethnicity, and geographic and cultural isolation.

The burdens are cyclical. 80 percent of the impoverished households are headed by someone who is illiterate, often women. These are people likely, in consequence, to be limited in the knowledge, skills and ‘world view’ needed to
stabilise family, income, maintain children in good health and send them to school. Invariably, they will also be living in environments that are not likely to help them overcome these limitations in communities among which approximately 50 percent are without complete schools. They are the people, as noted by the Minister of Education in linking the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper to the Education Strategic Plan, who are in the ‘education poverty trap’.

Given these various interacting conditions, becoming literate and receiving a basic education alone cannot be expected to end poverty. In providing, the tools, which empower, they are the necessary conditions of social change, but are in not sufficient. Unless the knowledge and skills acquired can be applied in an enabling socio-economic environment, the results of non-formal education will be limited and their impact marginal. Unless gender and ethnicity-based restrictions on participation, decision-making and individual action are removed, the knowledge and skills girls and minorities acquire through a literacy programme will do little and may prove a further source of alienation.

Pro-poor education reform must be set within a wider overall pro-poor policy environment, one which ensures health services on which to draw secure food sources on which to base good nutritional practices, job opportunities and an open market infrastructure in which to find and generate employment and strong legal sanctions in support of equity.

The complexity of the poverty-education link is a message the DNFE needs to reflect in all of its policy, in the objectives of its programmes and in the assessments of impact. It needs to be realistic. Non-formal education can and should provide income generating and life-skills programmes, for example, but they should be understood as having a short-term, catalysing purpose. These will not produce employment, agricultural innovation or good health; when of good quality, they will produce greater capacity within people to manage these things more effectively themselves.

The matter of incentives is best dealt with here. Learning is in itself an incentive where it leads to increased knowledge, skills and the self-confidence to use them. Income-generating projects fail, and in fact push vulnerable communities further into decline, where they introduce novel ideas and expectations without grounding these in learning which enhances capacities to seek use and assess information to analyse and interpret events and conditions in the social, economic and physical environment, and to apply and adapt skills in knowing and improving those conditions.

People may initially engage in an education activity because it promises to earn them an income, they stay and learn where that process makes sense, increases their options, and strengthens their confidence and capacity to control their environment. Parents who have experienced success in their own education and to use it to advance their own situation are much more likely to value their children's learning. Mothers in particular are more likely to push for their daughters education, to have the confidence and skills to make demands on the
school for better quality and relevance, to forego the immediate benefit of a child's work for the greater potential benefits consequent to becoming educated to maintain healthier and more secure and stable homes, and to have the time and capacity to help with lessons. The more literate community members there are, the stronger the pool from which to mobilise support for alternative arrangements such as community schools and learning centres.

This leads directly to the importance of action to build capacity in the system for designing, and delivering programmes which are learner centred and utilisation focused. Programmes must become increasingly better at relating to the real needs of those who are excluded, as they perceive them to be not as they are perceived by the ‘experts’. Professional knowledge, development skills and field-level experience in this type of pedagogy (actually andragogy) persist as a fundamental concern across the DNFE, both centrally and locally. Adult learning and non-formal educational arrangement are not yet treated as substantially different from what happens in the school.

The way ahead
The critical questions have already been posed to the non-formal education sector: what does it need to do, how and with what content/messages to ‘release the creative energies of the poor to grapple with the problems of their daily life... (and) to become the cutting edge for dealing with poverty, and quality of life problems’ (MoEYS 2000: 60). This same report also suggests the necessary elements of an answer. Non-formal education needs to be expressly integrated into all development policy and action across all sectors, not hived off as an isolated, second-class ‘add on’. It needs to work directly with those communities living in poverty and socio-economic exclusion in learner-centred, interactive ways which enable self-confident local control. As well, it needs to more effectively build around issues of concern to communities in ways they can immediately use.

Towards these ends, the DNFE has set a potentially strong base in the Education Sector Support Programme. The three priority areas it has identified are sound, based on indisputable need both in the numbers of people affected by exclusion and poverty and the extent of their vulnerability. All three areas are also very ambitious, of course, given the current system capacities to design, deliver and monitor them. It has, therefore, made considerable sense for the DNFE to commit serious resources over the next five years to an evolving ‘learning-while-doing’ programme plan and to the idea of determining needs, and developing, implementing and assessing actions, in an iterative, incremental way.

Also important is the intention to focus on reaching the most excluded and at-risk communities. To do this, it needs to become increasingly better as a catalyst in drawing individuals, communities, NGOs and the private sector to
work with this effort and to make use of all ‘windows of opportunity’ to create the space for these programmes. One important such window will be the upcoming local elections and plans to decentralise authority to Commune Councils and Village Development Committees. These institutions will require new capacities of information seeking and application, problem analysis, negotiation of priorities and design/application of actions, especially in the more remote and marginal areas, all of which the DNFE could provide. In turn, these will be critical partners for the DNFE in the design, delivery and monitoring of all three of its programme priorities.

**Implications for development of non-formal education and the DNFE**

It is critical, therefore, that the highest policy levels be themselves convinced, and then make clear in their own actions, that the mandate of non-formal education is not to serve as a temporary retrieval mechanism for the formal school. The Department and its partners need emphatically to make the point that the aim is not to create a parallel competing system. Rather, the fundamental purpose of non-formal education is as a partner, both to the formal education system in realising national EFA targets; and to other government and civil society efforts in attempting to end poverty and promote democratic development.

The most important tasks for the DNFE over this period of the Education Sector Support Programme, then, are twofold: actively it supports the goal of creating inclusive education, and to do so by emphasising and working toward a wider interpretation of what inclusive education is. It will need to promote and participate in national-level mobilisation of the EFA framework, which strongly emphasises non-formal education as part of basic education. Even more important in the long run, the Department with its partners will need to work in a very systematic way to develop, implement, monitor and elaborate to ensure realising its own Education Strategy Plans and Education Sector Support Programme commitments.

The task will not be easy given the size and situation of the target communities to be reached, the limited capacities throughout the system to initiate action and an almost non-existent progress base on which to build. There will need to be serious and sustained commitment and support both from senior policy levels of Government, as well as from the donor and NGO communities.

An important characteristic of the Education Sector Support Programmes (ESSP) for the DNFE is the insistence on its being a work in progress. Rather than a ‘cast-in-stone blueprint setting out a fixed menu’, it is intended to be a ‘rolling programme’ of reform strategies. Departments and their partners are expected to collaborate in progressively refining these as work is done and effects monitored. This is a positive situation for non-formal education insofar as
its present ESSP budget allocation is small and its programme plans still fairly vague. Both of these conditions, however, are probably realistic given the current state of knowledge, expertise and experience. The ESSP gives legitimacy to the DNFE making serious efforts to try, test and prove its case and its ability to do better - and thus to increase its resources.

**Recommendations for Action: Reaching the most Excluded and Vulnerable**

The programme priorities identified by the DNFE in ESSP are sound, based on national poverty reduction, social equity and EFA policies. They are sound also because they take into account the unavoidable reality of a population, more than half of which is excluded from effective participation in the development process by being denied access to good quality basic education. What is missing in the DNFE contribution to the ESSP is a realistic reflection of how far the Department and the sector as a whole have to go in developing the professional and institutional capacity to take effective and sustained action on these priorities. And especially, how these actions will be done so as to reach the most excluded and vulnerable children, youth and adults: the isolated rural poor, ethnic minorities, and those with disabilities within all of these.

The following recommendations are an attempt to address what is this key dilemma for the Ministry: *enabling systemic development, while at the same time acting to deliver programmes.*

An effort has been made to make each recommendation as discrete as possible, with specific rationale and tasks. There are, however, clear linkages among them. Most especially, they all imply and reinforce the importance of building capacity development into all activities and at all levels. It is an emphasis made explicit at several points, through specific recommendations for technical assistance and staff development.

**Strengthening the System**

Much of what the DNFE has committed to in the ESSP will depend directly on its ability to convince others to support and collaborate with its programme of work. This will only happen if it, along with its partners, takes the initiative in bringing the sector and its agenda energetically and coherently forward to all levels, from senior policy through to the community.

The purpose of such consensus building is both mobilising and pragmatic. These are to situate non-formal education globally and nationally as strategies for addressing poverty and social exclusion, to generate and form partnerships...
for action in non-formal education and to develop implementation plans for the DNFE 5-year Education Sector Support Programme’s priorities and Year 1 programme work.

**Capacity development linked to programme delivery**

Recognised limitations in the professional capacities currently available within the DNFE, and finding the best ways of strengthening and adding to these are two issues of major concern identified by the Department itself and in the wider non-formal education ‘community’. Professional and technical strengthening of the DNFE, at both central and local levels will be critical to consolidating staff capacities to think in broad, holistic and long-term ways about goals, directions and strategic choices for the programmes. The reality is that officers, at central and local levels, have not had the opportunity to acquire either the range or the depth of academic and practical expertise and knowledge and skills implied by the programme priorities of the ESSP, a level of capacity, which takes a long time to develop.

**Partnerships and networking**

It is necessary to extend the capacity of the DNFE through a formal strategy of partnership and network building, creating working associations and taking particular advantage of the ‘windows of opportunity’ provided by NGOs in working more collaboratively with government over the long-term. Collaboration is a priority for a number of reasons, both strategic and programmatic. Strategically, it is the only option for the Government and the DNFE in securing the human and financial resources, the knowledge and expertise bases, and the funds necessary to achieve both general EFA commitments and PRSP goals, and specific ESP/NFE targets. The problems are too large for any one agency to act alone, irrespective of budget and manpower. The wide variety of target population variables, socio-cultural and geographic factors and tasks to be done require equally varied perspectives, skill sets and knowledge bases. Collaboration enables the best mix of people and agencies to buy-in under a common umbrella, while still maintaining their own priorities.

It is also necessary to collaborate with the Teacher Education Department and Teacher Training colleges to identify opportunities and to create mechanisms, which ensure NFE teachers, facilitators and methodologies are included in all ESSP capacity building plans. Teacher education is a costly undertaking, requiring long-term commitments of both resources and professional attention. Finding opportunities for sharing these development and implementation costs and benefits will be critical for the DNFE in creating the kind of technically competent, self-confident and innovative non-formal education workforce it needs to realise its programming goals -- and in ways consistent with its principles of learner-centred and demand-driven delivery.
If non-formal education is going to be effective as a core component of Cambodia's overall poverty elimination strategy, it is critical that both as a sector and in terms of its major delivery agencies such as the DNFE, a systemic strategy and programme of action be put in place. If the efforts made during this first 5-year period of the ESSP are to be sustainable, institutionalisation of the effective initiatives will be crucial. This means institutionalisation of the capacity at senior professional levels to do it. The alternative is ongoing dependence on external, often ad hoc and not cost-effective, technical assistance. It is only through a coherent Human Resource Development framework that the professional and organisational capacity of the sector to conceive, design, develop, and implement the work will be effectively built.

**Programme Delivery Priorities: Functional Literacy, Equivalency and Re-entry**

The DNFE has set out these three-programme delivery priorities based on the different types of broad target communities it needs to reach. Reflected in both the text and budget of the Education Sector Support Programme, functional literacy and equivalency and re-entry, are to be given the strongest emphasis. This is justified, quite correctly, by the fact that these programmes focus on the learning needs and goals, and the largest number, of the *most excluded* communities - young people and adults who are living in greatest poverty and at greatest risk, and who are not being adequately served by any other education provision.

Some attempt has been made by the DNFE in formulating its ESSP contribution to project target numbers to be reached. These are based for the most part on the fact of actual numbers of people who are there and need to be reached if EFA literacy and basic education goals are to be met. They are based rather less on realistic estimates of the capacity of the Ministry to meet such a large need. A critical task of the Department and its partners over the five-year ESSP period will be to develop a much better assessment of what can be achieved, how quickly and with what range of resources.

*Organising overall implementation*

All three of the programme priorities of the DNFE share a broadly-defined target population: children and adults who are not in school, who are in various ways disadvantaged or at risk through poverty and exclusion, and who need/want to learn. As such, each programme must be implemented in terms of the Department's overall principles of action and systems monitoring. However, the particular capacities, challenges, needs and expectations that the different groups of people to be served within each of the programme areas will be different.
Each brings to the learning event a specific set of demands, and these require, in turn, different responses from the DNFE. For each type of programme, separate decisions need to be made as to how participants are identified and their needs assessed; who are the appropriate partners for programme development and application activities? Are these partners the NGOs, the Primary Education Department, or the Ministry of Women’s and Veterans’ Affairs? What should be the relevant design, delivery and completion criteria? How should they be applied?

The DNFE acknowledges that its experience in distinguishing learner types and tailoring learning arrangements in these ways is still limited. Nor is it yet clear precisely what kind and how much capacity development and technical assistance support it will need to ensure fully effective action. Nor is there strong expertise or experience at either central or local level in systematic work planning and budgeting. These are management tasks especially difficult to execute well in the very complicated and often shifting environments of demand-driven non-formal education as applied to fragile communities such as street children and ethnic minorities. It is recommended, therefore, that each of the three programmes be developed within its own programme-of-work or ‘work package’ structure, each with its own specified set of activity and within that, its own specific tasks.

It is also recommended that teacher training and programme development activities in all three programme areas be designed, reviewed and revised in terms of the principles of effective adult education practice (andragogy) using learner-centred and user-friendly programme design, curriculum contents and teaching methods. The rationale is that most adults and young people who come to non-formal education classes do so as volunteers, most want to learn. They are dissuaded from continued participation and learn less effectively, however, where the methods and content do not respect what they contribute, or reflect the reality of their lives nor provide them what they want to learn.

**Priority 1: Functional literacy**

Although the existing literacy programme is basically appropriate, it is necessary to, together with other relevant agencies, to critically review and revise the scope of its needs, the quality of the pedagogy used, and the content and use of materials. Functional literacy is based on a broad understanding of ‘literacy’ to include the ability, to read and write, to handle numbers, to acquire and use information to analyse situations and apply new ideas. It assumes these capacities are on a continuum, from complete or very limited ability to a level, which allows independent learning. Typically, however, those needing functional literacy programmes are those living in environments where these abilities and the opportunity to practise them remain limited due to poverty, exclusion from services, and lack of resources. Functional literacy interventions
need therefore, to focus on all equally, broad range of knowledge and skills, and to link these directly with ways of improving, people's quality of life, participation and income.

This approach to functional literacy is the focus of most current DNFE programming, and it has the most reasonable outreach capacity and materials base from which to expand. Although there is quite limited evaluative data on what is actually happening or being achieved in the literacy programmes, there appears to be a general consensus that they are reasonably, successful. Not surprisingly, this is especially the case where the delivery is well co-ordinated 'on the ground' through a strong local input from provincial education office, village development committee, an NGO or donor-supported programme such as Seth Koma.

What will be critical, however, is that the DNFE, through partners and in association with other delivery agents, like the Ministry of Women’s and Veterans’ Affairs, seriously take stock of who is being reached, the quality of the teaching and the appropriateness of the materials, in both their content and how they are used. One recommendation for doing this is selective on-site case studies of different literacy programmes to assess common strengths, and weaknesses and openings for improvement. In terms of actions to be taken, however it is recommended that the DNFE focus immediately on several specific areas as a means of improving the reach and effectiveness of its present literacy programme.

It is also recommended that a thorough assessment of the current scope and quality of literacy programme reach into ethnic minority communities in terms of needs identification, teacher deployment and effectiveness, relevance of the materials. Much of the current programme delivery, both government and NGO, appears to be focused on Khmer populations in high population areas. This makes good sense given that the majority of the illiterate and poor rural communities are here. However, in order to address the Government's commitment to reaching, the most excluded, it is critical that affirmative steps be taken to reach those isolated ethnic minority communities, and to do so with programme designs, methods and contents directly suited to their cultures, languages and life styles.

Some NG0s (such as CARE) are already moving in this direction and it is recommended that the DNFE enter into formalised collaborative arrangements with selected from these, as a means of extending its reach of delivery, strengthening its own knowledge and skills base and mobilising resources for in-depth research and development on effective practice. It is also recommended that potential linkages be explored, with the quite extensive and increasing expertise and experience in the region dealing with the issues of indigenous learning, those affiliated with UNESCO.

It will be necessary to maintain other functional literacy ‘life-skills’ programmes also on the long-term agenda (e.g. income generation) and add
others as these arise, but similarly begin work on them gradually as time, resources and ‘windows of collaboration’ become available. An early childhood care and education programme, where it is a family-based learning and development activity and not a pre-school programme, is an important and fully legitimate part of the non-formal education sector. It is also, however, a very complex area in terms of design and delivery and difficult to manage effectively - especially through a centralised bureaucracy.

Priority 2: Complementary equivalency programme

It will be critical to conceptualise and design an equivalency programme for out-of-school youth aimed at approving basic primary education competencies. This is a critical programme priority for the DNFE. It is aimed at a large and expanding population of children and young people who have never been or have dropped out of school, are likely among the most at risk living in situations of high vulnerability and too old or to be deeply involved in maintaining a viable living to go back to school. This is a diverse population in terms of their capacities and the room they can give to formal learning. This implies the particular importance of learning-centred methods and content, and flexible modalities and venues. There are a number of the fairly isolated projects managed through NGOs and the DNFE reaching some of these children; it is a population overall not being well served in any systematic, comprehensive way. Nor are programmes yet being designed and delivered in ways especially intended to provide the full complement of core competencies equivalent to grade nine primary basic education.

While equivalency programmes are a high priority focus for the DNFE, they are also likely to be the most difficult. First, their target populations tend to be the most difficult to reach and retain, ‘distant’ from the formal system geographically in remote areas, culturally as ethnic minorities and in life situation as street and working youth. Secondly, good equivalency programmes are difficult to manage: maintaining a balance between school focused and life focused programming is a delicate and continual evolving one, directly dependent on the particular circumstances and mix of children and youth involved. Thirdly, they are complicated, best developed through comprehensive community-based needs assessment, detailed planning with local and central education offices and extensive curriculum development and testing.

A number of criteria are typically applied to these programmes. They should be immediately useful and accessible, context-relevant, appropriate to learners in delivery methods and time-frame and provide the fundamental learning of primary school and be flexible in responding to participants' changing life demands. They also should be faster in delivery to cover six or nine years of the primary cycle in perhaps three or more blocks, have open entry in terms of matching the ‘school equivalent’ level of a child's acquired learning, and use a
variety of venues, sometimes the school where it can meet the schedules of the programme, but also temples, community centres, NGO facilities. Lastly, the programmes need to have strong community support.

Even if there are no fees for these programmes, there are often opportunity costs for students and their families. This is especially the case for those in the poorest and ethnic communities and for most vulnerable families in terms of sending girls. Some form of financial or other compensation is also critical if street or working children are to participate.

**Priority 3: Re-entry**

Re-entry programmes are intended for those out-of-school children who need and want to return to the formal system, probably after a fairly short time away or whose initial enrolment has been delayed. These are children and youth who want to go back into the system, and are at the right age to do so. They will be able to do so if they can catch up. This means designing programmes which give them in a relatively short time (probably 2-6 months), the same curriculum content and skills as the grade level(s) they have missed.

**Monitoring, Evaluation and Database Development**

The intention that the Education Sector Support Programme (ESSP) function as a ‘rolling plan’ of formative monitoring and adaptation is an important one for the DNFE as it tries to create and maintain its emerging mandate. Such a process will not happen spontaneously, however. Tools for enabling such progressive monitoring will not simply become available. Development of regular, comprehensive and broadly based monitoring systems within each responsibility area, with connections built between them, is a necessary condition for ensuring that the ESSP moves quickly beyond its present conceptual and programmatic ‘narrow range’. This will require moral support and technical assistance.

Guidelines in the ESSP for increasing the reach and reliability of monitoring and evaluation within the education system, while mostly related to the formal system and schools, are core for the DNFE as well. The most important of these are the three core ‘policy performance indicators’: equitable access, quality and efficiency, institutional development and capacity building. It is recommended that the DNFE actively pursue ways of recasting these in terms of its own situation and need. There are many ways these might be applied in a non-formal education programme context. Enrolment trends would include re-entry, equivalency and literacy programmes with participant numbers and priority features such as gender, ethnicity, and poverty levels. With regard to previous learning experience, it will be necessary to see the level of programme completed
and the types of follow-up activities pursued such as school re-entries, improved work opportunities and persistence in life skills programmes. In terms of quality and efficiency, it will be necessary to see if topic-based core competencies are acquired and whether there is a match between learner goals and outcomes, for example, how a programme ‘made a difference’ in the lives of learners. With regards to the appropriateness and flexibility of teaching methods and materials, aspects such as length and intensity of participation, learner-friendliness of environment, and scheduling facilities will be important. Institutional development and capacity will look into effectiveness of staff learning for improved programme design and development, implementation and assessment of whether different learner needs and capacities are met. Institutional capacities will show the availability of relevant staff and community learning opportunities for policymaking and technical improvement.

Data collection and analysis actions
At present, the serious lack of comprehensive and systematic data is undermining the effectiveness and sustainability of non-formal education programming. It is fundamental that the DNFE begin to establish an increasingly accurate ‘global’ perspective on the environment in which it is working, and the effects it is having. Indeed, under the terms of the Education Sector Support Programme, the DNFE is required to show systematic, efficient action and well delivered literacy programmes. It is also expected to show effective and sustainable outcomes in that literate communities have acquired with applicable competencies. Failing to do so could reduce the chance of its budget allocations being increased, or being renewed at current levels. Without evidence of progress, the place of the non-formal sector in furthering Government policy may be seriously undermined, left as solely an NGO and donor activity.

It is important to develop broad, rather than deep, and largely quantitative ‘environmental scan’ analyses. Eventually it will be important for the DNFE also to look forward to more comprehensive qualitative data. There are several reasons. Firstly, NFE programmes are effective where they are demand-driven and learner-centred, based not on what the system has to offer, but with what prospective learners are able and prepared to do. Successful programme outcomes will depend on the ability of the DNFE to differentiate among various groups, all of whom may be seeking to develop literacy-related capacities, but define these very differently in terms of who and where they are and the capacities and challenges they bring to the learning context. Good programming will depend of the DNFE having increasingly better knowledge of the reasons why children and youth are not at school, not simply that they are not. All of this is at the heart of the issue of ‘incentives’ and requires in-depth data.
Serious questions are being asked about the sustainability of the present literacy programme, which is basically now the only programme area of the DNFE. Statistics are available indicating a cost of around $25 for each new literate, much more than the per-student cost in primary school. Efforts have been made to mitigate this concern, pointing out that it is not clear how the school costs are calculated and that much of the non-formal education cost is in teacher training and materials development. The reality, however, is that there is little concrete information about what the actual costs and levels of efficiency are; few solid or reliable data on precisely what is being paid, by whom to serve, what kinds of people and with what quality of service. Certainly, a major and legitimate concern here is the fact that half of learners have to take the programme twice to be judged literate. The three priority programmes have been costed in the Education Sector Support Programme, but this is notional. Actual per activity figures need to be determined for purposes of requesting quarterly, budgets and accounting for their use to build a body of research and development questions and issues to be explored as time and resources become available.

**Capacity development**

Most of the work to be undertaken by the DNFE centrally and at local level over the 5-year Education Sector Support programme period is new to those responsible for conceptualising, planning and executing it. Also new in the context of the designation of the Department as a budget management centre will be the increased demands put on the Department at all levels for administration, budgeting and managing partnerships. These new and increased responsibilities will involve new actions at the policy level, in the design and delivery of programmes, in the more accurate and responsive identification of harder to reach ethnic groups and remote communities. All of this will need to be tracked, managed and reported for results.

**Implications for international co-operation**

There are implications for donors in all of the above recommendation, especially in terms of capacity-linked programme support and technical assistance. More specific implications include long-term commitment of moral, technical and financial support to the sector and to the DNFE as the principal national level focal point. Donors must recognise the differences between non-formal education and the formal system in the ways in which programme support and technical assistance are designed, supported and evaluated. Complementary support will be necessary to strengthen the capacity of NGOs as partners to the DNFE in realising improved NFE policy and effective programme reach. Advocacy on EFA will be important, especially with respect to the principle of creating a seamless and inclusive basic education system. Advocacy is also needed on the EFA National Committee and operating Secretariat among other
things as a means of advocating non-formal education as one of its principal thematic priorities. Co-ordinated planning and action among donors is necessary to ensure gaps are filled, duplications addressed and synergies identified across all aspects of the non-formal system.

In conclusion, the challenges facing the DNFE over the next five years are therefore significant; its learning curve will be steep. It will be critical that it improves its professional policy-making and technical delivery capacities, and plans to do so through partnerships supported by consistent in-house learning in various forms. Serious attention will need to be given by the DNFE itself, and by donors, to institutional and human resource development using long and short-term technical assistance, training and attachments to local agencies, promotion of provincial and district planning and implementation, knowledge and skills and creating sustained networking structures.

Notes

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1 The recommendations are based on the implications of a six-week situation analysis, on an assessment of the capacities of the Department of Non-formal Education as the Government's main implementing agency for the sector, and on expectations arising out of the recently drafted Education Sector Support Programme (ESSP). They are presented under headings reflecting the DNFE/ESSP programme priorities as a means of ordering what is a fairly broad set of suggested directions and actions.

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Evidence from several Asian countries has shown that a high level of literacy and basic education for all - children, youth and adults - is a necessary precondition for the introduction of economic reforms like deregulation and removal of trade barriers. The economic expansion that takes place thereby is assimilated and shared more widely through, what has been termed ‘participatory growth’ or people-centred growth. Positive state intervention and greater public concern and action on the issues of basic education, better health care and other measures of social security are, therefore, necessary for any programme of economic reform to succeed. The district-based total literacy campaigns (TLC) in India that emerged as a programme strategy of the National Literacy Mission (NLM) should be viewed against this backdrop. This paper presents a brief overview of the National Literacy Mission (NLM) programmes since its inception in 1988.

The TLC started in India in 1989 in Ernakulam district of Kerala, and was founded on the principle of wider public participation linking elected representatives in local bodies, district administration, educational institutions and voluntary agencies to create an upsurge of community participation for achieving the goal of eradicating illiteracy from the district. Needless to say, the programme was highly successful and led to the formulation of the ‘Ernakulam model’ of TLC in other districts. The expert committee set up to evaluate the impact of TLC unhesitatingly commented that it ‘has been among the best things promoted by the government since independence’ in the social sector, mainly because TLCs sought wider participation of people and invoked the voluntary spirit and left participants with a tangible feeling of achievement.
Literacy in the Indian Census 2001

The last decade of the second millennium was eventful in India for a variety of reasons. Not the least among them was the increased attention given to meeting the goal of Education for All by the year 2000. While all the goals may not have been met completely, the latest decennial Census of India 2001 does reflect the substantial impact of the efforts of the last decade. The literacy rate in the country is now 65.38 percent registering an increase of 13.17 percent during the last decade representing the highest decadal growth since our independence. But more satisfying has been the fact that female literacy, which now stands at 54.16 percent has grown at a faster rate of 14.87 percent, which is even higher than the growth rate for male literacy in the last decade. The deprived sections have also fared quite well as the results of the National Sample Survey Organisation’s 55th round have revealed that the literacy rate amongst the scheduled castes in 1999-2000 was 53 percent as against 37.41 percent in 1991 and that of the schedule tribes was 49 percent as against 29.6 percent in 1991.

A positive climate for basic education has been successfully created in the country, especially in the low literacy States and weak-performing districts. People have responded in vast numbers to the drive for universalisation of primary education, Non formal Education (NFE) for out of school children and Total Literacy campaigns (TLC) for adult literacy initiated by the government as its three-pronged strategy to address the EFA challenge.

Dakar Declaration and after

These results encourage the belief that national commitments made in the Dakar declaration in April 2000 and the achievement of the six goals is definitely possible. The two national programmes to meet these objectives are the National Programme for Universal Elementary Education (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan) and the expansion of the community-based literacy, post-literacy, and continuing education programmes of the National Literacy Mission (NLM).

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is a holistic and convergent approach to implement Universalisation of Elementary Education in a mission mode with a district focus. The goals under this programme include ensuring all children complete five years of schooling by 2007; all children complete eight years of schooling by 2010; bridge all gender and social gaps at primary stage by 2007 and at elementary education level by 2010; universal retention by 2010.

The National Literacy Mission on the other hand, has set itself the objective of attaining a sustainable 75 percent literacy rate by 2005. This has already been achieved for males, but the efforts to promote female literacy have to be strengthened further. The NLM’s programme of TLC has demonstrated the keenness among people to learn and participate in social processes. The value of education and learning in life is being appreciated and this has to be the thrust for educational strategies for adults with a focus on ‘learning throughout life’ –
the expression preferred by UNESCO’s International commission on education in the 21st century in its published report *Learning: The Treasure Within*.

The strategy for adult education thus has to go beyond literacy, while ensuring literacy where it is necessary. For example, a vast number of adolescents and young adults have to prepare themselves for the world of work and responsibility. Even those who may have had rudimentary schooling may not have the confidence or adequate competence to face the challenges of a changing work environment, especially with regard to new technologies, production processes, health and environment concerns. Migrants to the towns and cities require preparation that goes beyond specific skills training onto awareness of minimum wages and rights of workers. Elected representatives to the Panchayats, particularly women, need to acquire the ability to assert themselves in the correct conduct of meetings and learn the skills to obtain information and ensure that tasks are assigned and executed satisfactorily.

Such a programme of adult learning cannot be centrally designed or pursued uniformly all over the country. Nor can it be introduced on a mammoth scale in all the districts where TLC and Post Literacy/Continuing Education are in operation. Learning strategies for programming will have to evolve through a process of interaction between the learners and volunteers/activists recognising the specific needs and aspirations of particular groups.

**Continuing Education Programme**

Unlike the literacy campaigns of the last decade with their effective social mobilisation for literacy, the continuing education programme of NLM is a recent effort to give permanence to the learning environment for adults by establishing Continuing Education Centres (CEC) for a population cover of 2000-2500 persons. Though the continuing education programme was formally launched in 1997, there have been initial difficulties – technical and administrative – and it is yet to become fully operational. The basic design of the continuing education programme envisages a shift of responsibility for management to the community and the initial financial support from Government of India will gradually be taken over by the States, Panchayati Raj Institutions and/or the village community. By its very nature the continuing education programme cannot be uniform and will be influenced by the local situation.

The main activities of the continuing education programme have been the library and reading rooms established in over 101,563 CEC’s and 12,105 Nodal CEC’s. Literacy centres are also functioning under each CEC. Health and nutrition issues are covered in the programme and discussions are held on a range of development subjects.
Though the continuing education programme is still new, there are some interesting initiatives that are taking place in some of the States and in particular districts. It would not be proper to generalise from these examples but some trends and directions are visible. These can be summed up in the following points: 1) forming grassroots level associations/groups of neo-literate women and men is possible and necessary; 2) Community participation and a sense of ownership is desirable for long-term viability of the continuing education programme; 3) Linking literacy and continuing education with economic activities, livelihood issues and village development makes it that much more relevant and meaningful; 4) people have high expectations when they come together and contribute their time, money and effort. Promises made for loan/grants and facilities must be honoured.

In the context of the target of 75 percent literacy by 2005 there is an urgent need to make a strong movement for women’s literacy and formation of self-help groups. The attempt in the continuing education programme is to make it more flexible and invite NGO’s, Panchayati Raj Institutions and community based organisations to organise themselves collectively or on a partnership basis, or operate independently to undertake continuing education programmes.

Enhancing the available information base for planning and developing the skills of literacy workers in participatory planning methods are urgent tasks. Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in this regard is very important. In India, some pilot projects have been initiated and the learning resource centres established in collaboration with ACCU are also working in this area. Sharing successful district (and even smaller) initiatives so that others can learn from the experience is necessary and documentation, validation through research and systematic evaluation are other thrust areas for National Literacy Mission.

**Concluding Remarks**

In the 21st Century we are witnessing a pace of change that is unprecedented. The promise of technology and the challenge of participatory and democratic governance are the twin pillars on which the vast number of the new generation of adult learners in South Asian countries will have to build the future fulfilment of their dreams. The dialogue on policies dealing with adult and lifelong learning is an important way forward so that the UN Declaration of the next decade (2003-2012) as the decade for literacy (in its widest meaning of learning throughout life) and commitment to eradicate illiteracy worldwide by 2015 does become a reality.
References


Government and NGO Responses to Cultural Diversity in Promoting Adult Learning in Nepal

Satya Bahadur Shrestha

A Country of Diversity

The diversity of cultural identities in Nepal requires a multi-pronged approach to the development of adult education policies, strategies and programmes. Nepal is heterogeneous in terms of race/caste and ethnicity, language, religion, region/ecology, society and culture. Nepal’s racial composition is derived mainly from two major groups: Mongoloid and Caucasian. Under these two groups there are sixty different caste and ethnic groups. There are seven different religions practised in the country, and many sects within each of these religious systems. The National Language Policy Recommendation Ethnicity Commission has noted that there are over seventy spoken languages. Language is a major concern in the development of the literacy programme. All these diversities have helped Nepal to develop a plural society and culture of more than a hundred distinct ethnic/caste clusters. Such diversities clearly demand pluralistic approaches.

According to the Preliminary Report of The Population Census 2001, the population of Nepal is 23.2 million of which 89 percent live in rural areas. The population growth rate is 2.1 percent per annum. About 83 percent of the population are engaged in agriculture and the per capita income is US$ 250; it is very low even among the least developed countries of the world.

A number of social and economic indicators show that Nepal is one of the least developed countries in the world. More than 80 percent of population totally depend on agriculture. Compared to the other developing countries the
literacy rate of Nepal is still low in terms of the requirement for national development. The female literacy rate for 6+ is only 44 percent compared to the male literacy rate of 70.1 percent making an average of 58 percent.

**History of the Adult Literacy Programme**

In 1947, the Basic Educational Training Centre was established to train teachers responsible for running adult literacy programmes. A planned literacy programme for adults began in 1951, when activities for educational expansion were conducted as a strategy for national development. However, these efforts become evident only with the introduction of the First Five-year Plan in 1956. Textbooks for the six-month literacy course were prepared with the help of the World Adult Institution. However, activities initiated by the Ministry of Education remained limited to literacy until 1960. The history of the adult literacy programme has seen many materials and methodological experiments. It may be interesting to note here that in 1951, Dr. Lauback, under the agreement with USAID, came to Nepal for six months and helped the Ministry of Education in designing and developing literacy materials.

Subsequently, non-formal education was integrated into inter-ministerial activities with ministries such as Agriculture, Health, Panchayat and Local Development. This programme was one of the important components of development activities at the grassroots level.

Apart from the efforts of some individuals and institutions, the responsibility for non-formal education programmes fell to His Majesty’s Government of Nepal through the Ministry of Education and Sports. However, in the recent years, responsibility has been shifting and implementation of the government’s non-formal education programme has now become the major responsibility of NGOs/CBOs. The NFE Council has issued new policy directives regarding NFE programmes. Beginning in 1995, District Education Offices have been authorised to implement government supported NFE programme by mobilising local NGOs/CBOs. This policy was adopted in the spirit of decentralisation, partnership and the local self-government Act.

**Government Response to Cultural Policies in Education**

After the restoration of democracy in Nepal in 1989, the Constitution of Nepal - 1990 made provision to preserve national indigenous languages and granted indigenous people the right to read and write in their own mother tongue up to
the primary level of education. Accordingly, the Government of Nepal and the Ministry of Education and Sports has prepared textbooks of primary level in more than ten different indigenous languages.

The ninth five-year plan will be completed at the end of the year 2002. This plan (1997-2002) aims to increase the literacy rate to 70 percent among the population of 6 + age group. It targets to reduce the gender gap by 20 to 30 percent. Nepal has also set a goal of eradicating illiteracy by the end of the twelfth five-year plan (2012-2017).

In regards to the policy response, the Basic and Primary Education Master Plan Phase II is also worth mentioning. This has given emphasis to strengthening the organisational structure of NFE, training of NFE human resources, material development, mobilisation of local resource/support, improvement in programme delivery approach, the creation of linkages and expansion of agencies that implement NFE programmes, and recognising all stakeholders’ role in NFE programmes.

Apart from the Ministry as a supreme body, the policy formulating body of NFE is the National NFE Council. Under the policy formulated by the Council, the Non-Formal Education Centre (NFEC) was established to carry out NFE programmes for children, adolescent/youth and adult who have been deprived of access to any non-formal educational activity due to various socio-economic reasons.

Recently, the Education Act of 1971 was amended giving more importance to NFE. His Majesty’s Government of Nepal had actively participated in the conference at Jomtien, Thailand in March 1990 and made a commitment to follow up the decision of the Conference. Nepal was also part of the World Conference when the World Declaration on Education for All and Dakar Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs was approved in Dakar in 2000.

The government of Nepal has committed to improve the literacy situation in the country in accordance with the target set by EFA. The target is to achieve a literacy rate of 90 percent by 2015.

The current literacy rates show steady improvement, however the pace is still inadequate to meet the EFA goals by 2015. It could be now assumed that the problem of illiteracy lies more on the current population. Since enrolment in schools has improved, a higher proportion of upcoming adults is likely to be literate. In order to achieve 100 percent literacy, there will be need to improve net enrolment to 100 percent as well as to provide literacy to adults who are currently illiterate. The limitation of such description is that it cannot explain the quality of the classroom situation, that actual learning taking place, and that the process in practice is mainly responsible for making literacy meaningful. There is a need for several case studies, and socially diagnostic/ethnographic studies to provide some understanding of these and other aspects.
**Language policy**

Language and literacy for adults are related phenomena. According to the democratic Constitution of Nepal 1990, Nepali is the ‘National language’ and other native languages as ‘languages of the nation’. The Constitution also declares Nepal as a Hindu Kingdom, however recognises Nepal as a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, democratic, independent, indivisible, and sovereign nation. Nepal is also a multi-religious state, and religion, like racial origin, language, and nationality, is one of the important attributes of ethnicity.

The Government of Nepal appears to accept the responsibility of establishing co-ordination among different ethnic groups with different racial origins, castes, religions, and languages by eliminating all kinds of economic and social inequalities. Thus, the constitution of Nepal does not overlook economic and social inequalities among the various ethnic groups.

In lines with the constitution many educational materials and textbooks used in the education system have been developed in different languages by the government of Nepal. Accordingly, many NGOs, with the help of international NGOs and donors have developed literacy reading and writing materials in different national languages. As per the record, there are five different types of basic and post literacy and supplementary materials developed in five different languages.

**The National Non-Formal Education Centre**

According to the National Education Policy, the main objective of NFEC is to upgrade and extend literacy, post literacy and skill-oriented continuing education activities by integrating different NFE programmes and preparing annual work plans to implement throughout the country. The Centre establishes short term and long term policies and develops result-oriented programmes related to national literacy. Post literacy programmes are carried out to help neo-literate adults and children to remember and apply to their daily activities what they have learnt in class, and to assist them to add to their existing knowledge. The Centre develops NFE curriculum and textbooks and provides all types of technical human resources. It streamlines monitoring and evaluation and co-ordinates with national and international organisations involved in the non-formal education and makes arrangements to prevent programme duplication.

The NFEC has made programmes flexible to suit the learners’ time and environment. In order to achieve the targeted objectives of the expansion of non-formal education, NFEC encourages the involvement of many government and non-government organisations.
Programmes for adults
The adult literacy programme is conducted for both illiterate men and women in the 15 to 45 age groups who were not able to attend school. This programme is conducted for six months, a minimum of two hours a day, six days a week i.e. 150 days or 300 hours of classes in six months. Neo-literates or the graduates of basic adult literacy programme are eligible to attend the post literacy programme. This is a three-month programme. Classes are conducted for two hours a day, six days a week i.e. 75 days or 150 hours in three months.

The Women Education I programme is conducted for women in the 15 to 45 age group who for various reasons were unable to attend school. Similar to the adult education programme, this programme is also conducted for six months with two hours a day, six days a week i.e. 150 days or 300 hours of class in six months. Women’s Education II is for those who have completed Women’s Education I, which is also conducted for six months with two hours a day, six days a week i.e. 150 days or 300 hours in six months.

The NFEC has also developed and carried out an income generation programme on an experimental basis to help low-income women who have become neo-literate by participating in government supported literacy and post literacy programmes. This income-generating programme provides training to acquire functional skills to fit in the local job market.

Non-Formal Education Centre has also carried out programmes related to population and family life by integrating these subjects into different teaching materials and curriculum of adult non-formal education so that population study can be reached to the general public with the help of UNFPA.

Community Learning Centres (CLC)
Realising the role and importance of CLC for community development, the Ministry of Education and Sports/Nepal has been launching the CLC project since 1999 with the support from UNESCO/PROAP, Bangkok.

The policy is to develop this programme as a centre for learning, earning and living. This is a new initiative. It will take years to run this programme in the true sense. Human resource development and capacity building are the most important aspects and at this moment the programme needs to be made qualitative and output oriented.

Currently, the project is at the stage of concept development of CLC practices. Therefore, the NFEC is piloting only three CLCs in three districts of two development regions in different geographical locations.

Literacy campaign
NFEC has also been implementing the National Literacy Campaign for the last four years in twenty out of seventy-five districts of Nepal. This intensive
programme is for all adult illiterate men and women in the district. In addition, ten new districts have been identified and a household literacy survey is conducted on a priority basis to implement the literacy campaign with the objective to eradicate illiteracy within three to five years time. These ten districts represent five development regions of the country. Management of the programme corresponds with the adult literacy programme as mentioned earlier.

**Curriculum and Learning Needs**

Nepal adopted the curriculum format developed by the Asia-Pacific Programme of Education for all (APPEAL) in 1989. The National Workshop on Finalisation of the National Literacy Curriculum organised in 1991 by the Ministry of Education prepared and finalised a national curriculum grid for the first time in the history of non-formal education in Nepal.

According to this curriculum, there are seven core subject areas such as: environment conservation and cleanliness, family life, income generation and agriculture, civic consciousness, women and development, culture and tradition and health and nutrition under a broader framework of adult learning needs. These areas have been extensively elaborated and divided into three levels i.e. Basic, Middle and Self-learning. These three levels incorporate six different learning needs such as: Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, Numeracy and Functional skill/information.

**Innovative, Creative and Inter-Sectoral Approaches**

Apart from the programmes implemented by the government, there are many other innovative literacy programmes to meet the learning needs of adult learners in Nepal. Apart from the initiative mentioned below, there were many others like the Seti project, whole language and language experience approaches, education for development, non-formal education for rural development, family literacy as well as other programmes using a combination of many methodologies. The following are some examples.

**REFLECT**

Regenerated Freirean Literacy Through Empowering Community Techniques (REFLECT) in Nepal was started in 1995 with Action Aid/Nepal and SPACE, an NGO, piloting REFLECT with eleven circles. By the end of 1999, accumulated number of circles had crossed 700 and currently nearly 200 are in operation. Implementing institutions include both domestic and international
NGOs. Some local government have shown interest in REFLECT. REFLECT has been implemented in 28 districts of the Kingdom covering 13 languages of 15 different ethnic groups including dominant cultural groups speaking Nepali language.

With the REFLECT approach, each literacy circle produces their own learning materials analysing their own village and their immediate circumstances. This replaces the use of primers either developed by experts or institutions located at the centre. The key printed materials in REFLECT is a local Facilitator’s Manual which gives clear guidelines on how each literacy circle can produce its own materials.

Instead of starting lessons with a ‘codification’, each unit in the local Facilitator’s Manual starts with the construction of a graphic (a map, matrix, calendar or diagram). These are constructed on the ground using whatever materials are available locally along with a comprehensive and extensive discussion based on practical experience of participants. Once everyone has agreed that the ‘graphic’ is complete, it is transferred to a large sheet of paper using simple visual cards. The completed graphic is then used for the introduction of reading and writing as well as numeracy work. The whole process involves the REFLECT participants in a clearly focused dialogue/discussion that can lead to the identification of local action for development.

In REFLECT, reading circles and writing work arises either directly or thematically out of the graphics produced by participants. The maps, matrices, calendars and diagrams, and the structured discussion based on them, provide rich source material for developing literacy practices in meaningful context. The emphasis is placed on production, creation and action rather than passivity, copying or absorption.

**Community Literacy Project**

This project works with local organisations to support programmes designed to improve literacy, communication and access to information based on the different needs and aspirations of their target groups. It helps women and men to develop different uses of reading, writing and numeracy that they need in their daily life. It also enables national literacy agencies and NGOs to learn from its experience and assist them in developing activities that bridge the gap between the classroom learning and its wider social context.

The Community Literacy Project in Nepal is an attempt to apply contemporary anthropological and ethnographic perspectives to adult literacy teaching and learning. The Community Literacy Project approach believes that literacy is something that is used and learned in the community, rather than just being an activity of a literacy class. Communication and access to information can be enhanced through oral, visual and literacy based practices.
The current Community Literacy Project activities include exploration of existing uses of literacy, and opportunities for learning outside the literacy class through participatory ethnographic and action research. It is working with organisations involved in community broadcasting, writing and publishing to develop ways to involve non-literate and semi-literate groups and individuals. It has developed tailor-made literacy and numeracy curricula on livelihood issues such as community forestry, vegetable production and micro-finance. It is working with the publishers of written texts to encourage the development of reader-friendly materials (e.g. simpler texts, larger script, local languages, gender sensitive content). It also shares learning with national and international agencies. Apart from the above-mentioned activities, there are also some other activities like; organised dissemination seminars, training on community literacy, community writing and scribing training and training on literacy practices, communication and Access to information in community forestry by this project.

Community Literacy Project is funded by the Department for International Development (DFID) and was managed until the beginning of the year 2002 by the Centre for British Teacher, with technical support provided by Education for Development and with a Nepali NGO World Education Nepal (WEN). Currently WEN has taken over the project and is fully responsible in running it.

*Participatory Learning and Action Programme*

SCUS initiated a Participatory Learning and Action approach in NFE in the Siraha district in the year 1999. The programme comprises of a basic literacy course (6 months) followed by an advance literacy course (6 months). It is an integral part of the Community Based Family Health (CBFH) Project implemented in the district with the objectives of raising awareness on family, maternal & child health care practices through NFE in order to improve infant mortality rates and increase health-seeking behaviour at the family and community levels.

The main features of the Participatory Learning Action approach include an emphasis on involving participants in the development of educational materials; the use of checklists by facilitators to monitor the acquisition of letters by learners; monthly meetings and refresher training for facilitators; and an evaluation of learners’ achievement every three months.

During the last three years of programme implementation, training packages for facilitators were developed, key messages about health education were included in the locally generated materials, and monitoring tools were developed. Altogether, 470 basic literacy centres and 377 advance literacy centres were conducted. Bridging classes were also offered during the 3-month gap period (after the completion of the basic literacy course and before the start of the advance literacy course). The Community Based Family Health project
monitoring reports indicate that the programme has been effective in achieving its objectives. SCUS assessed the effectiveness of the Participatory Learning and Action approach in terms of improving teaching-learning activities, achievement and retention of the literacy skills, and changing knowledge, skills and practices relating to health behaviour. The overall purpose of the study was to document major achievements, lessons learned, challenges, and identify areas that need improvement. Thus, this study is expected to provide an overall basis for improvements, information dissemination to government and other agencies, and expansion as well replication of the programme in other parts of the country.

NFE methodologies included in the Participatory Learning and Action Programmes

REFLECT: In the REFLECT method, learners work collectively to produce information, educational and communication teaching/learning materials. This methodology combines Paulo Freire and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approaches on literacy. Paulo Freire approach on literacy is based on the belief that literacy alone cannot break the culture of silence. The PRA approach recognises that even poor communities have a wealth of techniques. The starting point of the PRA approach is the construction of maps, matrices, calendars, and diagrams on a large scale on the ground using whatever materials are locally available.

The Key Word and Whole Language approaches are also used in the Participatory Learning and Action programmes whereby a key word, or key sentence for a problem is identified from the real life situation, and used to learn reading and writing.

Given the diversity of Nepal there is no doubt that programmes like REFLECT, Community Literacy Project and Participatory Learning and Action are suitable. However, with the exception of REFLECT, Community Literacy Project and Participatory Learning and Action programmes are at the initial period of expansion. Some concerns on the capacity of the facilitator to run these methodologies are in question. The Ministry of Education and Sport is has also concerns regarding per unit/class cost in implementing these methodologies. In addition, these three programmes are implemented through direct financial and technical support of international NGOs.

References

A Basic Concept

It is generally agreed that education has become one of the most significant vehicles in the development of human life and can contribute towards personal well-being and happiness. To lead a happy life in a society, one should continue to be involved in education throughout life. Education is a tool for human beings to use for solving daily problems, or for adjusting to the environment: in other words, ‘education for life and life for education’. In this regard education does not only mean learning as received through the formal schooling system or what is called ‘formal education’. The concept of ‘education’ in the Thai Policy paper includes formal, non-formal and informal education, and the combination of these three will be referred to as ‘lifelong education’.

At present the educational system that serves the majority of people all over the world emphasises formal education, which is based on formal performance and rigid curricula. Based mainly on the educational patterns of the Western countries, the formal school system is usually classified into primary or elementary, the secondary, high school and university levels.

The second type of educational system is known as non-formal education, which educational planners are using as a complement for the formal system for out of school youth and adults. The non-formal education is less formal in terms
of its performance and has a more direct concern to daily life problems. These programmes are adult school and other short-training courses.

The last type of educational system is informal education, which is a truly lifelong process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience. It includes any kind of education besides formal and non-formal and any method of learning through various sources of knowledge having fixed procedures or forms. For example, knowledge may be acquired during conversation and travelling; attending shows or movies; reading books and newspapers; listening to the radio or watching television.

Why Lifelong Learning?

If the potential and the effectiveness of these three types of educational systems (formal, non-formal and informal) are examined, it is apparent that informal education is the most effective means for reaching a rural adult population. Most rural people have little time for formal schooling due to the necessity for meeting their personal, familial, occupational and societal needs. Each individual and, particularly, each society, have different educational needs. It has been proved that formal education is unable to serve individual needs since its curriculum is not directed to respond to the needs of the majority target group. Moreover, the present formal school curriculum stresses general knowledge, while skills and experiences for living are matters left for learners to acquire by themselves outside the school system.

Whose Needs for Lifelong Learning?

Establishing a formal school system needs considerable investment both in construction and maintenance as teachers and teaching materials are needed. It is for these reasons that the formal school system has not fully provided services for those people who live in remote areas. It has been estimated that 80 percent of the population in developing countries, including Thailand, are living in the rural areas where schools and other services are inadequate or non-existent. They have less opportunity to benefit from the facilities than those who live in urban areas do. This has, in turn, led to an existence of ‘the rural and urban gap’, which is regarded as a major problem of developing countries. The rural masses represent the majority of the population who earn lower incomes and have inadequate information and knowledge. They have difficulties in solving their own problems because they have less opportunities of good quality education; other problems relate to the question of how to raise incomes or how to improve creative thinking and occupational opportunities.
During the past two decades, the government of Thailand has been engaged in actions to address this educational concern through rural development efforts. The government has decided to give priority to non-formal education as a means to solve problems because non-formal education has proved to be responsive to the needs of rural people as well as the urban poor. As a result, non-formal education has been developed and expanded. Several types of programmes have been organised, such as literacy classes, mobile and stationary vocational training units, radio correspondence, and a variety of developmental training programmes.

This non-formal education effort has widely served adults and youth within the rural and urban areas. However, carefully examining the population attending formal and non-formal education, almost one hundred percent of the people engaged in such education are those between the ages of 15-30. Even though some of the programmes are not limited by age but try to convince the older adults to learn, those who are over 30 years old continue to have fewer opportunities in education.

To encourage the adults, especially in the rural areas who play vital roles in the development of their country, to acquire new knowledge, skills and experiences, the government should attempt to mobilise all educational resources toward the concept of ‘lifelong education’. Resources should be directed more to the area of non-formal and informal learning particularly in the area of Technical Vocational Education and Training. It is a fact that in such a rapidly changing world, the appropriate learning approaches must take into account the utility of the existing learning resources within the communities, individual differences, as well as factors relating to the age of the target groups.

Lifelong Learning as a Major Approach

Thailand is a country in South East Asia that has shown interest in exploring non-formal education and informal education as a complement to formal education and places it within the overall holistic and integrated lifelong learning framework. The concept has been found very fruitful for Thai citizens. In 1999, the Thai Government passed The National Education Act. Under the Act, ‘Education’ means 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 conducive to continuous lifelong learning. The Act also states that ‘Credits accumulated by learners shall be transferable within the same type or between different types of education, regardless of whether the credits have been accumulated from the same or from different educational institutions, including learning from non-formal or
informal education, vocational training, or from work experience’. These statements show the willingness of the education system in Thailand to open the opportunity to all and consider it as a lifelong learning process.

**What Made the Educational System Change?**

According to the Educational Act, which is in response to the concept of lifelong education, the Thai Government considered the time for Educational Reform. Many aspects of the changes can be described briefly as follows. Education provision shall be based on the following principles: Lifelong education for all; all segments of society participating in the provision of education; continuous development of the bodies, knowledge and learning process.

In organising the system, structure, and process of education, the following principles shall be observed: unity in policy and diversify in implementation; decentralisation of authority to educational services areas, educational institutions, and local administration organisations; mobilisation of resources from different sources for provision of education; partnerships with individuals, families, communities, local administration, private organisations, professional bodies, religious institutions, enterprises and other social institutions.

Early childhood and basic education shall be provided in early childhood development institutions namely, child care centres, pre-school child development centres of religious institutions, initial care centres for disabled children or those with special needs. Basic education will also be provided learning centres organised by non-formal education agencies, individuals, families, communities, private organisations, religious institutions, enterprises, and other social institutions.

**Policy Guidelines**

Below are policy guidelines from the Educational Act that the Ministry of Education will be implementing through the National Education Development plan and education activities. All activities that aim to lifelong learning approach can be mentioned as follows.

In the context of formal education _pre-primary Education_ is organised by various agencies, both public and private, for 3-5 year old children. The courses can be classified into three types: child development centres, kindergartens and pre-school classes. _Primary Education:_ Six-Year primary education, which is now compulsory, is provided to 6-11 years old children. Nearly 80 percent of the total primary schools are provided by the government. _Secondary Education:_ Subdivided into lower secondary and upper secondary levels, all
schools are required to organise three types of activities for learners: those organised in accordance with the regulations of the Ministry of Education; guidance, remedial teaching or academic development activities; and independent activities of learners. The provision of higher education can be classified into three programmes: academic programme, professional programme, and technology programme.

Non-formal education services are provided by both public and private bodies to those outside the school system such as early childhood population, school-age population who have missed formal schooling and over-school-aged population. The provision can be classified into 3 main programmes non-formal education for pre-school children, fundamental education for literacy, general non-formal education, and vocational non-formal education.

Informal educational activities are available for self-learning through various sources of knowledge and the environment as follows. **Institutional Learning Centres:** The learning activities provided by all types of libraries, museums, science and technology centres, community learning centres, village reading centres, sub-district or village health and agricultural offices. **Cultural Learning Resources:** All cultural learning resources i.e. temples, local wisdom, local and folk media, farms and parks. **Mass Media:** Informal education provided by mass media i.e. radio, television, newspapers and books. **Social Activity:** Learning from families, friends and societies, which are learning sources from birth of all people.

### Some Strategies for Lifelong Learning

Important strategies for lifelong education are to clearly identify national lifelong learning policy and set up an organisation responsible for promotion and co-ordination of lifelong education both at the national and local levels. Understanding of the concept and value of lifelong education must be enhanced in terms of promoting and encouraging all segments of society to take part in providing education. Sources of learning and networks need to be developed including information sources, IT/ICT, as well as mass communication systems. Furthermore, teachers and personnel should be encouraged to participate in providing education with quality. A diversity of education approaches must be developed with more flexibility, accessibility, quality and standards. Curricula and contents needs to be improved to be responsive to the needs of various target groups and learning processes and procedures should be made suitable for each particular target group. Lastly, learning should be measured and evaluated with consideration of standard and accreditation among the three forms of education.

To integrate formal, non-formal, and informal education into the lifelong education framework, the Education Act 1999 provides that ‘Credits
accumulated by learners shall be transferable within the same type or between different type of education’. Thus an individual who has his/her confidence in a certain skill or knowledge, which he or she earned from any of the sources, can be accredited and transferred for certificate or degree. Under this concept, the educational system in Thailand will be more open and more useful to all people with education aiming for more ‘Human Capacity Building’ rather than ‘Human Resource Development’.

References


Adult Education in the Context of the National Programme on EFA in Indonesia

Ekodjatmiko Sukarso

Indonesia, together with other nations, has entered the new global world in which countries are more interdependent than ever before. In order to pursue a sustainable development, states therefore need to improve the quality of human resources. In line with this effort, Indonesia is participating in the Education for All (EFA) movement. The current policy on educational provision has been aligned to the EFA movement.

In the following paper a brief overview of the implementation of the Education for All programme at the national level will be presented. The programme includes the 9-year elementary education, literacy programmes and continuing education. The goal of national education in Indonesia, based on the Pancasila (the Five Principle State Philosophies) and the 1945 Constitution, is to enhance the intellectual life of the people and develop a complete Indonesian man or woman who has supreme conduct, knowledge and skills, is physically and mentally healthy, self-reliant and has a strong personality and a sense of responsibility to the society and nation.¹

National Programme on Education for All

Nine year basic education
The main objective of educational development is to raise the quality of human resources for national development in various sectors. In this vein, the minimum
level of education of the people has been raised from the formerly 6 years of primary education to 9-year basic education. This extension must comply with the equity aspect, which the government endeavours to fulfil by providing equal access to quality education for all citizens.

This integration of primary school and junior secondary school into 9-year basic education has been further formalised through a declaration made by the President as well as through the universalisation of the programme in 1994. The main objective of this programme is to enrol all children from 7 to 15 years in basic education. It implies on obligation both on the part of the parents to send their 7-year-old children to school as well as on the part of the government to provide the necessary educational facilities.

Many studies have been conducted on the implementation of the nine-year basic education programme. Analysis shows that not all (formal) primary school students complete 9 years of school nor do many pursue their education further into the (formal) junior secondary schools. Common reasons for dropping out include the need to work for survival and to help parents to cultivate the lands, the inability to pay for school costs, and distance from home to school.

In providing basic education for all, therefore, the role of out-of-school education becomes crucial. It provides an educational alternative for those who cannot enrol nor attend school on a regular basis. Non-formal alternatives to the nine-year basic education available in Indonesia include Package A and Package B. Recently both packages were enriched with a life skills orientation. The packages consist of two programmes, i.e. programmes for young children and for adults. Life skills orientation for the young children include skills such as personal and inter-personal or social skills, and those for adults are focused on vocational skills.

**Basic literacy programmes**

Since 1964 special attention has been given to the ‘eradication’ of illiteracy. Although the illiteracy rate decreased from 37 percent in 1971 to 16 percent in 1991 and 13 percent in 1995, the decrease is insignificant as it only represents a decrease of one million illiterates annually.

One possible factor for the low rate in the reduction of illiteracy is the high percentage of illiterates who are in fact primary school dropouts, particularly those who drop out in early grades and did not even reach the basic literacy level. Therefore, since 1995/1996 three types of programmes have been designed. The provision of A-1 to A-100 Package is equivalent to elementary school students for students who dropped out before the fourth grade and have not enrolled in any educational system since. The basic literacy programme is aimed at those who have basic skills capability at least similar to package A-10. The functional literacy programme is integrated into vocational skill provision.
Literacy programmes in Indonesia aims at three types of literacies; ability to read and write in roman characters, ability to communicate in the national language, and basic knowledge. This means that even if an Indonesian is capable of reading local characters, he or she may still be classified as ‘illiterate’. Similarly, even if someone is able to read and write the roman characters, he or she may not be capable of using the national language, in which case he or she is classified as illiterate.

Sustainable Learning Skills

Sustainability of learning skills can be achieved only if there are opportunities to participate in education at a more advanced level. Currently, there are several ways of sustaining people’s ability to learn. These include the post literacy programme, literacy programme, personal interest programme, income-generating programme, future-oriented programme, and improvement of living quality programme. Three of them will be outlined in the following section.

The income generation programme
This programme began in 1996 as an experimental programme and was implemented in 1997 in 18 provinces. The total target reached was as large as 22,500 learners. The programme is mainly provided to people who have low education levels in addition to low income or live under conditions of poverty. The programme helps to improve the learners’ knowledge, attitude and skill, particularly in managing small businesses, and imparts competencies to conduct business independently. The overall aim is to increase the income and standard of living.

The government has declared a new strategy in the implementation of the income generation programme. The strategy is to connect income generation programmes with education programmes oriented to community needs in order to obtain revenue for the community learning centres.

Apprenticeship programme
Currently, within the framework of 9-year basic education programme, a work orientation programme has not been provided to elementary schools and Package B dropouts. The apprenticeship programme fills this gap. This programme provides an opportunity for students to work and study in a business unit for six months. While the transportation costs have to be borne by the participants, the government provides the incentives needed for setting up a business unit. Upon finishing the programme, students are expected to be able to start a new business. Since government funds available for this programme are limited, it is
hoped that this model will attract the community or local government to develop parallel programmes.

**Vocational skills courses**

Another type of out-of-school education programme being implemented widely is the continuing education vocational skills courses. The courses are organised for young people and adults who need to develop their skills to enter the jobs, and/or to pursue higher levels of education.

Vocational skills courses are entirely demand oriented. The types of skills offered are oriented to make it possible for graduates to successfully enter the labour market. Programmes focus on building and developing courses and services, to be provided by the community, which contribute to the know-how of the learner for working in or setting up a business, as well as improving status and quality of living. The development of the course programmes emphasises standardisation, accreditation and certification.

Out of 130 types of courses identified and provided by the community, 21 of them were standardised. These standardised courses apply the ‘dual system’ model of learning-teaching processes whereby theory and practice are acquired in both the classroom and the work/business context. Standardisation is aimed towards imparting key skills, which enable the graduate to compete in the labour market.

Based on data from January 2002, the Ministry of National Education has implemented the Course Accreditation Programme to accredit courses that have passed the quality test in areas of management, standardisation, institutions, teachers and infrastructure. 22,510 people have been given operational licensing from the Ministry of National Education.

In conclusion, the President of the Republic of Indonesia has reiterated the 9-year elementary and literacy programme as national programmes. The constitution provides that education is a state responsibility placing the onus on the Ministry of Education and Culture. However it is not only the responsibility of the Ministry of National Education, but also the Ministry of Religious Affairs at the provincial and national level, and particularly the District Government at the local level. Even though the main responsibility lies with the Ministry of National Education, the Armed Forces also provide help through a special operation for illiteracy eradication, *Obama*.

At the national level, a task force has been set up to monitor the implementation process. The responsibility of the task force is to identify problems in the implementation process and to submit remedial action plans. All agencies and stakeholders are expected to support the programme either in terms of decision-making, infrastructure, or the provision of resources or funding.
Based on this action model, similar efforts need to be made at the local level. The local task force will also be responsible for periodical evaluation and analysis of the Education for All programme and will be required to submit a methodology for problem solving and an action planning.

Notes

1 The Five Principles consist of belief in God the Almighty, just and civilized humanity, unity of Indonesia, democracy which is guided by the inner wisdom of deliberation of representatives, and social justice for the whole people of Indonesia.

2 At the present almost 95 percent of 7-12 year-old children participate in primary school. This means that another 5 percent is not served by the primary school. Furthermore, the transition rate from primary to junior secondary education is only about 62 percent. Another 3 percent of the students remain under-educated due to dropout, which in junior secondary schools amounts to 4 percent.

3 Package A and Package B have been given equivalent status to primary schooling and junior secondary schooling. Package A graduates are able to enrol for junior secondary school, and Package B graduates are able to pursue their senior secondary schooling.

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References


An Alternative Learning System for Disadvantaged Communities in the Philippines

Rosario J. de Guzman

Introduction

Education is conceived as a lifelong process which is related to all points in the life experiences of an individual. It is a process full of meaning and reality to the learner, and a process in which the learner is an active participant in the learning process rather than a passive recipient.

This paper deals with literacy and non-formal education of out-of-school youth and adults 15-years old and above who are illiterate or neo-literate from depressed rural areas or slum dwellings in the cities who either have no access to the formal education system or have dropped out of the formal school system and have reverted to illiteracy. It highlights two programmes for these targeted groups: the Basic Literacy Programme and the Non-formal Education Accreditation and Equivalency System. In order institutionalise and build bridges between formal and informal, the Philippines has established the Non-Formal Accreditation and Equivalency System which offers an alternative pathway by which out-of-school youth and adults earn an education qualification comparable to the elementary and secondary school system

Blueprint for Action
In pursuit of global development and lifelong learning opportunities, the government of the Philippines has developed a blueprint for action popularly known as ‘Education for All: A Philippine Plan of Action’ (EFA-PPA) which concretised the fundamental ideas and issues raised in the local and international literacy and continuing education conferences in order to reinforce the concept that education is a never ceasing process, a never-ending lifetime commitment, hence it is for life and takes place throughout life.

The same document pushes for a learning system that goes beyond the structures and strictures of formal schooling, wherein the world is viewed as a classroom with lifelong learning providing the tools for people’s empowerment. In recognition of the fact that education has increasingly become a lifelong process, the task of providing lifelong learning in the Philippines becomes a shared responsibility of both the public and private sectors. One of the features is the institutionalisation of the participation of civil society as partners in the implementation and management of non-formal education programmes.

The Philippine Constitution provides that the state shall establish, maintain, and support a complete, adequate, and integrated system of education relevant to the needs of the people and society. Non-formal, informal, as well as self-learning, independent, and out-of-school study programmes will be encouraged particularly those that respond to community needs. Adult citizens, the disabled, and out-of-school youth shall be provided with training in civics, vocational efficiency, and other skills.

**The Basic Literacy Programme**

The Basic Literacy Programme provides the core neo-illiterate out-of-school youth and adults from the poorest segments of society with educational programmes specifically designed to address their expressed needs. The programme is expected to contribute towards the country’s poverty alleviation programme by raising the literacy and numeracy skills of the poor to enhance their capacity for engaging in self-help and community development activities. It aims to develop locally adapted learning materials, strengthen monitoring, research and evaluative capacities of the implementers, mobilise NFE inter-agency co-ordinating committees, and assess community-based NFE programmes and formulate policies to raise the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of these programmes.

The Basic Literacy Programme utilises the Literacy Service Contracting Scheme (LSCS) as a delivery mechanism. The delivery of literacy services is contracted by the Department of Education to service providers which are Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) such as foundations, religious/academic support welfare agencies, people’s organisations, State Universities and Colleges with literacy extension programmes and other government agencies active in
literacy promotion, or any other alternative delivery system which implements and manages the Basic Literacy Programme. This policy is now enshrined in the law on the General Appropriations Act. The Basic Literacy Programme has already been institutionalised and receives funding from the National Government apart from the Local School Board and private agencies.

**Non-formal Education Accreditation and Equivalency System**

The Non-formal Education Accreditation and Equivalency System (NFE A&E) is a pioneering programme that offers a uniquely non-formal alternative learning system to formal schooling covering functional education skills and competencies comparable to the formal school system. It enables the learners to continue to learn outside the formal school system. It is a ‘flexible learning system’ because it breaks down traditional barriers or rigid curriculum, time, resources and accessibility, giving learners as much control as possible over what, when, where and how they learn within the constraints of limited resources. It allows flexible entry and exit points and aims to maximise learners’ control of the learning process to cater to their varying learning needs and goals.

The target learners are 15 years old and above, out-of-school youth and adults who are illiterate or have completed the Basic Literacy Programme. Most of these target learners live predominantly below the poverty line and come from the depressed, disadvantaged, underdeveloped and underserved communities.

The development of the NFE A&E System uses the new definition of functional literacy, which includes a range of skills and competencies - cognitive, affective and behavioural, to enable individuals to live and work as human persons; develop their potentials; make critical and informed decisions; function effectively in society within the context of their environment and the wider community (local, regional, national, global) in order to improve the quality of their life and that of society.

The NFE A&E Curriculum Framework contains a learning continuum of essential knowledge, attitudes and values desired for non-formal basic education and which are designed to be comparable to formal education. It serves as the basis for the development of 535 interactive self-learning modules, 3 videotapes and 47 audiotapes, which provide learning support to the learners.

The Learning Support Delivery System is the implementation designed to provide learners a range of alternative learning modes so they may continue their learning outside of the formal school system and upgrade their skills and competencies in preparation for taking the NFE A&E tests at two levels – elementary and secondary levels. This includes utilisation of learning materials
and a range of learning support strategies and structures and delivery modes. The NGOs, local government units, private and state colleges and universities, people’s organisations and church-based organisations implement the NFE A&E System.

The tests at the elementary and secondary levels, which are based on the curriculum framework, are paper and pencil-based tests with multiple choice-based questions and an essay-writing test. In order, to strengthen the integrity of the assessment and certification process, the Bureau of Non-Formal Education developed a viable and valid approach to the assessment of learner competence not adequately encompassed by the NFE A&E tests. In selected sites, portfolio assessment was added with project-based learning, documentation of life experiences and use of recognition of prior learning.

Articulation with other agencies was made by way of Memorandums of Agreement signed between the Department of Education and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA). TESDA provides NFE A&E Secondary Level Certificate Holders access to TESDA administered post-secondary schools and vocational training programmes offered in TESDA Regional and Provincial Training Centres. Memorandums of Agreement signed between Department of Education and the Commission on Higher Education and the Department of Education and the Philippine Association of State Universities and Colleges (PASUC) recognise the NFE A&E Secondary Level Certificate as a qualification comparable to that of the diploma of the formal school system and provides secondary level certificate holders access to the post-secondary education programmes of PASUC member institutions subject to the usual screening procedures of such institution for regular enrollees.

The Civil Service Commission issued CSC Resolution No. 000499 recognising the NFE A&E Elementary and Secondary certificates as valid documents for permanent appointment to government positions provided other requirements are met. These linkages and articulation agreements provide recognition and acceptance of the NFE A&E System as a legitimate alternative to formal schooling, which have opened new doors to possible employment, further education and better life opportunities to its graduates. These enter or re-enter the world of work. Other benefits that the NFE A&E test passers get are: the development of marketable skills, increase of income through improved job opportunities, development of self-awareness of community rights and responsibilities.

The former President of the Republic of the Philippines issued Administrative Order No. 116, which mandates all local government units and government agencies to support the NFE A&E System. At present, the Committees on Appropriations and Education in Congress have unanimously approved the institutionalisation of the NFE in the Committee level and will soon be brought to the House for first reading.
The seven-year Philippines Non-formal Education Project, which was funded by the Asian Development Bank, came to a close in June 2001. However, this year, the National Government has appropriated funds for NFE A&E. The Local School Board and international organisations such as the World Bank, Plan International, and private agencies are funding the implementation of NFE in selected sites.

**Academic-Focused Bridging Programme**
The Academic-Focused Bridging Programme was developed to equip the NFE A&E secondary level test passers who are interested to enter college with academic-bridging competencies for successful entry and survival in college. They have been out-of-school for some time and require additional learning support to cope with the demands and entry requirements of college education. The learning intervention also provides counselling and follow-up on their learning progress. The academic-focused bridging programme offers interested learners an opportunity to prepare for the intellectual challenges of a university/college education. With the development of the academic-focused bridging programme, the NFE A&E secondary level test learners will have an opportunity to move up a continuous ladder of learning from basic literacy level to college level education. Ninety-four interactive self-learning modules on essential life skills preparatory to college work, higher English, mathematical and science skills were developed as learning support for the learners.

**Non-formal Education Learning System for Indigenous People with Focus on Women and Girls**
The Bureau of Non-Formal Education started working on a project with the goal of providing education services and support which respond to the education needs of indigenous peoples and integrating their traditional knowledge, skills and learning systems into an equitable NFE learning system with special focus on women and girls. Specifically, this project will develop and pilot a more appropriate curriculum in the context of an equitable NFE learning system, seek government approval, and initiate expansion to communities throughout the country. This will be based on the philosophy of mutual respect and trust between the indigenous communities and the government and require, enhancement (rather than replacement) of traditional capacities, and genuine joint decision-making and action throughout.

It has proven difficult to meet the educational needs so integral to addressing these inequalities despite the keen interest of the indigenous peoples in education. The major constraints to their access and participation have been, namely, remote location coupled with limited government staff and budget, lack
of curriculum appropriate to their situation and needs, and lack of recognition and respect for indigenous learning systems and the consequent failure to integrate these into the national curriculum.

This learning system will be based on the philosophy of mutual respect and trust between the indigenous communities and the government and require enhancement rather than replacement of traditional capacities and joint decision-making and action. The final result will be an equitable and participatory system, which meets the needs of both indigenous communities and the country. Representatives of the indigenous communities will be equal partners in all decisions, actions and processes, all components of the curriculum will have sufficient flexibility to facilitate individual area/community adaptation to local resources, conditions and needs and respond to diversity within the community.

Pathway to A Better Tomorrow

The Philippine government commits itself to improving the conditions and quality of out-of-school learning for out-of-school youth and adults by creating learning structures and lifelong learning environments to counter the growing disparities between those who have access to formal school and those who do not. All these programmes and projects were developed and implemented for the out-of-school youth and adults who are 15 years old and above. However, this year the BNFE has been given a new mandate, which is to develop and provide an alternative learning system also for 6 to 14 years old children who have not enrolled in school or who have dropped out of school.

The development of these alternative learning systems have brought forth opportunities for employment, vocational training, further study in college, learning essential life skills, and the ability to participate more fully in the economic, political and social lives of their communities. This is the difference that these alternative-learning systems, particularly the NFE A&E System has made to the lives of the thousands of out-of-school youth and adult learners. Making this difference possible is what continues to be the driving force of the work and commitment of the Bureau of Non-Formal Education, Philippines, to make access to Basic Education a right for every Filipino. With the development of these programmes, thousands of out-of-school youth and adults from the most impoverished sectors of society have an alternative means to improve their basic education skills and competencies as a pathway to a better tomorrow.

References
The population of Malé is about 65,000 people, while the large majority of islands have less than even 5,000 people. The multicultural heritage, the uniqueness of the Dhivehi language, and Islam are strong national features.¹

It is believed that settlers from the Indian Sub-Continent came to the Maldives even before the 5th Century BC. During the spice trade rush between Europe, the Middle East and South East Asia, some traders made their homes in the Maldives as well, increasing the number of settlements. Such settlements and the lack of continuous transport within and outside Maldives led to the evolution of the language Dhivehi with its unique calligraphy thaana.²

Within the country, particularly the three southern most atolls, different dialects are spoken. However, the written form, Thaana, is common throughout the country, indicating that education has been an important part of the people. All children between the ages of three to six are taught to read Arabic, a necessity to practice Islam. An Edhurudhaitha, usually an elderly lady, teaches children to read Arabic and the rituals of praying.³ The Edhurudhaitha also conducts lessons in Dhivehi literacy and numeracy. Regardless of a formal education, parents send their children to an Edhuruge; it is a parental duty to inculcate proper belief of Islam in their children.⁴ This is the reason why the literacy rate of Maldives is as high as 98.5%.⁵
General Education

It was only in 1927 that a formal education institution, only for males and in the capital Malé, was established. The subjects taught were Dhivehi, Islam, Arabic and Arithmetic. Within the next two decades, however, females were also studying in a separate section of the school. At the same time, children in the atolls were encouraged to study. In result, by 1945 all inhabited islands had teaching institutions called makthab.  

Education in Maldives reached a new milestone with the beginning of English medium schooling in Malé in the next decade. This was the foundation of the current system of education that was established in 1978. This was followed by the formulation of the National Curriculum and the establishment of a basic educational standard of Grade 1 to 7. At about the same time, Atoll Education Centres were built in all atolls, and a long-term on-going project to upgrade existing schools was set up. A computer literacy programme was also launched recently, under which each child who finishes school (after Grade 10) is to be computer literate.

The private sector also plays a significant role in formal and informal education. Nearly 50 percent of school age children study at private and community schools as shown in the Chart 1.

Chart 1: Student Enrolment in Schools In 2000

![Chart 1: Student Enrolment in Schools In 2000](image)

Source: Educational Statistics 2000

The following chart shows the number of students within the different school categories mentioned above and the student population at each level in the atolls and in Malé.
The Non Formal Education Centre

The Non Formal Education Centre came into being as a separate government institution in 1986. It has the mandate of assisting those who miss regular formal schooling opportunities with literacy and post-literacy skills needed for productive employment, mainly skills that are not offered through training opportunities by the private sector.

Additionally, under the responsibility of the Centre are those areas that do not fall within the official national curriculum, such as early childhood care and education, and population education for the community.

Furthermore, the Centre is also responsible for creating general awareness within the community of such issues as those associated with socio-economic development. One of the methods of reaching out to the community is the publication of a monthly magazine, Jamaathuge Khabaru, and a yearly booklet, Holhuashi. While the former contains articles of significance by learned Maldivians, scholars and translations of various journal articles, the latter focuses on current concerns. Additionally, assorted children’s books and other publications are produced yearly on topics of enduring educational value and made available to the public. All of these productions are in the vernacular Dhivehi.
Below is a table summarising NFEC’s activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Education</th>
<th>Continuing Education</th>
<th>Specialised Programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(A Condensed Education Programme of 1 – 3 years up to grade 10 standard)</td>
<td>Malé based courses</td>
<td>Literacy and post-literacy education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atoll based classes</td>
<td>Skills development in the atolls</td>
<td>Early childhood care and education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malé based classes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Distance education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the Centre is funded by the government, several organisations such as UNDP, UNFPA, UNESCO and especially UNICEF assist generously.

**Linking Formal, Non-Formal and Informal Learning**

There is great demand for education by those who have not been able to complete formal education at the primary level due to various reasons. Recognising this, the NFEC caters to those who want education and training through various programmes, such as: Condensed Education Programme (CEP); Second Chance Programme; Distance Education English Course (DEEC); Community Development Programmes and Vocational (outreach) programmes.

The CEP enables students to study the General Certificate syllabus and to sit the GCE London University examinations, which is the examination that is done by students in the formal system of education. The CEP thus, provides the opportunity for school dropouts or those who had not been able to access full formal education to enter into the formal system of education after sitting for the examinations.

The Second Chance Programme allows students in Malé as well as in other, remote islands to access educational opportunities through contact classes.
is an extension of the CEP programme and now has been taken up more widely at a national level. One of the consequences of this is that the CEP teaching materials are now being used to create radio and TV scripts for delivery to even more remote islands in a distance mode. This distance delivery component is seen as supplementary to the contact classes which are held where possible, and it is hoped that even those who are not able to attend contact classes will benefit from the broadcast and telecast classes. The ultimate aim of these courses, in both modes, is to enable students to eventually reach GCE level.

DEEC courses, begun in 1989, were meant to bridge the Grade 8-10 gap in the English language and are geared to students in remote locations. The aim of this course is to assist students in gaining a formal, international qualification. While several cohorts of students have reached Level 3 of this course, which is the highest level available at this time, Level 4 materials will be brought out in 2003 and will truly enable students to achieve the aim of the course, after studying only by distance mode.

The recently developed Maldives National Qualification Framework (MNQF), formed by the Maldives Accreditation Board, enables longer-term non-formal courses to be accredited. NFEC is in the process of applying for accreditation for selected courses, and when accreditation is achieved, it will demonstrate increased official acceptance of non-formal courses, and those who finish these courses can access even better opportunities since they can enter formal courses based on their achievement in NFEC’s courses.

**Recognising Students’ Abilities and Prior Experiences**

Participants applying for entry to NFEC courses are not required to have any formal qualifications. The main and common stipulation is that the applicants should be (school dropouts) of age 16 and above.

Whereas there normally are no other qualifying criteria for short courses, on many of the longer courses there are entrance examinations that students who are better qualified can use to gain direct entry to higher levels of the course. For example, in the English for Adults course, there is an entrance test, which enables fresh applicants to enter the course at the level they are most suited for, based on the entrance results.

While prior experiences in particular fields are valued by the Centre, up to now it has not been possible to evaluate participants’ experience effectively and to incorporate those evaluations into entry criteria.

However, since there are usually no barriers to entry in courses, and since entry can be achieved at different levels depending on students’ abilities, it could be fairly said that students’ abilities, if not their experiences per se, are valued even at present.
Providing Alternative Modes of Learning

At present NFEC is involved in providing adult education through several means. There are, of course, the conventional classroom based classes. Examples of these are the English for Adults course, the *Thaana* and Arabic writing course, etc. Use is made of the distance mode as well, as in the case of the Distance Education English Course, which is run both in Malé and in the atolls.

In addition to this, national radio broadcasts (by the Voice of Maldives) are employed, especially in the case of community education, and NFEC has a weekly 15-minute slot in the morning (6.45 to 7.00 am) which enables access to a large audience. The programme is also repeated on the same day at 9 p.m. Furthermore, development is underway to supplement the Second Chance programme through conversion of that syllabus to radio and TV based distance mode versions to enable greater access.

Creating Infrastructures and Partnerships for Lifelong Learning

While there are several systems that are in place which are useful and effective in delivering adult and lifelong learning in the Maldives, there are also many aspects that need improvement.

The organisation of NFEC is in itself geared towards the effective delivery of lifelong learning, since there are specialist persons who handle different program areas, who have their own support staff.

Relationships with many parties and organizations need to be maintained in order to carry out programmes effectively. This aspect is especially important since there are no set mechanisms in place to facilitate the running of programmes on-site. Different programmes require close connections with different parties and creative solutions to local conditions. While this requires time and effort, one set method of carrying out activities would not be effective in many situations in the Maldives; therefore this varied approach is necessary.

The parties that NFEC work most closely with include other ministries, especially the Ministry of Atolls Administration, which mediates much of the official communication with the atoll offices and island offices. Additionally, ministries such as the Ministry of Health are also important since some of our programmes are in health awareness. In many cases the schools, such as the Atoll Education Centres, host programmes, and also in other cases, the staff of the schools play a major role in the delivery of programmes or dissemination of information. Many local NGOs are extremely active in motivating people within
the community to learn different skills, acquire knowledge, etc., and they in fact often play a major role in making arrangements for courses, and even in running programmes. In some cases NFEC needs to solicit the co-operation of different individuals in the community to assist in the running of courses. Other facilities are also needed for the effective delivery of adult and lifelong learning, such as communications facilities.

At present, extensive use is made of methods such as phone, fax, post and also direct delivery methods in order to deliver the programmes. While some of these methods are more effective with some islands and/or programmes, others play a major role in other ways. For example, there are some islands where the post does not operate regularly. In such cases, materials need to be sent via boats from particular islands that have stopped over in Malé.

Another mechanism that is used to deliver programmes, especially community awareness messages, is radio. Through a cordial relationship with the Voice of Maldives (the national radio), NFEC is able to deliver such programmes directly into the homes or workplaces throughout the country, and this is seen as a very valuable resource. This is so much so that, as mentioned earlier in this paper, radio as well as the TV-based Second Chance programmes are being prepared for delivery.

One development that is eagerly awaited is the ready and easy access by those in the atolls to the Internet, which will enable the convenient delivery of much material and information on a more regular basis.

Another long-awaited event is the establishment, either independently or within another institution, of a community centre or other facility that can act as a focal point for programmes and activities. In fact, research is now being undertaken by the Ministry of Education to determine the mechanisms of operating such a facility, and when such facilities are set up, they will enable a more effective delivery of programmes as well as better feedback and monitoring of activities.

**Conclusion**

Lifelong learning activities are being undertaken by increasing numbers of people, in parallel with the development of the formal system of education and the development of the economy. It is being seen as more and more important for people to be educated as much as possible, and to have acquired various skills that would help them.

This process is likely to be strengthened and to gain momentum with the introduction of courses put together under the Maldives National Qualification Framework, since this will make it possible for students to gain credit points from various programmes into solid qualifications.
Since NFEC is a government-funded organisation, most of the budget comes from the government, giving NFEC the valuable status of being financially independent. For instance, the government budget for NFEC for 2002 was over USD 280,000.

In addition to this, the Centre has been fortunate in attracting funding from other sources from time to time. These sources include UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO, as well as other bodies such as the ACCU.

While the Centre, as seen from the information above, is quite active and is delivering many programmes to the community, it has the potential of achieving even more. It is hoped that the next few years will see the development of even better support systems for the delivery of adult and lifelong learning, as well as the development of new programmes to achieve the mandate of the Centre.

Notes

1 *Dhivehi*: The language of Maldives.
2 *Thaana*: Calligraphy of Dhivehi
3 *Edhurudhaitha*: an elderly lady who teaches basic religious studies at her home.
4 *Edhuruge*: A place where basic religious studies are taught usually the home of edhurudhaitha.
5 In the Maldivian context, the literacy rate based on the ability to read and write Arabic and Thaana as well as basic numeracy
6 *Makthab*: A traditional school for teaching religious studies, Quranic reading, basic numeracy and literacy.
7 *Community School*: A school establishment in each inhabited island run by the local community assisted by the Government.

References

Support Structures and Institutional Capacities for Adult and Lifelong Learning
Understanding how Adults Learn: Some Considerations for Institutional Responses to Meeting Basic Learning Needs

Anita Dighe

Developments in Adult and Lifelong Learning

The field of adult education has been marked by loose and even erratic use of terms such as ‘adult education’, ‘non-formal education’, ‘continuing education’, ‘social education’, ‘adult basic education’, ‘community education’, and ‘lifelong education’. These terms have been used at one time or another, sometimes even interchangeably, in most countries, irrespective of their level of development, to reflect the changing nature of each country’s development priorities. The latest addition to this list of terms is ‘lifelong learning’. Numerous international conferences, seminars, commissioned projects have provided direction in shaping national policies for education of adults; it might be useful to understand the historical evolution of some of these terms.

According to Bhola (1984), it was the World Conference on Adult Education held in Montreal in 1960 that put adult illiteracy on the world educational agenda. UNESCO, which has taken a leading role in the fight against illiteracy since its inception in 1946, was given the specific mandate to take necessary follow-up action. However, since the sole emphasis on literacy as the ability to acquire the 3Rs (reading, writing and arithmetic) resulted in motivational problems for adults to become literate, new solutions had to be found. In India, the term ‘social education’ became part of the community development movement of the 50s.

The next landmark was the World Conference of Ministers of Education on the Eradication of Illiteracy that was held in Teheran in 1965. At this Conference,
it was recognised that literacy had to be more than the rudimentary knowledge of reading and writing. Thus was born the concept of functional literacy, which focused on the economic aspect and on productivity and was later put into practice in the form of Experimental World Literacy Programme (EWLP) conducted by UNESCO from 1967 to 1973 in eleven experimental projects around the world. The EWLP experience, however, showed that illiteracy still remained a problem amongst the marginalised groups.

The 1970’s witnessed other developments in the field of adult education. The exclusive focus on economic skills in the EWLP was broadened and even transformed. Literacy was now seen as a strategy for liberation. The aim was to teach adults not only how to read the word but also how to read the world (Bataille 1976). Paulo Freire’s (1970 and 1973) emphasis on literacy to ‘liberate’ as opposed to literacy to ‘domesticate’, captured the imagination of those who started understanding the transformative potential of literacy. On the other hand, the growing disenchantment with the inability of the formal system in solving the problem of adult illiteracy, led to the somewhat euphoric acceptance of the term ‘non-formal education’ which was perceived as the panacea for solving the problems created by formal education.

Earlier adult education programmes had a selective, intensive approach. In the 1980s, there was a realisation that this approach was ineffective and that a mass campaign approach, which was commensurate with the magnitude of the problem of illiteracy, was necessary. The 1980s were thus a period of mass literacy campaigns. On the basis of the analysis of literacy campaigns conducted in eight countries, Bhola (1984) came up with a theory of literacy campaigns and addressed policy makers and planners on the basic strategies for designing mass literacy campaigns. India was one of the countries that subsequently took up the Total Literacy Campaign across the country in a big way. After completing the basic literacy phase, post literacy and continuing education programmes were intended to be in place.

In 1990, the Jomtien Conference on Education for All adopted the concept of ‘basic learning needs’ as the core for the expanded vision of education. 1996 was declared the European Year of Learning and saw the publication of two international reports centred on the concept of lifelong learning as the pillar of the future learning society: the Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century (1996) and the OECD Report (1996). In 1997, the Fifth Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V) spoke of adult education and adult learning. In 2000, the ‘Memorandum for Lifelong Learning’ of the Commission of the European Communities launched a Europe-wide debate on a comprehensive strategy for implementing lifelong learning at individual and institutional levels, and in all spheres of public and private life (Torres 2001).

The term lifelong education was first mooted in the Faure report of 1972 titled ‘Learning to Be’. Twenty-eight years later, lifelong education was replaced by the term lifelong learning. Critics avert that lifelong learning, as promoted by the European Union (EU) and its member states, the Organisation of Economic Co-
operation and Development (OECD) and even the World Bank, has an economic interpretation and an individual orientation. Given the hegemonic control of the promoters of such policies, many Asian countries have had to follow suit and have developed modern policy discourses on lifelong learning, transforming in the process their own traditional philosophies (e.g. Confucianism, Buddhism) which have for centuries promoted continuous learning (UIE 2001). Despite the criticism, the fact remains that lifelong learning continues to gain wide acceptance across a large number of countries of the world today. It would therefore be useful to understand the salient features of lifelong learning and of the changes/developments that have taken place since 1990, the year that put basic education on the educational agenda of a large number of countries across the world.

While the Jomtien Conference created universal awareness and collective mobilisation vis-à-vis education, there remained a gap between international declarations and national plans and policies. Thus, despite the official recognition of the importance of the ‘expanded vision of basic education’ for adults, youth and children, in reality, basic education through the 1990s confined itself largely to school education and that too, only focused on primary education. Despite the quality and equity rhetoric, the main concern remained on quantity (enrolment, access, gender parity). While this trend was evident in Africa, the Mid-Decade EFA Assessment drew the attention of the planners and policy makers that the ‘expanded vision of basic education’ was being reduced to ‘putting more children into school’ (EFA Forum 1996). According to Torres (2001), the end of decade assessment confirmed that these trends were not reversed. School enrolment increased but few countries had data to report on learning and fewer countries could show improved learning results.

With regard to adult basic education, the trend was even more disturbing. The issue of quality was not even acknowledged. Torres (2001) is of the opinion that illiteracy and literacy continue to be understood and measured with quantitative criteria, regardless of the quality of learning inputs, processes and results. Eradicating or reducing illiteracy was expressed in terms of reducing or increasing numbers and rates. The cost-effectiveness of literacy programmes revolved around the number of months, or lessons to be covered. ‘The shorter the better’ remained the dominant criteria for determining success. This explains why major educational efforts in the South confined themselves to reducing illiteracy, albeit with the help of programmes, which were often, time bound, static, and limited in scope.

On the other hand, in the countries of the North, with the break up of economic barriers worldwide, rapid technological changes particularly in telecommunication, and the unfolding of knowledge based networked societies, the term lifelong learning has assumed great significance. Two of the most cited reasons for the importance of lifelong learning are for people to keep pace with the speed of development of information and knowledge and for people to learn new skills in rapidly changing societies.
Recognising the importance of building a ‘knowledge society’ and a ‘learning society’ in the new millennium, countries of the North have already embraced the framework of lifelong learning and are mobilising efforts to make this a reality for the citizens of their countries. On the other hand, the countries of the South are still struggling to provide Basic Education for All. Clearly a divide in educational discourse, policy and practice, between countries of the North and South is taking place. In order to bridge this gap, it is now necessary that lifelong learning as a paradigm - both as a horizon and as an active principle must shape education and learning policies and programmes of all countries (Torres 2001 and UIE 2001).

**Understanding the Concept of Lifelong Learning**

A review of some of the existing materials and reports, however, show that lifelong learning as an educational principle is not clearly understood and is still highly contested. Given the wide range of understanding and usage of lifelong learning, it might be useful to clarify some of concepts and principles that are used in relation to lifelong learning. This would be necessary in order to identify the institutional support system that would have to be in place for the implementation of such programmes.

As a starting point, the operational definition provided by a UIE document (2001) is useful, for it distinguishes between lifelong learning as a principle of learning throughout the life cycle and in different areas (lifelong and life wide) and lifelong learning as a master concept which will treat education holistically and integrate all stages and forms of education. Some of the principles might be stated thus:

‘The focus in lifelong learning is on learning and not on education. Education is more teacher-oriented, while learning is learner-oriented; Learning takes place throughout life. It is not just confined to a specific period in the life of an individual. Learning needs of children, youth and adults have now to be addressed. Also, learning needs can be varied and can change over time; Learning is life wide; all types of learning environments, situations and opportunities, settings and institutions, would now have to be included. These would include home, community, workplace, education and cultural centres, community centres and libraries, mass media, women’s organisations and youth clubs’. A systemic vision of education and learning would be necessary. This would thus encompass not just formal education and its institutions and programmes but also non-formal and informal programmes and seek to strengthen and integrate them in a holistic framework.

Since lifelong learning has been criticised for having an economic and vocational orientation, it has been considered necessary to go beyond this discourse and to enlarge the scope of lifelong learning’s contribution to address identity and values formation, promote citizenship education, facilitate
democratic participation and help in conflict resolution. Indeed, the challenge facing policy makers, educators and practitioners is the reconstruction of lifelong learning to allow it to encompass political, social and cultural aspects of life within each society (UIE 2001). While suggesting that adult basic education and lifelong learning should be located within the framework of Human Development, Torres (2001) makes a plea: ‘This is a new opportunity to make the case for a vibrant resurgence of education and learning for all - children, youth and adults - and specially for the poor, where youth and adult learning are not viewed as remedial and minimalist concessions, reduced to basic literacy skills and aimed at alleviating poverty, but rather as part of a strong, renewed strategy for human development’.

Conducive Learning Environments for Adults

It is pertinent to understand that in lifelong learning, the shift of focus is on the learner and on the learning process. There is a growing tendency to refer to students as learners, and teachers as facilitators of learning. Instead of learning to follow the teacher, there is now emphasis on learning to learn. The learner is thus centre stage as the rest are seen to be supportive of the process of learning chosen by the learner. Since learning styles and learning needs of adults are different, it would be useful to recapitulate these. This would be necessary for such an understanding would determine a range of timely and appropriate support systems.

Understanding how adults learn

To say that adults learn continuously through their lives is to state the obvious. We learn every day - sometimes we do it deliberately, sometimes learning processes are unintended. Rogers (1992) refers to a continuum of adult learning in relation to intention. Thus, at one end is the haphazard learning, which is unplanned. There is no intention to promote learning purposefully when we see a poster, eavesdrop on a conversation, or see a movie. Whatever learning happens is chance learning. Then, there is learning which is intended on the part of the provider. Advertisements and mass campaigns belong to this category. This is called informal learning. When learning becomes more purposeful, designed to meet needs as they arise or to cope with new situations, then such planned learning is called non-formal learning. At the far end of the continuum are those formal learning programmes in which there is clear intention on the part of the provider and the learner to engage in learning. These are formal learning programmes both inside and outside the formal education system.

There are other aspects of adult learning that need to be given consideration. For example, an adult does not simply respond mechanically to environmental stimuli/events. He/she is an active explorer and creator. Learning is the interplay between the learner and his/her learning environments (UIE 2001). Furthermore,
the adult learner reflects on his/her life and environment and is thus a reflexive agent. Prior learning and prior experience are important issues of adult learning systems and need to be taken into account in developing learning materials and in organising learning events. Those are some of the principles of adult learning that have been distilled from adult education practitioners and theorists. Adults learn best when they are free from undue stress, boredom, overload of information and when they are not trying to second guess the objectives of the educational intervention. Adults decide for themselves what is important to be learned. Adults do not approach any additional learning from a fresh or 'clean slate', and thus, learning without a concrete link to life has little value. Rather they draw upon past experience as a benchmark against which they measure any new information. They may already have fixed viewpoints on a given subject. Adults have learning needs closely related to their lives and their work. They tend to define a useful learning experience as one in which they can link the new knowledge to their experience to solve problems. They thus expect information given to them to be immediately useful; they expect that the process of learning be easy, convenient and interesting. The ‘why’ of learning is as important as the ‘how’ of learning. More than anything else, adults have a significant ability to serve as a knowledgeable resource to the trainer and to fellow learners.

The immediate implication here is that the learning strategies would have to match the processes of learning and would have to include a significant element of interactivity enabling a ‘partnership’ in the process of learning. This would help the learner to understand how he/she learns.

Also from the above, it is evident that the entire continuum of adult learning would have to be considered in planning for adult and lifelong learning programmes. While formal institutions of various kinds would form one range of institutional support for such programmes, the challenge would be to identify all learning spaces that are available for the non-formal and informal learning. These could possibly include community centres, libraries, mass media, religious gatherings, and a whole range of such institutions, organisations, and settings, making up the learning environments. Furthermore, rather than education being the concern of only departments/ministries of education, all the allied departments and ministries, for example human resource development, labour, health, agriculture and rural development, urban development and the like, would have to be involved in the implementation of lifelong learning programmes.

**Understanding how women learn**

Inadequate attention has so far been paid to understanding how women learn and what are the barriers to their learning. The issue of women’s lack of self-confidence and low self-esteem in starting or returning to an educational programme is now well known. This lack of self-confidence, however, is endemic to women and cuts across cultural and class barriers. Due to a variety of reasons including social norms and mores as well as the process of acculturation and personal experiences, most women exhibit extreme lack of confidence when they
join an educational programme. Coupled with this is what has been described as the phenomenon of ‘finding their voices’ (Belenky et al. 1986). This is a positive reinforcement and an assurance that women need to know that they are intelligent, that they are capable of learning. The staff of any institution that is engaged in educational programmes for women would therefore have to be trained to give positive and constructive feedback to women students to ensure that their confidence is enhanced and not eroded.

The literature on feminist emancipatory education suggests that women have different learning styles from men (Kirkup and Prummer 1990, Berge and Lensky 1990, Prummer 1993). Research is beginning to show that women are more interested than men in elements of interactive learning (Kirkup and Prummer 1990, Prummer 1993). Feminists are therefore beginning to question whether the concept of a self-learner is modelled on male learning styles. Given women’s preference for ‘social learning’, it is important to create a network of support among students, providing them opportunities to meet and to interact with one another.

Research is also beginning to show that women seem to do best in learning environments where affective forms or knowledge that comes from life experiences are valued (Belenky et al. 1986). In short, they do best in learning environments where there is an effort to relate theoretical concepts to real life experiences.

The idea of capitalising on learners’ life experiences and relating theoretical concepts to these experiences is not new in the field of adult education. What is new, however, is the emphasis feminist pedagogy places on the importance of women in particular reclaiming and validating the learning that comes from life experience as women. Women learners come to an educational programme with specific personal histories, learning styles and expectations that are shaped to varying degrees by their experiences as girls and women in a society characterised by male power and privilege. In addition to barriers posed by sex discrimination, many women are doubly or even triply disadvantaged as members of ethnic minorities, as working class women, or as members of other marginalized groups. In order to ascertain the sort of education and institutional support services that would be appropriate to women’s needs, it would be necessary to understand more about their experiences, their learning needs, the difference and diversity among them so that a woman-friendly and woman-sensitive approach could be planned and implemented for them.

**Understanding the basic learning needs of adults**

Basic learning needs derive from and relate to, basic needs of individuals, groups, and societies. Children, youth and adults, both rich and poor, in developed and developing countries, have basic learning needs that must be met. Such needs vary according to age, gender, context and culture and also individual interests, motivations and preferences. They also change with the passage of time.
The World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien 1990) defined basic education as education aimed at meeting the basic learning needs and identified seven areas that are common to children, youth and adults. These are: surviving, developing one’s full capacities, living and working in dignity, participating fully in development, improving the quality of life, making informed decisions, and continuing to learn.

The Delors Commission Report (1996) identified four pillars for education and learning: learning to be; learning to do; learning to know and learning to live together. Adopting Jomtien’s Declaration and the Delors Report as frameworks, the Dakar World Education Forum reaffirmed, ‘Basic learning needs in the best and fullest sense of the term, an education that includes learning to know, to do, to live together and to be. It is an education geared to tapping each person’s talents and potential and developing learners personalities, so that they can improve their lives and transform their societies’.

Given the far-reaching changes that are taking place in the world today, new basic learning needs have emerged in various domains, and many have been and are being continuously redefined. Torres (2001), therefore advocates that learning has to change and to accept change, nor does it only need to adapt to change it must also proactively direct or re-direct change. Well being and development is another critical challenge and mission of education and learning systems, especially in today’s highly inequitable world.

Since adult learning needs are so varied and diverse, they cannot be met by one single institution nor through one mode only, be it the school, home, community, workplace, mass media, or new technology. Meeting them would require the convergence of all available learning systems, means and modalities.

**Understanding the Use of Technology for Lifelong Learning**

Experience so far has shown that despite concerted efforts around the world, the existing programmes would be ill equipped to deal with the challenges that lie ahead. New solutions to the old problems clearly have to be found. The need to explore non-traditional learning systems has arisen because experience has shown that traditional approaches have failed to attract all those, especially those in need, to the adult learning system. Various reasons are attributed to the non-participation or the high drop out rate of adults from educational programmes. These relate to the inconvenience of time, inadequacy of facilities, untrained staff, inadequate and irrelevant teaching/learning materials, and inappropriate pedagogy. Also, educational programmes that have been offered have stemmed from the ‘one size fits all’ mentality. As a result, uniform programmes, with little flexibility and diversity, have been offered to adults as well as to children, most often with all too well known consequences of low initial enrolment and
subsequent high drop out rates. Lifelong learning is attempting to make a paradigm shift and to orient the educational system to the challenges of the new millennium.

Opportunities are now emerging for making better use of technologies that have been previously under-utilised in supporting learning processes such as radio, television, print materials, audio and video cassettes. The emergence of powerful information and communication technologies (ICTs) have dramatically expanded our options for increasing access, ensuring equity and interactivity, for the enhancement of the learning experience.

However, technology cannot be regarded as a panacea to solve all the problems in the field of education. Technology can be useful provided it is harnessed appropriately and for tasks suited to its potential. The advantage of lifelong learning is that it recognises the need for flexibility and for adaptability to suit local contexts and specific circumstances. Educational programmes that emanate from such an understanding of education would look for increasingly diverse solutions instead of propagating universal solutions for all. Rather than accepting that there is one single pattern for everybody, diversified educational models should be designed to meet the specific needs of each group. Also, such an understanding of education would allow for greater decision making on the part of the participant groups. So far, the poor and illiterate adults have only been blamed for their illiteracy and poverty. As a result, experts who have offered mainly middle class solutions to their problems have developed literacy programmes for them. If people are looked at mainly as ‘solutions’ rather than as ‘problems’ as they have tended to be so far, they would be seen as being already engaged in daily processes of self and community development. According to Jain (2000), for this to happen, we would have to recognise the infinite and diverse potentials of every human being and their different learning styles/paces, intelligence, creativities, meaning-making systems and allow space for these to bloom. At the same time, we would need to better understand and foster the dynamics of collective learning, interdependence, collaboration and dialogue, which are critical to living in healthy communities. If we recognise that individuals and communities are constantly learning and are constructing/sharing knowledge even when there are no formal educational programmes, we would understand the importance of building a learning community/society grounded on a discourse of diversity.

The possibilities for using different combinations of technology to create and facilitate such learning processes and environments are infinite. Technologies make it possible to visualise other worlds and to link up diverse learning communities. According to the UNESCO document titled ‘Technology and Learning’, these technologies and their breaking down of barriers, present us with a chance to address questions of distance and time. ‘They allow us to question fundamental assumptions, generate new ideas and even, sometimes, albeit more rarely, catalyse social and institutional change. To unlock this potential requires re-contextualizing the ways in which we ‘see’ new technologies.’
Setting up technology-based Community Learning Centres - some experiences

The need for building a learning community/society becomes even more urgent due to discrepancies in ICT access between the industrialised and wealthy nations of the ‘North’ and those of the ‘South’ (almost all developing countries). As a result, serious concern is now being expressed about the ‘digital divide’ that separates the information-rich and the information–poor. A question that repeatedly gets asked and which poses a moral dilemma is, when hundreds of millions of people in the South lack basic education, health care, adequate nutrition, and basic amenities for decent living, how can investment in ICTs be justified? Since resources are limited, should they not be allocated to meeting basic needs of food, clothing, shelter, health care and education?

Today, it has to be recognised that information and communication technologies have a place in the South inasmuch as in the North. Also, technology is already a reality in the South and increasingly so for greater numbers. Rather than posing this as an either-or proposition, it is important to realise that while the basic needs of people have to be met, at the same time there is need to use technology but in a manner whereby people begin to exercise control over its use. Since developing countries lag significantly behind in information infrastructure and individual access to technology use seems an impossibility, the concept of a community centre that is equipped with technology and which serves the information, communication and educational needs of the community, is drawing considerable attention. Current research indicates that such centres can begin to respond to varied community learning needs. Keniston (2000), however, cautions that instead of assuming that extending ICTs to larger populations is good in itself, what has to be understood is that if ICTs are useful at all, they must become a potential instrument in meeting the human, social, economic and cultural needs. In other words, ICTs should be deployed only when they constitute the most effective and available way of meeting basic human needs. Drawing lessons from the Indian experience, he enumerates some principles that need to be kept in mind if ICTs have to be used to increase equity and promote diversity. One of the principles relates to that of the ICT projects building on an assessment of local needs, as locally defined by local people. The experience of the M S Swaminathan Foundation in Chennai has shown how community tele-centres were set up in villages near Pondicherry. However, before introducing new information and communication technologies, extensive discussions were held with different sections of the village community to ascertain their information needs. They found, for example, that women wanted information about childcare, health, child rearing, education and reproductive health; men were interested in information on market prices of fertilisers and grain. Assessment of information needs was useful in helping the project team to craft Internet uses that were responsive to the needs of the villagers and became the starting point for procuring/adapting/developing learner-centred materials. Thus, in a coastal village, a U.S. Naval website is now accessed every day in
order to provide information about heights of waves that is of use to the fishermen who are venturing into the sea. In the case of other villagers, information regarding government schemes, health-related information, market prices of agricultural commodities, pest control measures, home remedies, etc., are procured from government and well as other sources. The community telecentres ensure that the information required by the villagers is procured from different sources and is made available to the villagers in a form and language that is understood by them. It is not assumed, however, that sophisticated Web sites or even ICTs are the only means to provide the needed information. In one village, the village women articulated the need for information on reproductive health. As a result, a health camp was organised to address this need and information about reproductive health was thus better provided to women in small group discussions with doctors than by clicking for information on a Web site.

Elsewhere, there are interesting experiences, both within India and abroad, which are showing that the ICTs can be used by the poor for accessing information on issues that affect their lives. Thus, computerisation of the Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) Bank helped to expand the self-help groups involved in financial services at the village level. Use of computers in district level organisations helped expand business by maintaining up-to-date records which in turn, increased productivity. Computers opened up new markets for craftswomen of Banaskantha and Kutch. The wares of these skilled artisans were displayed on the Internet, generating a lot of interest and bringing in more business. This has helped the women command a better price for their products and has benefited more than 40,000 women in these areas (Bindra 2000). For the 800 Bangladeshi women who were given cell phones on loan by the Grameen Bank, the instrument became more than a means of communication: it became a weapon, which they have successfully used to fight poverty. As a result, they are now any number of cases where the mobile phone has brought changes in their lives and in their social status as women (Thakuria 2000).

The Centre for Extension Education of the Indira Gandhi National Open University is presently engaged in a project funded by the Commonwealth of Learning, Vancouver. The objective of the project is to set up technology-based community learning centres for promoting literacy among adults, youth and children. It is envisaged that beyond simply learning how to use software and hardware, individuals and communities will use varied technologies to generate their own literacy materials and thus facilitate mutual learning, begin to access information that they need, exercise control over such information, and use the new ICTs for the articulation of their own culture and identity. The experience so far has shown that some interesting developments have begun to take place. Very early on in the project planning, accessibility, interactivity, community mobilisation and sustainability were articulated as project goals. As a result, project activities have been shaped on the basis of these project goals. Various strategies have been used to mobilise the community and ensure access of
technologies to different socio-economic groups with varying learning needs. Thus, the younger school-going children as well as adolescent youth have shown interest in acquiring computer skills while there are neo-literate adults who have begun to use technologies such as digital camera and handy cams to take pictures and compose their own stories and materials. Others use computers to practice reading skills. Short duration training programmes on reproductive health issues have been organised for those women who articulated this need, inasmuch as a soil testing programme in one village and animal husbandry programme in another village were organised on the basis of the development needs that were articulated by the villagers. Gradually, an environment of learning is being created in these communities. Technology is being harnessed to respond to the community needs. Experience is showing how information and communication technologies can be used to provide flexibility for catering to different learning styles and different learning needs. In other words, people themselves are taking the initiative to select appropriate technologies to support their needs.

According to Johnson and Jain (1999), in using ICTs, individuals and communities should hold a larger vision of learning. This vision should involve processes of critical self-reflection, thinking, questioning, exploring, interacting, creating, connecting, and discovering. Quoting from a UNESCO document, Johnson and Jain aver that these processes are directly linked to a notion of empowerment, in which ‘individual/communities engage in learning to create, appropriate and share knowledge, tools and techniques in order to change and improve the quality of their own lives and societies. Through empowerment, individuals not only manage and adapt to change but also contribute to/generate changes in their lives/environments.’ It is such a vision of learning that must guide the technology-based community learning centres if ICTs have to play a meaningful role.

However, if we have to build and support learning communities, then the system would first have to undergo a process of unlearning and then re-learning in order to understand how learning communities can be built. This would entail a complete change of mindset and de-conditioning on all of our parts. The challenge would be to develop a variety of educational programmes for children, youth and adults wherever they may be - in the homes, outside in the fields, in the workplace, in the community - using whatever media are at their disposal - television, local radio, satellite, cable, ISDN networks, and the Internet- and make learning the number one activity in each community. Moreover, in order for this to happen, a policy for lifelong learning would have to be formulated, adequate resources provided and variety of institutional support systems would have to be created. That is the challenge that faces most countries in this region today.
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Creative Change Agents for Lifelong Learning Communities

Washington P. Napitupulu

One of the many causes, if not the main one, of ‘material poverty’ is ‘educational poverty’. Educational poverty means that people do not possess, or have access to functional knowledge and information. They lack positive and appropriate attitudes towards modernisation and development. They also lack relevant skills needed to earn a living. Thus, they depend on fate and on traditional ways of doing things. These three educational targets, functional knowledge and information, relevant skills and modernisation and development of mental attitude are intertwined and inseparable one from the others. With this conviction, education is the key to bridge the gap between the haves and the have-nots, to wipe out polarities and inequalities. Education, including illiteracy eradication, is the key to modern life (Napitupulu 1990).

The third target, achieving the right mental attitude, is the most difficult target to attain. One of the reasons for the difficulty is that people do not have a habit of learning and lack the will to change. This could be referred to as ‘traditional influence’ on daily behaviour. If a person is already in possession of a habit for learning, then he/she will automatically be proactive, anticipative and future-oriented. Therefore, in education, attention must first of all be given to achieving this mental attitude. Whatever activities undertaken with respect to developing functional knowledge and relevant skills, attention should also be simultaneously directed to the modernising attitudes.

Building a Learning-Teaching Society

When referring to the term ‘lifelong learning’, the first priority should be towards the attainment of the needed mental attitude. Lifelong learning will not take place if the environment is not conducive to learning. Most of our societies in the Asia-
pacific region are not yet 'learning-teaching societies', with the exception of Japan, Australia and New Zealand who have already attained the balance between oral and written cultures. The absence of schooling has been the main cause of illiteracy and while there has been talk for many years about compulsory education, it has not yet become a reality. Conversely, ‘compulsory teaching’ has also not been introduced. Eradication of illiteracy will only be achieved in this region if Dr. Laubach’s ‘each one teach one’ model is implemented and provided there are no further dropouts from both formal and non-formal basic education programmes.

In Indonesia, illiterates now are only about 10 to 15 percent of the population i.e. 30,000,000 people. If volunteers can be successfully motivated from the 85 percent of the literate population, the implementation of the ‘each one teach one’ policy could reach many, providing there is a law on compulsory teaching.

Creating lifelong learning environments
The creation of a lifelong learning environment does not only depend on the mobilising literate educated people, but also on the learners themselves and the provision of relevant learning materials. The motivational efforts must be simultaneously directed both towards the learners and teachers with an eye on building a ‘learning–teaching’ society. Motivation should preferably be integrated into the learning materials used, not only in terms of contents but also methodologically to facilitate learning. Therefore, ‘do-it-yourself’, ‘modular’ or ‘self-instructional’ learning material ensures almost all spheres of life are covered, taking into account the circumstances of the adult learners in order to specifically address their experiences with poverty, disparity, division and inequality.

Lifelong learning programmes
Lifelong learning should go far beyond the three R’s. Relevant learning materials need to touch on the six continuing education programmes proposed by UNESCO Bangkok: post-literacy, equivalency, income-generating, quality of life improvement, individual interest promotion, and future orientation. Through lifelong learning programmes, even an illiterate should be assisted purposively to become an effective change agent, like each one of the educated and learned people of our world. A change agent is a person who continuously improves himself/herself and other fellow human beings, enabling or empowering and enabled or empowered. Thereby, the strategy of self–multiplication using a chain-reaction system with a geometric progression may in the near future be effectively applied, and thereby, progress towards modernisation is accelerated.

Creating lifelong learning structures
The Report, Learning: The Treasures Within (1996), is a valuable source not only of information, but inspiration, in creating adult learning structures. If lifelong learning is the first basic principle of education, then the task of motivating
people to learn and teach, as well as the building of infrastructures needed to support it must become one of the main educational policies of the government. The task of teachers and educational supervisors, including the Ministry of Education, is to hold tightly to the four pillars of education in program planning and implementation: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together. It is not adequate just to learn to know, but also to learn to do. It is not correct and sufficient to just memorise information but it should be internalised through formation and transformation, thus learning to be. All these must also be utilised for the process of learning to live together, to live with others. Many examples may be cited, not only in Indonesia and India but also throughout the world, that proves that mankind has not yet been successful in the implementation of this fourth pillar. All educational institutions, formal and nonformal, for children, youth and adults must be made aware of those two basic principles of education and they must be motivated and supported to seriously apply the principles for the sake of efficiency, effectiveness and productivity of education.

The traditional social system of Indonesia, gotong-royong (mutual assistance, synergy) must be revived and used for the creation of lifelong learning environments and adult learning structures. It must help combat ‘educational poverty’, and thereby also ‘material poverty’. Since the commitment of implementing ‘Education-For-All’ (EFA) in Jomtien, Thailand (1990) has not yet been fully realised, it is essential to recommit ourselves to implement the six goals and twelve strategies adopted in the Dakar Framework for Action. If the basic principles of education, particularly the first and second pillars (Delors 1996) are not adhered to, then there will always be a gap between acquired knowledge and the action taken. The UNESCO Bangkok Office has been urging the Member States to seriously make attempts of formulating action plans on ‘Educational-For-All’. Each Member State will have an EFA National Action Plan integrated with the national development plans and programmes of the country to be submitted to UNESCO as expected by the end of 2002.

**Stakeholder Participation**

From the beginning, the Indonesia National EFA Forum has endeavoured to motivate stakeholders to participate in the formulation of the action plan to ensure ownership belongs to everybody and every institution thereby guaranteeing its effective implementation. The Indonesian National EFA Forum is convinced that ‘Education for All’ will be successful only if stakeholders are committed to ‘All-for-Education’.

Indonesia has just begun the decentralisation of education in accordance with the Law on Local Autonomy. The Indonesian National EFA Forum is now involving the provincial, district and city officers in the formulation of the National EFA Action Plan in order to ensure that the it does not emanate from the
centre alone. With the local autonomy, the mobilisation of all stakeholders in the provinces, districts and cities will be more effective, and that ‘education-for-all’ can soon also become ‘all-for-education’.

The learning activities centres
The first stakeholders are, of course, the educational institutions in both formal, in school and non-formal or out-of-school channels. For instance, in the out-of-school channel the following institutions have been established under the direction of the Director-General of Out-of-School Education and Youth of the Ministry of National Education. BPKBs in the provinces (Balai Pengembangan Kegiatan Belajar – Learning Activities Development Centres), SKB in the districts/cities (Sanggar Kegiatan Belajar – Learning Activities Centre) PKBMs in the sub-districts Pusat Kegiatan Belajar Masyarakat – Community Learning Activities Centre), and learning groups in the village. These institutions will be mobilised to implement Education for All programmes and in particular lifelong learning programmes for youth and adults. The provincial learning activity development centres develop learning models, which are further elaborated and made relevant to city and district needs by the district level learning activity centres and are implemented by the centres at the sub-district level.

Provincial learning activity centres
The functions of the learning activity centres at the province level (BPKBs) are to formulate models and develop out of school educational programmes; experiment with the models and programmes according to local situations; disseminate the results of model experimentation to the relevant local situations; provide counselling on learning-teaching processes and to evaluate the programmes; develop and implement experimented model of the local content learning materials; provide technical direction and guidance to the district level centres, and administrate management of the centre.

Learning activity centres at the district and city level
The functions of the district and city level learning activity centres (SKBs) are to arouse and motivate the community eagerness and willingness to learn in the framework of building a learning society. They also motivate and develop the community to be willing and able to become educational resources in the implementation of mutual learning. The SKBs provide information on the available out of school educational programmes, provide learning tools and infrastructures, and integrate and synchronise sectoral activities in the field of out of school educational programmes. The district level centres furthermore implement educational and training programmes for out of school educational personnel and implementers and administrate management of the centre.

Community learning activity centres
The sub-district learning activity centres (PKBMs) are implementing a variety of out-of-school educational programmes such as Kejar Packet A for illiterates. The
programme is a catch-up programme for those to work and learn through learning groups. Packet A contains learning materials equivalent to Primary School.

Kejar Packet B is designed for graduates of Kejar Packet A and Primary Schools as well as those who did not continue into, or dropped out of, Lower Secondary Schools. Additional skills training is provided along with income-generating activities. A variety of programmes such as early childhood care, education, religion, sanitation training, and artistic training are also delivered according to the expressed needs of the community.

The community learning activity centres also provide libraries, not only to serve the learners, but also to serve all interested members of the community. In short, the centres will deliver any programme that the people in the community request, therefore the government, through its different ministries and agencies, has an obligation to support, facilitate and empower these community level centres so they can serve the communities and their learning needs while concurrently alleviating poverty. With the needed support given, learning activity centres at the community level will become the appropriate vehicle in building a learning-teaching society.

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The learning centres at the province and district and city levels are built, managed and financed by the Ministry of National Education. The sub-district learning activity centres (PKBMs) are managed and mostly financed by the community themselves, however sometimes some subsidies are provided to these centres by the Directorate-General of Out-of-School Education and Youth. The community-level centres are also encouraged to produce relevant learning materials. The motto of PKMBs is ‘of the community, by the community and for the community’. With this motto, it could be said that the democratisation process in Indonesia can and will be facilitated by the learning activity centres at the community level.

The other stakeholders are the local institutions whose primary roles are not educational, but which provide support through in-kind and financial funding to educational institutions such as the community learning activity centres. Mass media, both electronic (radio, television) and printed (newspapers magazines) should be encouraged to participate in the promotion and advocacy of Education-For-All. As well, other socio-economic and socio-religious institutions, civil society, and the parliament should also be motivated to actively participate for the successful implementation of ‘Education-For-All’, including adult and lifelong learning programmes.

The community learning activity centres, the government, as well as other stakeholders must be able to co-operate intimately in order to reach the objectives of ‘Education-For-All’ and ‘All For Education’ through teamwork in a literal sense, but also with the relevant behaviour needed as expressed in the word teamwork as an acronym - Together, Empathy, Assist, Maturity, Willingness, Organisation, Respect and Kindness (Sihombing 2000).

The learning materials provided play a very crucial role in adult and lifelong learning. The materials must be relevant to the needs of the adult population. The
materials should be made friendly and interesting and the level of comprehension should not too abstract that learners could not reach it. The learning materials cannot be alien to the socio-cultural values lived by the adults, especially since the mental attitude usually is embedded in those values. It is important to understand the values of the adult population before being able to motivate and introduce changes required for lifelong learning.

In conclusion, if adult and lifelong learning is approached only through budget provision, and if in reality a country is usually unable to provide an adequate budget for the basic education of children (aged 0 to 18 years old), then one may ask why spend money for the education of the adult population? Is the first priority not the children? The response to this question should not be in the form of either-or. Too much money should not be spent for the education of adults leaving not enough money for the education of children. Therefore, organisations need to be more innovative in developing educational programmes for the adult population. Hence, the self-instructional learning materials for autonomous and independent learning. Organisations need to help raise the educational level of the adult population, especially young adults, using all forms of cost-effective approaches in order that they become more productive and empowered to alleviate poverty, thereby providing more funds for the education of children.

References

The New Vision of Literacy for All: Creating Literate Environments

Wolfgang Vollmann

By establishing the International Literacy Decade the General Assembly of the United Nations has sent the message that the literacy problem must be tackled head on. As the highest expression of international solidarity and cooperation, the General Assembly recognises that the situation of 875 million adults without literacy skills, the lack of learning opportunities of 113 million children, and low quality of learning outcomes in some school systems is totally unacceptable in today’s world. Furthering the cause of the knowledge or information society can mean only further marginalisation and alienation for whole communities where literacy is not in common use. International debates in lifelong learning about bridging the digital divide, knowledge of development, about access to information and knowledge for development and knowledge management, are meaningless for people for whom access to the most basic learning tool – literacy – is denied.

The size of the problem is massive. One in seven people on this planet do not have the opportunity to access literacy skills. Two-thirds of them are women. Seventy percent of them are located in Asia. Africa and the Arab States have the lowest literacy rates – just under 60 percent - of any region, while the Least Developed Countries as a whole have an even lower literacy rate of 48 percent. For the last 50 years or so, industrialised countries have maintained literacy rates of 95-99 percent - an indicator of sustained inequity and imbalance between different parts of the world.

While literacy rates have climbed significantly between 1980 and 2000, the total absolute number of adults without these skills has remained obstinately high – 887 million in 1980, 885 million in 1995, and an estimated 875 million in 2000. To that must be added the failure of education systems, in some parts of the world, to deliver primary education of quality, creating a large number of schooled, but largely non-literate young people. In other parts of the world crisis
and conflict have robbed a generation of children of the opportunity to enter or finish primary education. When the crisis or conflict is over, they are often too old to go through primary school or engaged with heavy family responsibilities. These must be added to the numbers of those without access to any learning opportunity at all.

Research into literacy has clearly shown that its use, far from being an unequivocal factor of positive change and development, is dependent on many significant social and political parameters, particularly the institutionalised power of elites, school systems and other controllers of communication through text. The role of literacy varies also according to cultural context – the literacy-orality dimension takes different shape in different parts of the world and different socio-historical contexts. Literacy may be liberating and give voice to marginalised communities; it may equally well become domesticating and entrench existing inequitable social structures. It may be an instrument of cultural and linguistic domination, or it may give new possibilities of linguistic self-expression and affirmation. The uses of literacy and the modes and processes of its acquisition are a determining factor.

The importance of communication through text has become an ineluctable fact, given the way the world is developing. For better or worse, society globally relies on communication involving text, even though there are certain communities where oral communication predominates and where written communication has almost no role. Therein lies the crucial point: will everyone have the opportunity to participate in these broad, global practices of written communication or not? Will their participation take different forms and be sensitive to different realities, such as the need to safeguard oral communication and traditions where these are under threat or neglected? However, there can be no justification for denying, by design or by default, the opportunity of such participation to anyone.

A particularly important aspect of communication through text is its use in learning. While there are several modes of learning, such as discussion, demonstration, and mentoring, learning opportunities in today’s world involve text, at some point. Text plays a crucial role whether it is the formal primary school system found in almost all countries of the world, or the diverse modes of learning structured by and for young people and adults. Thus the use of literacy (reading and writing) is not merely a matter of participation in networks of written communication, but also of accessing learning opportunities. Learning is about promoting the full potential of each human being, and so, once again, there can be no justification for withholding such a fundamental learning tool as literacy.

The majority of the children, youth and adults without any access to literacy are on the margins of mainstream society – minorities and indigenous peoples, remote rural populations, those in the urban periphery and slums, the poor, women in predominantly male-dominated societies. For people like this,
mainstream school systems are inaccessible, and then quite possibly irrelevant. Modes of learning, patterns of interpersonal relations, gender roles, language use, cultural background, social values, ways of communicating – all these may be structured quite differently in the community and in the school. School can be an island of alienation, an irrelevant or, at worst, destructive influence on learners, and this shapes perceptions of learning in general.

Models of adult learning have often been an imitation of schooling, creating the same the same barriers to learning. To put it succinctly, literacy efforts have failed to take adequately into account the socio-political and cultural milieu. To reach the remaining 113 million children and 875 million adults, not to mention those for whom schooling is failing to offer sustainability literacy skills, will require much greater efforts to adapt learning opportunities to the realities of life of learners. This is the thrust of the new vision of ‘Literacy for All’ – giving voice and offering learning opportunities to those whom the systems continually squeeze out.

Towards a Literate Environment

On this basis then, we need to ask how the results of the Decade will in the end take shape in the lives of communities and of individuals. How will the social landscape be changed by an emphasis on literacy? The unifying concept is the literate environment as a key in developing learning societies. This places literacy acquisition and use firmly in the social context and connects it inseparably with all aspects of life and livelihood. Just as poverty alleviation and eradication must address all aspects of life and not just economic levels, so literacy promotion is an interdisciplinary enterprise and must connect with people’s goals, values, aims, aspirations, challenges, hopes and fears, as well as with the physical, social, cultural and political realities of the local and broader contexts. Literacy has no meaning apart from what it enables communities and individuals to do better. The Decade will not succeed by merely delivering literacy skills, but only by developing literate environments which emerge from and are embedded in the social fabric when communication involving text serves the purposes of locally owned development.

Key Principles of the United Nations Literacy Decade

The United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD) is about Literacy for All. It focusses on women and men, children at school, young, mature and old adults, communities of all kinds, in whatever language, and script. The Decade views literacy as a tool for learning thoughout life rather than literacy as an end in itself. Literacy lays the foundation for lifelong learning which is part of the daily lives
of people, practiced in diverse cultural contexts. The UNLD is an integral part in implementing and achieving the goals and objectives of the Dakar *Framework for Action*. Lastly while UNESCO is playing the lead coordinating role, it is a cooperative joint effort and responsibility of all the stakeholders.

**References**

Effective Delivery of Learning in Bangladesh

Claude Bobillier

Bangladesh, with a population of 130 million people, faces many difficulties in trying to eradicate widespread poverty. In view of its having one of the lowest rates of literacy in the region and problems of school dropouts and a weak overall education system, the country has still a lot of work to do in its attempt at strengthening basic education, including non-formal education.

This paper presents some key aspects of non-formal education (NFE) in Bangladesh. Based on widespread field experiences and many lessons learned over the last three years, the author proposes a series of measures, which would contribute to strengthening the current NFE system, especially its continuing education component, the implementation of which is due to begin on a massive scale this year (2002).¹

Background

Over the last decade, the Government of Bangladesh has become increasingly involved in basic literacy that it calls non-formal education. A growing number of NGOs have also become involved in non-formal education over the last two decades and several bilateral and multilateral donors are supporting these efforts. While non-formal education in Bangladesh has access to rapidly increasing volumes of external funds, for a number of reasons, not all funds are effectively absorbed. Despite the on-going efforts made by the combination of partners, illiteracy rates are still very high.

So far, the combined efforts of various partners have had limited impact on the country and on its long-suffering local communities. Non-formal education appears to have contributed to creating awareness about health and sanitation, and increasing the self-confidence of some women, however the programme has had
hardly any impact on improving the living conditions of the 17 millions who have been exposed to the programme.

A number of factors have combined to bring about such failure. Firstly, there is an absence of a long-term vision and precise policies and strategies to guide the non-formal education programme. Other factors include a rigid and over-centralised decision-making process, an absence of transparency and accountability and a weak monitoring and reporting system. Moreover, rapid staff turnover, a lack of leadership, insufficient commitment and competencies, poorly paid, trained and supported facilitators, and a defective system of NGO selection have all contributed to the unsatisfactory outcome of the programme.

Non-formal Education in Bangladesh

The current situation
Bangladesh had, some years ago, an illiterate population of nearly 40 million. Over the last few years, the Government of Bangladesh, working with NGOs and supported by several donors, has implemented at least five massive non-formal education projects to fight widespread illiteracy and therefore poverty. At the beginning of 2002, the Government claimed that over 17 million men, women and children had become literate as a result of the NFE programme’s implementation.

So far, non-formal education in Bangladesh has been limited to basic literacy. There is not yet however a nationally accepted definition of basic literacy in the country. For some, to be literate means that a person can sign his/her name. For others, to be literate means to be capable of reading some sentences from a primer or textbook and carry out very simple calculations. For others still it means the ability to read, understand and use in every day life simple reading, writing and counting skills.

The number of individuals who are declared literate today depends on which definition is adopted. If the latter definition is adopted, then the real number of individuals, who have truly become literate in Bangladesh as a result of the NFE programme, is obviously much lower. Some tentative findings seem to indicate that perhaps less than half of the 17 million men and women who have had access to literacy courses have managed to become partially functionally literate.

The non-formal education programme in Bangladesh is also very centralised. The Primary and Mass Education Division (PMED) and the Directorate of Non Formal Education (DNFE) are entirely responsible for deciding on policies and strategies, as well as implementation of the four NFE projects. In implementing all 4 projects, DNFE largely relies on contracted NGOs and district administrations, depending on the selected delivery mechanism or approach.
Basic literacy, post literacy and continuing education: meaning and goals

Basic literacy is still today the main and only significant activity within the NFE programme. The implementation of a twelve-month small pilot post literacy and continuing education (PLCE) programme in 2000-2001 represents the only exception so far. Functional literacy is not yet a part of any of the four projects.

The post-literacy programme is still in the planning and preparation stages. Two large projects, supported by development banks, have been designed and ought to start sometime this year. As with basic literacy projects, PLCE projects will be largely under the centralised control of the DNFE, a weak institution plagued by frequent staff turnover, inadequate functioning and a lack of leadership. Post literacy and continuing education will follow a fragmented project approach, be supported by a large number of donors with different agendas and procedures and will be sub-contracted to NGOs.

As with basic literacy, PLCE has not yet been precisely defined and is not well known in Bangladesh today. Basic education-related concepts such as continuing education, lifelong learning, and the learning society are rather new; their meaning remains unclear. To this day no national consensus exists about them in the country. The situation is similar as far as the goals of the basic literacy and post literacy continuing education are concerned. The absence of a national consensus, the lack of an overall vision, precise policies and clear strategies about non-formal education, make it rather difficult to know precisely what are the long-term goals of NFE in Bangladesh and how these ought to be achieved.

Beneficiaries and learners

The size of the illiterate population in Bangladesh is vast. Experience shows that for attempts to eliminate poverty and illiteracy to succeed, they have to rely on a massive, multi-dimensional and multi-level national effort, an effort in which all essential sectors of society are involved.

As can be expected, the majority of illiterate people are to be found in the villages, many of them quite remote and isolated as a result of a lack of adequate transportation and communication infrastructures. Women represent, by far, the majority among illiterate persons.

The majority of the NFE programmes beneficiaries are adults. There are approximately an equal number of females and males, all between 15 and 45 years of age. The only exception to this is the NFE 3 project. This innovative project tries to address the immense needs of the 351,000 hard to reach working urban children between 8 and 14.

With the exception of the NFE 3 programme where beneficiaries attend centres over a 24-month period, illiterate adults benefit from 6 months of basic literacy, followed by 3 to 4 months of so-called post literacy. As of yet, only a tiny proportion of the 17 million people who have gone through the basic and
post literacy programmes have had any access to continuing education. As a result, large numbers of former learners have relapsed into illiteracy.

The poor attendance of learners in basic literacy courses represents another serious difficulty currently faced by the NFE programme. The main factor explaining the progressive but rapid decrease in learners’ attendance is loss of motivation and interest for basic literacy, once it is realised that literacy alone is of little help in improving one’s economic situation.

**Delivery mechanisms for NFE**

In Bangladesh there are basically two ways of delivering basic literacy: the Centre Based Approach (CBA) and the Total Literacy Movement (TLM). The Centre Based Approach delivers basic literacy through fixed centres run by sub-contracted NGOs. The Total Literacy Movement operates through centres run by the district administrations. Both approaches suffer from serious shortcomings. Of the two approaches the TLM approach is the least costly. Lower cost is partly achieved as a result of the fact that teachers/facilitators get a very small monthly fee for their efforts.

The CBA approach used to be the dominant approach, whereby teachers are recruited and briefly trained by NGOs to deliver basic literacy. Under the CBA, the sub-contracted NGOs are responsible for the recruitment, training and support of the teachers and the supervisors. Under the TLM approach, district administrations assume the responsibilities carried out by the NGOs under the CBA system. The district commissioner (governor) assumes the ultimate responsibility for the implementation of the programme, but depends on the central government for the timely disbursement of funds and the delivery of training materials.

**Stakeholders and other actors: roles and responsibilities**

Several stakeholders are involved in the four projects making up the NFE programme. The government, districts administrations, a large number of NGOs, seven donors (two banks, one international organisation and four bilateral donors), various committees at each level, a very large number of supervisors and facilitators/teachers and, of course, millions of learners spread over the entire country.

Within the vast bureaucratic NFE programme, it is going to be difficult to meet its ultimate and excessively ambitious goal to transform 40 million illiterate people into literate individuals in the span of a few years since roles and responsibilities are rather diffused, often overlapping and contradict one another.

The current NFE system in Bangladesh is highly centralised. A few individuals at the national level control most operations including the utilisation of resources, policy formulation, strategy, the recruitment of sub-contractors, the elaboration of contents and the choice of delivery mechanisms, among other crucial mechanisms. As a result of excessive centralisation, the many ‘partners’ of the central government have hardly any say and decision making power.
Some achievements and constraints

Over the last few years, several bodies have been involved in the monitoring and evaluation of various aspects of the NFE programme. The overall picture which emerges from these exercises is a source of concern to many. Although there have been some achievements in terms of the number of people processed through the system over the years, the overall quality of the proposed learning has been quite dismal.

Some of the achievements of the NFE programme can be summarised as follows. Over a period of a few months, close to 17 million illiterate people have been exposed to some kind of basic literacy. Many individuals have benefited in terms of achieving a greater awareness about sanitation, health, family planning and management, civic responsibilities, among other elements. Some detrimental attitudes and behaviours have indeed changed as a result of exposure to NFE.

Many crucial lessons have been learned over the last few years about underprivileged peoples’ difficulties, needs and aspirations, as well as about ways of responding to these. Partly as a result of NFE, some women have seen their own social status improve and their self-confidence grow. As well, some fruitful partnerships have been created or strengthened, for instance between NGOs and local communities. Large numbers of often dedicated facilitators have emerged, been trained and committed themselves to assist the poor. Lastly, some local communities have embarked on new projects and by so doing have discovered some existing, but previously latent internal resources and capacities.

Some of the constraints and limitations, which characterise the NFE vision and policy, can be summarised as follows. Apart from having espoused the Jomtien and Dakar EFA Declaration there is, in Bangladesh, a dire lack of a long-term vision for NFE and lifelong learning. The few policy statements which do exist are general and vague and do not amount to clear policies, concepts and strategies concerning the direction the country should be going in NFE and related fields.

Even though basic literacy on a massive scale has been pursued since the early nineties, functional literacy remains largely ignored and continuing education is still at the planning stage. The concept of lifelong learning has barely entered into NFE practitioners’ vocabulary. The quality and relevance of the learning proposed to millions of learners is excessively weak.

Due to the absence of a holistic approach to learning and access to indispensable additional inputs, skills and needed support, large numbers of former learners have relapsed into illiteracy and become disillusioned and frustrated with NFE. The excessive centralisation of the NFE system and its bureaucratisation and hierarchical structure stifle local initiatives and make it next to impossible for other sectors of society, especially local communities and the private sector, to contribute to the programme. The fragmented approach to NFE characterised by a multiplication of procedures, inadequate co-ordination, and
diverging interests and objectives of different stakeholders, seriously complicates an already difficult situation.

Furthermore, as a result of insufficient orientation, training, technical support and difficult working conditions, large numbers of crucially important facilitators, among them teachers, are disillusioned and either drop out of the programme or become burdens within it.

Insufficient decentralisation, inadequate community involvement and the absence of involvement on the part of other sectors of society contribute to making the NFE programme unsustainable and therefore largely dependent on external funding.

**Impact of the programme**

After almost ten years, the impact of the NFE programme in Bangladesh is quite limited. Over the last three years, various assessments have clearly shown that the impact of the basic literacy programme in terms of assisting the adult poor in improving their wretched living conditions is almost non-existent.

The programme however has contributed to raising the awareness of some beneficiaries. As a result of what they had learned in the programme, some women, including female teachers, have become more self-confident, self-assertive and respected in the local communities.

If one considers the vast investments made over the last few years to provide access to basic learning to millions and rid the country of illiteracy, the results achieved so far are dismal. The measured outcome clearly indicates that many fundamental changes are urgently required. Such changes are needed in attitudes, the concept of NFE, the approach to learning, as well as in ways of delivering it.

In the next section, the author suggests the approach to continuing education in Bangladesh should be both holistic and useful to the millions of poor who are in dire needs of knowledge, skills and life improvement. ²

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**A Holistic, Comprehensive and Integrated Approach**

**Basic learning of adults**

The many experiences and lessons learned from the field, at all levels, clearly indicate that the best way of contributing to the alleviation of poverty through education is by promoting a holistic approach to basic learning. Such an approach has to combine the essential elements required for improving the socio-economic conditions of poor and illiterate people.

The holistic approach, therefore, has to include not only basic literacy but also functional literacy linked to trade and market-related skills, elements and inputs. Furthermore, experience shows that access to capital through loans at reasonable rates of interest is high on the list of required elements. Similar experience demonstrates that learners have many needs and aspirations, which cannot and
should not be ignored. Such needs should indeed largely dictate the nature of the support offered by external services.

From functional literacy to steady incomes and improved living conditions

Functional literacy skills have to be directly related and therefore useable in everyday life, as well as in the learning and practice of one’s trade. The selection of trade skills to be offered has to be the outcome of properly carried out market demand surveys, as well as need assessments of future trainees.

Prevailing economic conditions in Bangladesh, where the industry and service sectors are under-developed, as well as the scarcity of jobs in the formal sector, compel most individuals having acquired trade skills to become self-employed. To become successfully self-employed, the acquisition of functional literacy and a trade skill is still not enough. As the PLCE pilot project showed, additional skills and inputs are needed. These include access to capital through loans for programme graduates to purchase tools and raw materials, small business development and marketing skills including simple bookkeeping and negotiating skills, and regular access to additional technical support in one’s trade. The possibility for NFE graduates to become self-reliant, self-employed semi-skilled workers and tradesmen is closely related and largely depends on the nature and number of inputs available once they complete their respective courses.

Decentralisation of Resources, Responsibilities and Decisions

The concentration of decision-making powers is creating many difficulties. Excessive centralisation exacerbates the difficulties when the aim of a learning programme is to provide essential skills to poor and illiterate people scattered in remote villages with various learning needs. In the context of Bangladesh, it is important that a process of genuine decentralisation be immediately started. As part of this process, local communities should be progressively, but rapidly, given the capacities, know-how and resources to run their own basic development programmes.

NGOs, it is quite clear, have the moral as well as the professional obligation to provide quality services, transfer their own skills and contribute to ensuring the progressive self-reliance of communities. This implies empowering concerned local communities so that they can run their own programme. To that end, the Centre Management Committees (CMCs) ought to be adequately prepared to assume many key programme related roles and responsibilities, including management on behalf of the communities. In this changed context, NGOs too will have to play quite a different role from indispensable and long term providers of various inputs to providing specific services including training services.
demanded by the community recipients. Therefore, NGOs need to develop their own vision, strengthen their technical capacities and become true professionals. NGOs ought to be accountable to the people they serve. Their ultimate aim should be to be rapidly dispensable.

**The roles and responsibilities of local communities and the Centre Management Committees (CMCs)**

Intensive action-research in the field over several years has revealed that CMCs are grossly under utilised entities in the on-going NFE programme. This situation is largely the outcome of an almost total absence of orientation and training. CMCs were simply not prepared for their important role and responsibilities. Furthermore, the same research has revealed that CMCs have immense potential as well as constructive roles to play in the establishment of a community based and run basic learning system.

For the CMCs to be in a position to fulfil their potential they need to be informed, briefed and trained about the objectives and strategies of the programme as well as about their precise roles and responsibilities. Job descriptions have to be prepared, discussed and negotiated. The purpose and functioning of the CMCs have to be explained and incentives for CMC members have to be built into the programme.

As the CMC is the spokesperson of the community, community representatives ought to be selected by and accountable to the community. The CMCs contribute to guide and monitor the entire learning process at the village level. It plays the main role in selecting learners, facilitators and supervisors and provides support and advice when required. For all this to occur, the current position, role and responsibilities of the CMCs need to be considerably strengthened.

**Improving capacities and changing roles of NGOs**

The role of NGOs within the proposed continuing education programme will have to change from never ending providers of weak and limited services. NGOs will need to become temporary providers of a diversity of quality services related to the demands and aspirations of the recipients to whom they are accountable.

Clearly, many NGOs may not be able to provide enhanced quality services unless they first undergo a number of fundamental changes in terms of attitudes, structure, procedures and above all, capacities. Several in-depth studies have revealed that many NGOs are weak and should not even attempt to provide services to people. Other researchers point out that a number of NGOs are claiming their status with one sole purpose in mind: to obtain funds from donors. To avoid serious problems due to the incompetence of some NGOs, intensive practical training and regular re-training and support of key NGO workers should be the norm, especially in the case of basic learning programmes.
Criteria for selecting NGOs as sub-contractors suffer from several fundamental weaknesses and should also be totally revised. The most serious problem stems from the fact that favouritism and cronyism is regularly the main, although unspoken criteria in selecting NGOs for specific projects. Since poor NGO performance is one of the main sources of project failure, selection should be entirely based on merit or performance rather than favouritism.

What has been said so far about NGOs also largely applies to other stakeholders such as district administrations, DNFE and other providers of services such as government agencies, training providers and consultant agencies, to name only a few.

**Partnership with the private sector in resource mobilisation, skills delivery and NFE graduate placement**

The vast number of people requiring access to basic learning, as well as the limited resources available for such programmes, makes it quite impossible for the Government of Bangladesh to fulfil such ambitious tasks alone. A sustained national effort is required where all key sectors of society contribute in a planned, organised and co-ordinated manner. The private sector, if adequately informed and treated as an equal partner, can significantly contribute to the establishment of a truly lifelong form of learning. Possible contributions of the private sector could be in domains such as human resource development, funding through a levy or tax system and, most importantly the elaboration of training contents and the employment of NFE graduates.

**Effective management, coordination and co-operation**

The necessity to mobilise additional material resources and human capacities is immense. For the programme to succeed and become sustainable, available evidence shows that strong committed leadership and sound management at all levels of the programme are essential ingredients. Genuine co-operation between partners and regular coordination between the programme’s stakeholders, as well as between levels within the programme are equally vital.

The success of a basic learning programme largely depends on the timely combination of a number of crucial elements. These include strong, sustained and enlightened political will, the continuous presence of committed and competent leaders, sound bureaucratic support and a well trained and dedicated workforce of facilitators and officers enjoying decent working conditions.

The weakness of the current non-formal education programme in Bangladesh is largely due to the fact that above cited vital components have not been given sufficient attention. With good will, adequate planning and dedication, the current programme may be strengthened.
Market demand analysis, learning need assessments and content reviews
In its attempt at widening the scope, increasing the relevance and improving the quality of the current non-formal education, Bangladesh needs to introduce a number of key elements and activities. Carrying out regular market surveys to assess the demands for goods and services is one important activity which needs to introduced into the current programme.

For similar reasons, learning need assessments at all levels of the programme need to become a permanent feature. The selection of skills which learners will learn once they have mastered basic functional literacy should be the result of market demand analysis and learners’ needs. As the tasks and sub-tasks performed by various tradesmen and women, small entrepreneurs and self-employed workers change continuously, there is a necessity to adapt the contents of the various training programmes accordingly. In order to be in a position to adequately fulfil the above mentioned activities, government officers, NGO workers and facilitators need to be convinced of the importance of such activities as well as be thoroughly trained on their implementation.

Empowering beneficiaries
Planning at all levels is a crucial function and needs to be reinforced to strengthen the on-going NFE programme in Bangladesh, particularly the continuing education phase. Based on lessons learned from the pilot phase of the PLCE project, this should be done through regular dialogues, negotiations and exchanges between the main programme stakeholders. Market surveys and need assessments show that concerned officers, NGO coordinators, field workers, facilitators and CMC members should co-ordinate to plan the programme and its activities right down to the village and centre level.

CMCs, with democratically elected representatives, will play a central role in the mobilisation of local communities as well as potential learners in the forthcoming continuing education programme. Mobilisation will not be limited to rallies at which national, as well as local politicians harangue the masses, make promises, seek recognition and try to obtain support for their projects. Rather, mobilisation at the grassroots level will aim at explaining the intention of the programme, its objectives and strategy, and convincing local communities and their leaders to get involved and to take it over progressively. Concrete evidence clearly suggests that the only way for a basic learning programme to succeed in the long run is to ensure that the programme itself is a product of the community and responds to its most pressing needs, as felt and defined by the community itself.

With this end in mind, the next phase of the proposed PLCE programme is placing heavy emphasis on local participation at all stages and in all components of the programme. Local ownership through intensive and practical training and skill transfers from the NGOs to the learners and, above all, a holistic approach, are also strongly stressed.
**Combined efforts of a diversity of partners**

In order to effectively reach beneficiaries and contribute to the improvement of their living conditions, skills and knowledge within the NFE programme ought to be delivered through a diversity of mechanisms, as well as a diversity of partners. Such diversity is essential to reach the large numbers of beneficiaries.

The choice of a learning delivery mechanism largely depends on the location and circumstances of the learners, as well as on the nature and extent of their needs and aspirations. Often, poor, isolated village women, victims of discriminatory practices, can not even be asked to walk to a centre. A mobile type of delivery system has to be devised so that skills to be learned are brought to the homes of the women by female trainers.

Many partners need to be involved and actively contribute to meet the challenge of responding to the enormous demand for skills. The private sector has not yet been involved in the NFE programme. The time has now come for the private sector to join the fight against illiteracy and poverty. Other potentially useful and so far neglected actors should also be brought in. As already indicated, local communities are the most important actor still to be adequately mobilised as equal partners.

**Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting**

Among a number of NFE stakeholders in Bangladesh, the importance of monitoring, evaluation and reporting (MER) still needs to be made clear. This is a first and crucial step. Providing the capacities, resources and skills to those who are meant to carry out regular MER exercises represents the second step.

The idea that MER ought to be an indispensable component in any development activity needs to be stressed and the practice needs to become widely institutionalised. The proposed PLCE programme makes this point clearly and suggests concrete ways of providing stakeholders, at all levels, the skills to do so.

**The ultimate goal: a community-run basic learning system and programme sustainability**

In Bangladesh, the entrepreneurial spirit is active. Given the opportunity, support and self-confidence, evidence suggests that even very poor rural men and women would progressively lift themselves out of poverty. So far, unfavourable external circumstances have not enabled these men and women to do so.

Non-formal education in Bangladesh could represent a turning point in poverty alleviation and in the improvement of living conditions if a number of prerequisites would be fulfilled. Recently collected field evidence suggests that a holistic and integrated approach to NFE and to lifelong learning presents an absolute must. Similar evidence also suggests that human resources and
capacities in Bangladesh’s villages are enormous. All of these could be rather rapidly mobilised for setting up community based and run basic learning systems.

The issue of sustainability, like the one of participation, has become a slogan to be used in international gatherings as well as in the negotiations of projects between donors and recipient countries. Real long-term sustainability within the Bangladesh non-formal education programme can be achieved with few difficulties provided the issue is addressed at the very onset of a programme. As far as post literacy and continuing education is concerned, one of the steps proposed is to insist on the payment of modest fees by trainees who can afford it and who have successfully been absorbed by the local market, while still enjoying the benefits of the programme. Another proposed measure is for communities to make contributions to the programme. A third measure consists of setting up a national training fund supported by all key sectors of Bangladesh society.

Conclusions

An attempt has been to briefly present some aspects of the on-going NFE programme in Bangladesh. From the many lessons learned in the field, the paper shows that if fundamental and desperately needed changes were to be introduced into the currently weak NFE programme, rapid improvements could be expected. Such optimism is largely justified by the fact that Bangladesh can rely on a vast reservoir of human resources, which if mobilised and effectively harnessed, could represent a major force for social change and economic development.

For this to happen, however, it is necessary for major changes to take place. The development of a long term NFE vision, strategies and policies, the mobilisation and involvement of key sectors of society, especially local communities and the private sector, and the introduction of a holistic and integrated approach to continuing education are some of the crucial steps which would strengthen the relevance, scope and effectiveness of the current NFE programme. Another vital step would be to actively promote the genuine involvement of local communities as decision-makers and empowered implementers in setting up of village-based basic learning systems. The latter step would go a long way towards transforming the current government and donor dependent programme into a community-based programme. It would also ensure the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of non-formal education in Bangladesh, as well as progressively lead to lifelong education and the establishment of a learning society.

The paper has important implications for policies in meeting basic learning needs, setting up support structures, as well as institutionalising evaluation and monitoring. First, as far as policy responses to meeting the learning needs of adults is concerned, very much still needs to be done in every component of the NFE system. To examine some of the basic learning systems in place in other countries of the region would be a positive first step. Other steps would include
the development of an overall NFE vision, precise policies and strategies, decentralisation of the entire system, creation of a permanent multi-level workforce of well-trained officers and facilitators, and mobilisations of other sectors of society.

Second, this paper has made a series of suggestions regarding institutional support for effective delivery of adult and lifelong learning which include the creation of partnerships with the private sector, the empowering of local communities and the development of their own existing basic learning systems, as well as strengthening the capacities of NGOs, district administrations and their numerous facilitators.

Third, the need to create awareness about the concept and purpose of monitoring and evaluation is critical in Bangladesh, where there is limited understanding, especially in government circles. As a second major step, there is the need to review, overhaul and strengthening of the current monitoring, evaluation and reporting system and mechanisms.

Notes

1 This paper does not represent the views and opinions of the Government of Bangladesh and of the SIDA. Views and ideas discussed here are the sole responsibility of the author. The suggestions are based on facts and lessons learned over a three year period of continuous in-depth professional involvement at all levels of the NFE program in Bangladesh. Evidence has been gathered, through observations, investigations, action-research, numerous fieldtrips and discussions in many districts of the country.

2 It should be noted that the suggestions are largely taken out of the proposals NORAD, SIDA and the technical assistance team has recently made to the Government of Bangladesh for their continued support to NFE in this country.

References

Increasing Learning Opportunities in Rural China: School-Community Linkages and Farmer’s Access to Further Learning

Zhang Tiedao

This paper reviews the current literacy and adult education status in China and the national policy initiatives whereby the government has committed to assume the primary responsibility for full literacy especially for youth and adults, along with the successful implementation of 9-year compulsory education programme. Two innovative areas are highlighted; namely the community learning centres programme and programmes to increase farmers’ access to further learning. These initiatives demonstrate the issue that education provisions for rural populations should respond to their need for income generation and promotion of quality of life, and be adapted to the conditions of the community in order to make it relevant and accessible for the targeted population group.

China is the most populous country in the world with a population of 1.26 billion, of which 64 percent live in rural areas. According to the 5th National Population Census of China, 78 percent of illiterates live in rural areas and only 11.6 percent of rural labourers had finished 12-year schooling. Low educational status is another constraint of the rural population. Even where young farmers have achieved a certain amount of literacy, many of them still suffer from ‘technological-blindness’. Due to the academic curriculum, every year more than seven million secondary school graduates return to the countryside having hardly learned any agricultural knowledge or techniques. Field surveys have also revealed that less educated villagers are slow to respond to new technologies and thus remain unproductive.
The Policy Framework

The national capacity for poverty alleviation and promotion of quality of life has been recognised as critically related to the literacy standard and involvement of its populace in learning the needed skills, knowledge and attitudes to respond to socio-economic changes. It is well known that China has performed favourably among the developing counties. School-aged children have full access to primary education and the country has achieved an 84 per cent literacy rate among adults over 15 years (UNESCO 2001). In 2000, 2.58 million adults became literate and 2.53 million are still engaged in library training programmes. Of the 93.96 million adults who completed their technical training, 88 million were rural youth and adults (China Education Daily 2000).

In this context the new demand of literacy and adult education has become two-fold, namely to extend literacy provision for the disadvantaged population groups and to strengthen the relevance and quality of adult learning programmes. However, the current education system in China’s rural settings remains primarily oriented to formal basic schooling and it is inadequately prepared to meet the learning needs of the rural community.

The new policy framework released in 2002 focuses on promoting literacy campaigns and improving curriculum contents and delivery systems for economically disadvantaged rural areas in West China. The national education policy has been driven by a shared commitment to sustain steady quality improvement in its human resources especially through effective diffusion of knowledge and technologies.

The objectives for the national literacy programme have been defined to achieve a 95 percent literacy rate among the age group of 15-50 by 2005, provide continuing learning programmes for neo-literate youth and adults, and to make adult learning system more responsive to social and individual needs.

The local government shall continue to assume primary responsibility for planning and implementation of literacy programmes and will assessed by the state on an annual basis. The planning and implementation shall take into account the verified needs of learners and integrate literacy programmes and continued learning for neo-literates with the nine-year compulsory education. Needs-based curriculum and delivery mechanisms shall be sought to ensure cost-effective delivery of programmes, and priority should be given to the most disadvantaged population groups, such as poverty-stricken population, ethnic minorities and women.

The Ministry of Education has recently proposed a series of strategies, putting literacy on their agenda as a top priority together with specific policies for planning, funding and mobilisation of social resources. These policies include co-ordinating all sectors of society to fulfil the government’s mission of literacy campaigns, mobilising funds especially for the most needy groups, and making literacy more functional and useful for learners with improvements in curriculum contents and teaching and learning methods. The literacy curriculum is to be
reformulated to include basic literacy, applied maths, enterprise competencies, skills and knowledge for family life and effective citizenship. In addition, all schools and facilities will be involved as lifelong learning providers in the evenings, over the weekend and during vacations, and school teachers will assume literacy responsibilities. Finally, it has been proposed that the provincial government monitoring and accreditation system is to be geared towards the overall achievement of universal primary education, literacy and then 9-year compulsory education.

In sum, literacy is primarily committed as a socially shared responsibility whereby the government plays a co-ordinating role for the planning, mobilising, and accreditation of the programmes. The current main task seems to strengthen the relevance and cost-effectiveness of learning experience of all learners, along with special programmes for the disadvantaged population groups.

**Rural Schools as Community Learning Centres**

The issue of rural schools has been re-examined to meet the various learning needs of the rural community. The school, if properly utilised, is the only community supported educational establishment that can be directed to promote the readiness of the rural villagers to acquire the expertise necessary for more efficient production and effective participation in the community.

In spite of the rapid urbanisation, China is still an agriculture-dominant nation. 68 per cent of the total rural labour force is engaged in the agriculture sector. Although economic performance relies on the status of human resource development, education should prepare the rural population for effective acquisition of knowledge, skills and humanistic qualities. It is therefore necessary for rural development to be perceived not only in terms of increase in income but rather promotion of the quality of rural life through improvement of the villagers’ educational and health status.

There have been numerous efforts made by international, national bodies, NGOs as well as the rural clientele themselves. Some examples of projects carried out since the 80s include the following. The *Taihang Rural Mountain Approach* is a university-assisted project in which professors of Hebei Agriculture University volunteered to work for 3-5 years in the field to encourage the villagers to apply new technologies for productive farming. The *Inter-Provincial Project on Poverty Alleviation*, co-ordinated by the Chinese National Commission for UNESCO, focused on technical training among the rural poor for poverty alleviation through the design and development of learning materials geared towards creating and maintaining income generation activities. The *UNESCO/APPEAL Community Learning Centre Projects* made recommendations for staff training and grassroots involvement. The *UNESCO/Beijing Office Pilot Project for Poverty Alleviation in Yunnan Province* focussed on literacy training among the sparsely populated minority communities; and the Gansu Institute for
Educational Research developed the *Joint Guidebook Preparation for Non-Formal Learning Material Development.*

The initiatives described above however have been fragmented and disconnected from the education system. There is a lack of empirical studies and documentation with well-designed research intervention to decode the catalytic function of education. As a result, many praise-worthy innovations have been confined to certain territories, seldom sustained, or disseminated.

Each of these projects however shared common areas for improvement related to the lack of expertise for project planning, particularly in terms of objective setting, selection of strategies, field implementation, team building, material development and instruction and synthesis of innovative practice and documentation. There are also problems with the lack of project visibility, funding support and sustainability. To address these issues, several considerations for project planning and implementation are recommended.

Education efforts for rural empowerment should have as a priority objective poverty alleviation and improvement of quality of life. To this end, any project should aim at enhancing the abilities of adaptability and entrepreneurship of the rural target population.

Current rural communities are family-based in which transformations can only be a gradual process. Educational services should therefore be designed with the aim of encouraging voluntary participation with an incremental approach to change.

To suit the expanded role of rural schools to facilitate community learning and for them to serve as a primary educational resource in the disadvantaged localities, full use of their resources should be made to disseminate and demonstrate the most needed skills for the rural villagers. In practice, however, the most difficult thing to begin with, is to motivate the target population to participate in the community affairs. Therefore, needs assessment, market survey, entrepreneurship training as well as micro-credit assistance should be included during the planning stage. Incentives should also be created jointly by the local community, education authority and the project agency to encourage the rural schools to try out additional programmes for the community members.

The implementing institution needs to play a crucial role throughout the project cycle, and its commitment to capacity building should determine the success of any proposed project efforts. In this connection, there is always a need to invest in the staff development and opportunities to expose institutions to new expertise and challenges. It is also necessary to develop a project management handbook for effective educational innovations and specifically for to prepare rural schools to shoulder the community learning programmes.

Research intervention proves to be an essential element for significant innovations in education. Research and training institutions, with and accountable administrative support, could perform well as implementing agencies. Apart from its important function for programme development, research is expected to have an even more critical role with regard to identification of indigenous wisdom,
syntheses of available field experience, multimedia documentation of project outcomes as well as workshops/conferences at different levels. 1

Farmers’ Access to Further Learning

In a globalising world, access to information for economic productivity plays an increasingly critical role for determining people’s capacity for income generation and quality of life in the community. This is particularly true in the vast rural areas where farmers, often out-of-reach of valid information and expertise, remain disadvantaged in social, economic and cultural aspects.

In present day China, the digital infrastructure has been extended from the central urban cities to the counties to supplement traditional media. However, in spite of the heavy investment, the Internet (or Intranet) systems often lack verifiable information or, more often, are unable to reach the targeted population. ‘The last mile’ problem occurs when an information system does not reach the targeted population groups resulting in the waste of information. 2 This case shows that information service could provide a practical solution to this problem.

The construction of information-driven agriculture has made great achievements in China. During the five-year plan of 1995-2000, IT has been rapidly applied in agriculture under the joint efforts of ministries and research institutions. Consequently, geographic information, remote sensing information and global positioning, the expert system, and the agricultural analogue techniques have become applicable for modern agriculture. Twenty massive technology-assisted rural projects have been carried out in different ecological contents. The farmers in pilot zones can go directly to the local promotion centre to obtain necessary data for crop cultivation and animal husbandry with the assistance of a computer.

Furthermore, China has succeeded in developing and utilising advanced databases concerning agriculture, forestry, poultry, fishery, and plant protection. The low-cost and high-speed agricultural information network web sites have brought traditional farming onto the information highway and changed the traditional practice of farming.

In spite of its rapid expansion, the agricultural IT in China has met with some difficulties. First, the information available from the network is sometimes inaccessible to the users at the grass-roots level. Second, the incomplete coverage of information system tends to cause information transmission failure. There is a large gap between the construction of operation management and service system of agricultural IT and the development of the market-oriented agriculture. Under most circumstances, the current system is not prepared to meet the most-felt needs of rural population.
Farmers’ information needs
China’s agricultural economy is transferring from the planned economy to the market-oriented economy and gradually redirecting toward a consumer-oriented production. The change in the rural situation has brought a series of new problems, such as surplus agricultural production as a result of structural changes, falling prices, slag markets, increasing surplus labour, waste of human resource, farmer’s poor income. Farmers have to respond to changes how and what to produce and whom to sell to in order to maximise the outputs of their production. All these depend on their access to valid information and expertise.

Adult education in rural China
Adult education in rural China is carried out through the non-formal adult education system. China has been trying on a large scale, to offer all kinds of scientific training programmes to farmers to improve their literacy and technical ability. The Green Certificate Project has trained and certified farmers’ mastery of a specific income generation technique. The Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Finance and the Central Committee of the Chinese Youth League jointly conducted the National Technical Training Project for Young Farmers. By the end of 2000, more than 0.5 million young farmers were trained and 3,071 techniques were popularised.

The extensive educational programmes in rural China have effectively functioned to raise the literacy level of the rural labourers and made a great contribution both to the development of rural economy and society. The current information flow is maintained through several channels.

Extension programmes
Agricultural technical extension has been organised to disseminate new techniques in agricultural production through experiments, assimilation, training programmes and consultation services. Extension centres, village-level agricultural-technical service centres, and agricultural-technical associations serve as demonstrating institutions. With the introduction of the market economy and the on-going agricultural industrialisation, the previous extension system can hardly cope with the uprising needs of the farmers for new techniques. The farmers now expect quicker, easier and more direct approaches for learning new techniques.

Traditional information services
While farmers use the Internet to conduct all types of information service, the traditional ways are still favoured. A great number of practical technique series, periodicals and booklets on agriculture have been edited and published. In addition, other materials are distributed to farmers with the activity of ‘sending science and technology to the countryside’. All these have promoted the application of agricultural science and technologies.
The agricultural information network

Internet has now become the fourth largest medium following newspaper, radio and television. In recent years a group of agriculture-related websites have sprung up providing farmers with all kinds of information services. According to statistics, China has about 3,000 domestic agricultural information websites, among which 177 deal with agricultural technologies. Furthermore, continuous attention has been paid to tapping agricultural information resources and many agricultural databases have been established focusing on every aspect of production and rural life.

The Beijing Academy of Agriculture and Forestry Sciences (BAAFS) focuses on releasing the latest information on agricultural science and technology as well as marketing and related government policies and regulations. It provides counseling services through multimedia means including training classes, newspapers, an enquiry hotline as well as sends specialists to the countryside to give on-the-spot consultations and designing agricultural information web sites.

Compared to traditional media, the agricultural information network seems to have some exceptional advantages since it offers wider coverage, low cost and timeliness. It provides an all-round service with its large volume as well as its verbal, pictorial, sound and image information. In the near future, the network might be linked to cable and wireless television, thus bringing agricultural-scientific information service into every household. This will undoubtlessly pave the way for the most accessible service to agricultural technologies and information. Therefore, the information network has been regarded as a most potential approach for the farmers to obtain the most up-date information.

Distance education

In the rural areas, resource problems such as insufficient teachers, textbooks and classrooms are often apparent in farmers’ training programmes. Distance education is another delivery mechanism to provide rural labourers with more learning opportunities to improve their competencies. The operation of agricultural distance training is developed from the distribution of hand-written and printed materials, to the use of the multimedia of radio, television, sound recording and videotapes to the use of satellite television and computer networks.

The BAAFS initiated the construction of modern agricultural distance education in two pilot sites - Miyun County and Huairou County outside Beijing by connecting the Internet to wide-band satellite broadcasts, local network and cable television. In 2000, the pilot project of agricultural distance education programme was officially opened to the public in the Beijing area. The curriculum is offered through satellite transmission and the Internet. Through live and interactive lectures, farmers and learners can ask questions and communicate with specialists. This is convenient for self-directed learning.

A large quantity of multimedia course materials for agricultural distance education has been developed. Furthermore, the construction of a multimedia material storehouse has taken shape, and more than 1,000 kinds of teaching
materials have been accumulated. Over 100 demonstrative sites have been set up in the suburbs of Beijing. These learning programmes have been successfully conducted and are welcomed by farmers.

**Integrated satellite transmission and completed network**
An integrated satellite transmission and computer network supplies multimedia information, provides distance education and conducts market counselling for farmers and agricultural managerial personnel, especially for those living in remote areas. In Beijing, there are 100 cluster centres that reach more than 50 per cent of the rural township. 12 centres have also been set up in the provinces of Hebei and Fujian, and the Tibetan Autonomous Region. Most of these are located in the township government or village offices, local agricultural companies and schools, accessible by local farmers and school students. Such a practice seems to be a possible solution to ‘the last mile’ problem of the agricultural information construction. The operation of the network has also proved to be an effective capacity building process in information service and resource utilisation.

China’s agricultural information network and rural distance education however are beset with a number of shortcomings such as the conditions of professional expertise, shortage of funds, insufficient infrastructure and insufficient flow of information. There is still a wide gap between the current provision and the growing need for information-driven agriculture. To this end, several new initiatives have been undertaken such as merging information networks, improving information service, and promoting exchange and co-operating with both domestic and international institutions.

**Conclusion**

Sustained national development rests on the quality of its populace, for which literacy and continuing learning can play an empowering role. The government should assume primary responsibilities for the planning and mobilisation. In order to link policies with the practice of and enhance the effectiveness of lifelong learning programmes, policies should be met with innovative modalities and pilot projects in close response to the learning needs through all possible delivery mechanisms.

The development of economy and society depends mainly on the overall improvement of literacy and continuing learning. Sustainable development of rural society in China relies on the education system for all. The elaboration of the two projects in China’s rural context has shown that the continued endeavour for reorienting rural schools as community learning centres and promoting adult education of farmers is necessary to respond to the changed contexts and the most-felt learning needs of the beneficiaries.
Notes

1 The author's own experience shows that research can serve as an effective learning process for professional development, but research capacity tends to exert an important impact on the final decisions on the supply of resources for the establishment or continuation of any project initiatives.

2 With the sponsorship of UNESCO, Beijing Academy of Agriculture and Forestry Sciences (BAAFS) and Beijing Academy of Educational Sciences (BAES) have jointly accomplished the current project dealing with 'the last mile' issue.

References


Diverse Settings and Providers of Lifelong Learning in Malaysia

Khairuddin Idris

This paper describes the notion of lifelong learning, formal, non-formal and informal learning in Malaysia. It focuses on these different types of learning by highlighting a few significant programmes in the area of formal education, workplace learning and distance education in Malaysia.

Lifelong learning refers to forms of learning activities from the moment of birth to old age. As such, these learning activities will include all forms of learning, be it deliberate or incidental in nature. The Commission for European Countries defines lifelong learning as all learning activities undertaken throughout life aimed at improving knowledge, skills and competencies within a personal, civic, social, and/or employment related perspectives (Commission for European Countries 2001). Meanwhile, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) considers lifelong learning ‘should extend throughout life, include all skills and branches of knowledge, use all possible means, and give the opportunity to all people for full development of the personality’ (UNESCO 1977: 2). Hence, learning is seen to be an endeavour that includes all forms of subject matter and is deemed to be beneficial for the individual and the society at large. However, in practice, the concept of lifelong learning is generally associated with adult education, partly due to the necessity of distinguishing adult learning activities from formal institutional learning. In Malaysia for example, most adults would not claim to participate in learning activities if they are not engaged in a formal educational process. In this case the term lifelong learning would refer to learning beyond the formal setting especially those who have reached adulthood or who are no longer in school.

Learning therefore can be categorised into four general categories. Formal learning includes activities that take place in formal educational institutions that leads to some form of accreditation or qualification. Non-formal learning generally includes learning that takes place out of the formal educational context where the aim of learning may not necessarily result in a particular qualification.
Individuals participate in activities to gain new skills or knowledge in specific areas related to their work or personal growth. Such forms of learning may include private tutorials for examinations, technical courses, extension education, job-related training, community-organised programmes and other learning activities organised by public, private or non-governmental organisations. Informal learning comprises generally unstructured learning activities that individuals undertake to fulfil the need for knowing about certain things. This type of learning occurs naturally out of inquisitiveness that sets learners out on a search for information. In most instances, individuals do not regard themselves as being in the learning process. Incidental learning includes unplanned and unintended learning outcomes that directly result from engaging in other activities. Learners may suddenly discover a connection between different objects that brings significance to them.

Formal Learning

The Malaysian government considers education as a state responsibility. The government’s emphasis on education has ensured a 93 percent literacy rate for Malaysia. Primary and secondary public education is provided free of charge for all students aged 7 to 17, however, it is still not compulsory for the moment. Nevertheless, the government is considering making primary education compulsory for all children aged 7 to 12 in the future.

In light of meeting the requirements for the 21st century the government considers educational reform as a necessity for future growth in human resources. As such, new legislations were formulated and tabled at the parliament between 1995 and 1996. The Education Act 1996 aims to incorporate all categories of schools under the national education system to ensure relevance and quality in education. The act also emphasises teaching of foreign languages and the teaching of values. The National Council on Higher Education Act 1996 provided for the establishment of a national body to plan, formulate and determine policies relevant to higher education in Malaysia. The council oversees and coordinates both public and private education, and develops strategies to ensure the country’s higher education system meets the national growth requirements. The Universities and University Colleges Act 1996 was also amended to enable self-governance of universities. The act has paved the way for the democratisation of tertiary education, especially in developing new modes of educational delivery such as distance education and fostering co-operation with foreign universities.

Non-Formal Learning

Malaysia has a significantly young population with a median age of 23.9 years. This young median age has translated into a decrease in the dependency ratio (the
ratio of dependents for every 100 working persons) from 62.7 percent in 1995 to 59.1 percent in 2000, as the number of people in the working age of 15-64 has increased.

In Malaysia, the Human Resource Development Corporation (HRDC) is probably the most dominant organisation that undertakes non-formal learning programmes. The Human Resource Development Fund (HRDF), managed by the HRDC, was implemented in 1993 enabling participating employers in the manufacturing industry with 50 or more employees to be 100 percent reimbursed for training costs. In 1995 companies with 10 to 49 employees were included. Large employers with paid-up capital of 2.5 million Ringgit are mandated to contribute one percent of the monthly payroll to the HDRF levy, while smaller companies were given the option to participate. Employees of the latter category that opt to participate contribute 0.5 percent of their monthly wages to the fund and the government contributed two Ringgits to every one Ringgit contribution as a subsidy.

As of February 2000, the HRDF has been extended to include the service industry, computer, telecommunications, energy, shipping and aviation companies and private institutions of higher learning and training.

Altogether there are 2.6 million places eligible for the HRDF in seven training schemes. These are: The Training Grant Scheme, Approved Training Programme Scheme, Annual Training Plan Scheme, Agreement with Training Providers Scheme, Apprentice Scheme, Training Grant Scheme for Small and Medium-scale Enterprise Scheme and Training Scheme for Retrenched Workers. Generally, employers preferred to provide in-house training by external trainers.

Table 2: Human Resource Development fund, Number of Employers, Levy Collected, Financial Assistance and Percentage Utilisation of Funds.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Manufacturing</th>
<th>Services</th>
<th>Levy collected (RM million)</th>
<th>Financial assist. (RM million)</th>
<th>Percentage utilisation of financial assistance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>3,254</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>3,669</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>64.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>3,966</td>
<td>778</td>
<td>100.9</td>
<td>89.6</td>
<td>88.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>4,393</td>
<td>1,027</td>
<td>126.7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>4,702</td>
<td>1,181</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>159.5</td>
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<td>4,803</td>
<td>1,323</td>
<td>61.0</td>
<td>141.3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>1,404</td>
<td>83.7</td>
<td>106.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>188.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Human Resources Development Council, Ministry of Human Resources
**Human Resource Policy**

According to the Eighth Malaysian Plan, the thrust of the human resource policy is to improve the quality of education and training systems ensuring manpower supply is in line with technological change and market demand, and to expand the supply of highly skilled manpower to support the development of the knowledge-based economy. The policy encourages increasing accessibility to education and training to enhance income generation capabilities as well as quality of life and promotes lifelong learning to enhance employability and productivity of the labour force. The policy also advocates intensifying efforts to develop and promote Malaysia as a regional centre of educational excellence and reinforces positive values of citizenship, personal development, and democratic participation.

**Informal and Incidental Learning**

Informal education has not been well documented in Malaysia although it has been acknowledged as an important facet of learning. Individuals engage in informal education both at work and in the community. Studies have indicated that individuals use this learning at work to enable them to do their jobs (Idris 1999, Aziz 2002). Employees may seek opinions and or talk about solutions to work problems with their colleagues. In addition they may also seek information through printed materials or the Internet. Employees also obtain information for product marketing purposes through their daily lives. Informal learning is also a very important type of learning at the personal, group and community level. Individuals may inquire with friends and neighbours regarding problems that they face or just seek information regarding improving their quality of life. These may include dealing with ailments, relationships, personal finances or personal interests. Again, printed materials and the Internet have been useful references in the search for information.

Chong’s (2002) study on Chinese night market operators supported the inclination for informal learning. Chong found that night market traders are generally unaware that they go through a learning process in order to develop and sustain their businesses. Although these night market operators may claim that they do not necessarily learn about their business, the data indicated that they employ seven learning modes. These include: observation; experiential learning; trial and error learning; getting customer feedback; reflection; visits to various marketplaces; and getting advice from friends. The traders have also reported that they have gained insights into their own businesses through their nightly trading activities and by observing competitors at the night markets. These insights indicate that informal and incidental learning also plays an important role in learning.
Presently, the University Putra Malaysia is conducting a study to capture and document informal learning efforts in the country under the Intensified Research in Priority Areas programme.

Conclusion

The current emphasis on productivity and technology has made lifelong learning more important in Malaysia. Currently human resource development is regarded as the driver for the development of competencies among the Malaysian workforce. Hence, formal and non-formal learning have been receiving a lot of attention. The Malaysian government has taken initiatives to ensure that both these forms of education are further strengthened to address the requirements of the industry.

However, it is also important that other aspects of learning, especially informal education be given attention. While policies on informal and incidental learning may be difficult to develop due to the nature of the learning itself, it is nevertheless an important effort if lifelong learning is to be integrated in to the daily lives of the people. Informal and incidental learning can be promoted by making resources available and accessible to Malaysians. These resources may include facilities and infrastructures such as libraries and public Internet facilities. Malaysia is now working on a lifelong learning policy to ensure a culture of learning becomes a culture for its people, from skilled employees alone, to learning citizens by addressing social, personal, and labour market needs.

References


Development of a Non-Formal Education System in Mongolia

Yondomjamtsyn Nyamdavaa

Non-formal education (NFE) in Mongolia attends to the educational and lifelong learning needs of adults, out of school children and youth. While the formal education system in Mongolia was established in the 1960s, non-formal education has only been developed since the middle of 1990s. The recent law on education emphasises that ‘education should include both formal and non-formal education’.

The population census of 2000 shows that 5.5 percent of the population aged 15 and above is uneducated, of which 98.6 percent of this aged population is literate. In comparison, 4.6 percent of population aged 7 and above is illiterate. Although the population in rural areas, particularly the herdsmen, are at various levels of education, their use of literacy skills are at a very low level. People do not use literacy skills in their daily lives since they do manual labour and stockbreeding and often tend to forget their literacy skills. Therefore, post literacy programmes are necessary. In 1997, the Government of Mongolia implemented strategies for the National Non-formal Education Development Programme which would be put into action over a period of eight years.

Mission of the National Non-formal Education Programme

The Government shall establish and develop educational structures that enable each person to continue the learning process according to their learning needs and available time. Non-formal education system structures shall be implemented in order to develop content, methods, materials, learning strategies and training
programmes for teaching staff to meet educational needs and the interests of adults. With the help of these structures, a network of activities will be undertaken to develop non-formal education throughout the country.

To develop non-formal education in Mongolia, the National Non-formal Education Development Programme has developed 6 strategies. They are to increase the literacy education rate, improve the general level of education, implement equivalency programmes, provide vocational education and skills, enhance and promote creativity, and contribute to the development of self learning. Each strategy will have its own specific management, content and approach.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture specifically established the Non-formal Education Centre 1997 to implement the programme nation-wide. The Centre has the tasks of implementing government policies on Non-formal Education, improving the curricula, developing handbooks, teaching-learning materials and aids as well as mobilising material resources, improving skills of the personnel, organising workshops and introducing distance learning.

Recently, the government of Mongolia implemented the National Distance Education Programme as an important step in developing adult lifelong learning. The programme has a mission of improving efficiency, quality and effectiveness in formal and non-formal education delivery services. It also supports people in getting opportunities in lifelong learning through the national distance education system. The National Distance Education Programme includes coordination of policy and management system, mechanisms for service and activities, capacity building, sufficient, qualitative, effective technical and information infrastructure as well as appropriate media, research, content and methodology.

**Institutional Support**

The purpose of creating an institutional support structure for non-formal education for meeting adult basic education needs is to create a non-formal education management system, train NFE personnel on management and planning, develop curricula, prepare teaching-learning materials and aids and finally, implement the Dakar Framework for Action.

Education and Culture Centres located in 21 provinces have Non-formal Education units. All government units of Mongolia have been commissioned to develop non-formal education, formulate policy and supervise non-formal education activities at the community level. Community Learning Centres (CLC) are the smallest unit of the Mongolian education system and have the role of organising training at the community level.

Several capacity building workshops will be held on non-formal education management and planning involving heads of educational units and heads of Governors’ offices. There is a policy to have at least one methodology expert and approximately 300 teachers in non-formal education to be trained by distance
education. The handbooks ‘Non-formal Adult Education Facilitators’ and ‘Adult Learning Material Development at Community Level’ by APPEAL and ACCU, were translated, adapted and disseminated to all non-formal education teachers, for use in their daily activities.

Support structures have been put in place to prepare curriculum for adults and out of school children and youth. Primary and basic education equivalency programmes have been developed and used. Furthermore, there is a need to develop and implement a curriculum for adults’ life skill.

There is a plan to prepare and disseminate the theory and methodology of non-formal education for the people that work in this field. Due to NFE, adult education has just begun to develop. It is necessary to prepare materials on theory and methodology to give knowledge on NFE. In result, 10 different kinds of textbooks for primary education, 7 for basic education and 23 handbooks for life skill training were developed and disseminated. Preparation of teaching-learning materials and aids with the support of international organisations and NGOs has increased.

The non-formal distance education project implemented with UNESCO’s support is playing a big role in adult learning in Mongolia. Under the project, over 35,000 families have been trained in marketing and life skills. The training uses both printed materials and radio. Through this method, it has achieved good results and also reached remote parts of Mongolia.

The National Education for All Forum established in April 2002 and headed by the Government will implement the Dakar framework for Action in Mongolia, with members of Government and Minister of Education, Culture and Science.

Emphasis will be laid on 3 goals to implement objectives of Education for All in Mongolia. They are to expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education; especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children, ensure that all children get basic education of good quality, and ensure that the learning needs of adolescents and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning.

Accordingly, a goal-action guideline has been developed and it is ready to be implemented by Government of Mongolia.

**Future Tasks**

Comparatively speaking the level of education of Mongolian people is relatively high in the Asian Pacific region. The first steps in the development of non-formal and adult education have been made. Building the appropriate institutional support structures for adult education have also been undertaken, and these structures will be strengthened and developed based on both national and local resources. Close co-operation of countries is essential to implement the Dakar Framework for Action in Asia and the Pacific and to develop NFE in Mongolia. In the next few years, Mongolia should create financial resource to organise
training for adults, improve personnel in NFE and adult training as well as increase teaching learning materials for adults. In addition, Mongolia should get support from donors and share information and materials with other countries as well take part in international and regional activities. Furthermore, they provide access to the population on functional uses of literacy.

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Development of a Non-Formal Education System in Mongolia

Yondonjamtsyn Nyamdavaa

Non-formal education (NFE) in Mongolia attends to the educational and lifelong learning needs of adults, out of school children and youth. While the formal education system in Mongolia was established in the 1960s, non-formal education has only been developed since the middle of 1990s. The recent law on education emphasises that ‘education should include both formal and non-formal education’.

The population census of 2000 shows that 5.5 percent of the population aged 15 and above is uneducated, of which 98.6 percent of this aged population is literate. In comparison, 4.6 percent of population aged 7 and above is illiterate. Although the population in rural areas, particularly the herdsmen, are at various levels of education, their use of literacy skills are at a very low level. People do not use literacy skills in their daily lives since they do manual labour and stockbreeding and often tend to forget their literacy skills. Therefore, post literacy programmes are necessary. In 1997, the Government of Mongolia implemented strategies for the National Non-formal Education Development Programme which would be put into action over a period of eight years.

Mission of the National Non-formal Education Programme

The Government shall establish and develop educational structures that enable each person to continue the learning process according to their learning needs and available time. Non-formal education system structures shall be implemented in order to develop content, methods, materials, learning strategies and training
programmes for teaching staff to meet educational needs and the interests of adults. With the help of these structures, a network of activities will be undertaken to develop non-formal education throughout the country.

To develop non-formal education in Mongolia, the National Non-formal Education Development Programme has developed 6 strategies. They are to increase the literacy education rate, improve the general level of education, implement equivalency programmes, provide vocational education and skills, enhance and promote creativity, and contribute to the development of self learning. Each strategy will have its own specific management, content and approach.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture specifically established the Non-formal Education Centre 1997 to implement the programme nation-wide. The Centre has the tasks of implementing government policies on Non-formal Education, improving the curricula, developing handbooks, teaching-learning materials and aids as well as mobilising material resources, improving skills of the personnel, organising workshops and introducing distance learning.

Recently, the government of Mongolia implemented the National Distance Education Programme as an important step in developing adult lifelong learning. The programme has a mission of improving efficiency, quality and effectiveness in formal and non-formal education delivery services. It also supports people in getting opportunities in lifelong learning through the national distance education system. The National Distance Education Programme includes coordination of policy and management system, mechanisms for service and activities, capacity building, sufficient, qualitative, effective technical and information infrastructure as well as appropriate media, research, content and methodology.

**Institutional Support**

The purpose of creating an institutional support structure for non-formal education for meeting adult basic education needs is to create a non-formal education management system, train NFE personnel on management and planning, develop curricula, prepare teaching-learning materials and aids and finally, implement the Dakar Framework for Action.

Education and Culture Centres located in 21 provinces have Non-formal Education units. All government units of Mongolia have been commissioned to develop non-formal education, formulate policy and supervise non-formal education activities at the community level. Community Learning Centres (CLC) are the smallest unit of the Mongolian education system and have the role of organising training at the community level.

Several capacity building workshops will be held on non-formal education management and planning involving heads of educational units and heads of Governors’ offices. There is a policy to have at least one methodology expert and approximately 300 teachers in non-formal education to be trained by distance
education. The handbooks ‘Non-formal Adult Education Facilitators’ and ‘Adult Learning Material Development at Community Level’ by APPEAL and ACCU, were translated, adapted and disseminated to all non-formal education teachers, for use in their daily activities.

Support structures have been put in place to prepare curriculum for adults and out of school children and youth. Primary and basic education equivalency programmes have been developed and used. Furthermore, there is a need to develop and implement a curriculum for adults’ life skill.

There is a plan to prepare and disseminate the theory and methodology of non-formal education for the people that work in this field. Due to NFE, adult education has just begun to develop. It is necessary to prepare materials on theory and methodology to give knowledge on NFE. In result, 10 different kinds of textbooks for primary education, 7 for basic education and 23 handbooks for life skill training were developed and disseminated. Preparation of teaching-learning materials and aids with the support of international organisations and NGOs has increased.

The non-formal distance education project implemented with UNESCO’s support is playing a big role in adult learning in Mongolia. Under the project, over 35,000 families have been trained in marketing and life skills. The training uses both printed materials and radio. Through this method, it has achieved good results and also reached remote parts of Mongolia.

The National Education for All Forum established in April 2002 and headed by the Government will implement the Dakar framework for Action in Mongolia, with members of Government and Minister of Education, Culture and Science.

Emphasis will be laid on 3 goals to implement objectives of Education for All in Mongolia. They are to expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education; especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children, ensure that all children get basic education of good quality, and ensure that the learning needs of adolescents and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning.

Accordingly, a goal-action guideline has been developed and it is ready to be implemented by Government of Mongolia.

**Future Tasks**

Comparatively speaking the level of education of Mongolian people is relatively high in the Asian Pacific region. The first steps in the development of non-formal and adult education have been made. Building the appropriate institutional support structures for adult education have also been undertaken, and these structures will be strengthened and developed based on both national and local resources. Close co-operation of countries is essential to implement the Dakar Framework for Action in Asia and the Pacific and to develop NFE in Mongolia. In the next few years, Mongolia should create financial resource to organise
training for adults, improve personnel in NFE and adult training as well as increase teaching learning materials for adults. In addition, Mongolia should get support from donors and share information and materials with other countries as well take part in international and regional activities. Furthermore, they provide access to the population on functional uses of literacy.

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The ‘Lifelong Learning Specialist’ in Korea

Eun Soon Baik

As lifelong learning becomes a reality rather than an ideology, the importance of personnel takes on a greater significance. This paper will deal with the issue of the recognition and mandatory placement of lifelong learning specialists in Korea, as a way of guaranteeing quality of lifelong learning.

Lifelong learning is commonly understood in Korea to mean constructing a society that allows learning to whomever, whenever, wherever. This could be misinterpreted as lifelong learning being provided by anyone. Further confusion could be caused by the very nature of lifelong learning which allows diversity and variety, and where the characteristics of the suppliers of education are composed of diverse groups composed of voluntary, part time, temporary, and regular workers. However, professional training of the lifelong educator is necessary if lifelong learning is to develop in different settings. Both specialisation and diversity are important conditions of lifelong learning.

The issue of qualification for adult educators is not new. In the late 1980s, an Act was passed with a mandatory provision that social education specialists be placed in a social education agency. Recently the ‘social education specialist’ has been renamed as the ‘lifelong learning specialist’ with a strong emphasis on training curriculum. The Act stipulates that any lifelong learning organisation or facility that has more than 10 employees, or can teach more than 300 learners at one time, or has more than 3,000 students in a year should hire a lifelong learning specialist. The criterion is the size not the kind or characteristics of the facility.

However, the enforcement of the Act is not adhered to in reality. The low quality of the ‘lifelong learning specialist’ along with the inadequate implementation of the policy hampers the development of the system. This article attempts to analyse the issue of professionalism of the lifelong educator.
Lifelong Learning

The terms, ‘lifelong learning’, ‘adult education’, ‘social education’, and ‘non-formal education’ have different meanings in various countries, and diverse interpretations exist within any one country. In Korea, the term, ‘lifelong learning’ has two different meanings. The first one is closer to the original meaning of lifelong learning namely, ‘education from birth to old age, including every aspect of education such as child education, home education, school education, work education...’ This broad definition is widely accepted by scholars.

The second one adopts a narrow view and focuses on out-of-school education. Due to the old and deep-rooted belief that ‘education is confined to school’, lifelong learning is usually considered out of school education. The Lifelong Learning Act of Korea adopts this narrow definition. According to the Act, lifelong learning refers to all forms of organised educational activities occurring outside of school. The main target group of out of school education is adult. Therefore, lifelong learning in Korea means mainly adult education, and unlike in the Western society, the term, adult education or continuing education is not widely used.

The lifelong learning specialist presented in this paper is based upon this narrow concept. It is the qualified person in the lifelong learning sector, or in the adult and continuing education area, and could be interpreted as the adult professional educator in Western terms. The lifelong learning specialist has been developed to improve the quality of lifelong learning. An underlying assumption is that as we need a specialist in each area such as teacher in school, or doctor in hospital, a qualified person is also needed in the lifelong learning sector. The controversial issue of quality control and mandatory placement can be traced back to the concept of specialisation.

Specialisation: What Does it Mean?

Specialisation means more than acquiring skills and has two connotations. The first one is based on efficiency. It assumes that concentrating on a specific area can maximise the efficiency of each person and society. This innate attribute of specialisation applies to every field. As society develops, the necessity and importance of the specialist are widely accepted. For example, the teacher certificate works as a sign of specialisation.

Internal specialisation places more emphasis on ‘what’ and ‘how’ dimensions rather than on the ‘why’ dimension. It gives importance to pre-service and in-service training of the personnel focusing on internal processes, such as curriculum building, teaching method, and length of training period.

External specialisation is related to keeping the boundaries. The main function is to exclude others and to maintain one’s own territory. For example, a skilled
expert who can teach is not allowed to teach in school without a teacher’s certificate. Whether they are trained in an efficient manner, or have the required skills is another matter. The certificate is the key to access. It assumes that the job market is open only to its holders and the key to is upgrade to qualification. Mandatory placement, which is based on certification, is considered more important than internal specialisation.

This kind of external specialisation is closely related to the placement of the specialist since it focuses on distributing specialists to institutions or organisations. It also specifies the kind and capacity of institution/organisation, the number of specialists to be placed, and the kind of certificate it denotes.

The specialisation of the ‘lifelong learning specialist’ in Korea can be analysed from these two aspects. Since modern society recognises the necessity of specialisation, the first definition that is, to build the necessary skills of the ‘lifelong learning specialist’ gains legitimacy. However, the second meaning provokes objection and controversy since there are conflicts between certificate-holders and non-holders. Moreover, profit-seeking organisations oppose the mandatory placement of the certificate-holders in order to save the cost.

**Internal Specialisation**

To enhance the quality of the lifelong learning specialist, various measures have been taken. Three levels have been introduced to denote high, middle and low levels of lifelong learning specialist. Each level has its own requirement, and amount of studying.

The role of the specialist is based upon its job analysis. Several attempts have been made to do the job analysis. The widely accepted job analysis is shown in Figure 1. The job of the lifelong learning specialist can be divided into several sections such as planning, programme design and development, programme management, organisation administration, counseling and teaching. The Lifelong Learning Act stipulates the role of lifelong learning specialist as ‘planning, practicing, analysing, evaluating, and teaching of lifelong learning courses’.

The job analysis is not a simple task. It is in question whether it should represent the current or future job, be based on the actual condition with a lot of practical difficulties, or display the ideal form. Although there is agreement upon the job requirement, the relative significance of each part within the sector is different. For example, calculating how much emphasis should focus on planning, and how much energy and time should be invested for programme development are not simple matters. Relative importance within the job domain should influence time allocation of the subject concerned.

The Ministry of Education established the curriculum of the ‘lifelong learning specialist’ with the help of lifelong learning scholars. The Act stipulated required and elective subjects, number of hours, and level of certificate for the legitimacy of internal specialisation.
Figure 1: Job Analysis of Lifelong Learning Specialist

Planning
- Analysis of learning need of society & organisation
- Strategy Building
- Long-term plan

Programme Development
- Programme Validity Investigation
- Programme design
- Selecting Programme contents
- Programme development
- Programme presentation & Marketing
- Programme Implement
- Set up objective of programme

Programme Management
- Programme Validity Investigation
- Programme design
- Selecting Programme contents
- Programme development
- Programme presentation & Marketing
- Programme Implement
- Set up objective of programme

Programme Management
- Operating Learning tools
- Output analysis
- Programme presentation & Marketing

Organisation Administration
- Administration Service
- Financial administration
- Staff management & development
- Application, interpretation of law & Policy

Management
- Management education facility & environment
- Learner management
- Instructor management
- Advertisement of Institution

Networking
- Survey of community learning resource
- Human & material resource interchange
- Information Sharing
- Network Construction
- Technology Cooperation

Teaching
- Learner analysis
- Teaching material gathering
- Teaching plan
- Teaching material development

Learning Counseling
- Learner diagnosis
- Offering learning material
- Learning method advice
- Instruction Practice
- Instruction Evaluation

Learning Consulting
- Educational problem diagnosis
- Solution propose
- Implementation & Feedback
As seen in the Table 1, there are seven required subjects and ten elective subjects. The number of elective subjects depends on the learner characteristics. University students take three elective subjects to achieve the level two certificate, and two-year college students study three elective subjects for the level three and eight subjects for the level two. All the students should choose at least 3 elective subjects.

It is roughly agreed that these required subjects (see Table 1) are suited for the job of the lifelong learning specialist. However, they are not sufficient as the skills needed in the field cannot be raised through the study in classrooms.

The National Center for Lifelong learning, which is part of Korean Educational Development Institute, developed a modular course for each required subject to prevent overlapping among subjects and to increase internal coherence. The detailed information on what should be taught in each subject, time allocation for each subordinate subject, and the related reference were developed and distributed to the teaching institutions.

Table 1: The curriculum of the lifelong learning specialist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Subject</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Required subject</td>
<td>Foundations of lifelong learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lifelong learning management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adult learning and counseling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Distance education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Human resource development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lifelong learning methodology (or Industrial education methodology)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lifelong learning programme development, (or industrial education development)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elective subject</td>
<td>Youth development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foundations of women education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gerontology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foundations of management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Industrial welfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocation and ethic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education for the disadvantaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Environmental education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The required time for the pre-specialist to get the qualification is roughly about 14 credits or 210 hours in the case of level 2, and 20 credits or 300 hours for level 3. As seen in table 2, the qualification is based on the education level, not competency. For example, university students can achieve the level 2
qualification by studying 300 hours, whereas, two-year college students should study 450 hours to earn the same qualification.

From the point of internal specialisation, criticism is directed to the assumption that university student could reach the same level of specialisation by devoting 2/3 of the total time required by the two-year college student. It is hard to admit that four-year college/university student could reach the same level studying less subjects and hours. This evaluation based on time and the years of previous education is a convenient way of sorting pre-lifelong learning specialist. However, this kind of qualification acquisition can hardly be viewed as contributing to the specialisation of lifelong educators.

Moreover, the automatic conferment of qualification has to be checked and revised. The present system allows access to certification without any process of selection only if one studies for a certain duration of time. Although it is not easy to test the ability of the pre-specialist, an additional screening process has to be developed.

Table 2: Qualification and credits for lifelong learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Qualification (condition)</th>
<th>Credit (hours)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Doctoral degree in lifelong learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level 2 + 3year experience</td>
<td>210 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Principal/vice principal</td>
<td>210 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>Graduate school student</td>
<td>14 credit (210)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University student</td>
<td>20 credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University graduate</td>
<td>20 credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 year college student</td>
<td>30 credit (300)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 year college graduate</td>
<td>30 credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>level 3 + 3 year experience</td>
<td>10 credit (150)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University graduate + 3 year experience</td>
<td>14 credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher + 3 year experience</td>
<td>14 credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>2 year college student</td>
<td>20 credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 year college graduate</td>
<td>20 credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>high school graduate + 3 year experience</td>
<td>20 credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>public officer + 2 year experience</td>
<td>14 credits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One possible controversy in the internal specialisation of the lifelong learning specialist is the suitability of the curriculum to the job requirements as well as the process of acquiring qualification. Although the curriculum has been much improved compared to the earlier one, the time-based and education level-based conferring process needs to be changed or improved to attain the internal specialisation.
External Specialisation

The mandatory placement policy has enriched and promoted the internal effort of specialisation. The placement of qualified personnel along with the Act specifying the guidelines for hiring lifelong specialists works as an impetus to build a strong internal integrity.

However, this regulation is not well kept in reality. The reasons can be traced in many ways. First, the Act does not have any article specifying the penalty for not hiring a specialist. When lifelong learning institutions or facilities do not observe the law, they are not obligated to pay fines or suffer any inconvenience. The lack of punitive measures makes the Law ineffective. Private institutions want to save the budget by not hiring the specialist, and the public institutions do not tend to fire unqualified personnel and hire the specialist.

According to a recent survey, Korean lifelong learning scholars regard lack of penalty as the main reason for the underdevelopment of the lifelong learning specialist system (Baik et al. 2001). Inadequate penalty (37.9%) was the main reason for the underdevelopment, while other reasons include inadequate curriculum (24.2%) and insufficient social and economic return (18.5%).

The ongoing efforts can be evaluated more or less positively in several aspects. The Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development and Korean Educational Development Institute has attempted to set up the policy on lifelong learning specialists. The placement of lifelong learning specialists works as an important factor in the evaluation of lifelong learning institutions and relevant administrative organisations. For example, the Credit Bank System, which recognises the credits earned outside of the school and confers degrees to the learner, takes the existence of lifelong learning specialists as one of the evaluation criteria. The Ministry of Labor has started a policy to restrict some kind of financial benefits to the institution that hired lifelong learning specialists.

The lack of mandatory placement has hampered the development of the specialisation of lifelong learning specialists. As of 2000, more than 26,000 lifelong learning specialists have trained in university/college. However, few of them have jobs as specialists in the lifelong learning sector. This insufficient and unstable job market tends to lower the quality of the lifelong learning specialist. Beginning this year, field workers in adult and continuing education have the chance to be a lifelong learning specialist by studying in a designated organisation. This new attempt is expected to contribute to specialisation of the field workers.

Conclusion

Lifelong learning specialists are central to quality education for all Koreans. They are expected to perform important tasks of planning, programme
development, institutional management and counseling. Efforts to enhance their quality have been made through job analysis, curriculum and modular development. However, a lot of work needs to be done in this area. In addition, the policy of mandatory placement has not been enforced effectively. Both issues of quality training and placement issues are mutually related.

References

Lifelong Education Act (2000)
Creating a Learning Society in Vietnam

Vu Van Duc and Nguyen Cong Hinh

During the past few years, the Vietnamese government has carried out many socio-economic reforms and policies to help the Vietnamese overcome poverty, develop its economy, and integrate into the international community. The Vietnamese government considers education, including the education of adults, as a primary national policy issue. Consequently, after half a century, the education policy has helped to raise literacy to 95 percent from 90 percent. As of 2000, all provinces and cities in Vietnam have reached the national standard of literacy and universalisation of primary education. The policies ensure that Vietnam will have completed the universalisation of the lower secondary education by 2010. The Government's Strategy of Education and Training for 2010 to 2020 identifies the goals (among others) of quality improvement, increased levels of education and training, the creation of a skilled and flexible workforce, recognition of the importance of lifelong learning and more dynamic approaches to teaching and learning with the goal of achieving 'a Vietnamese modern education with national colour'.

This paper discusses two policy initiatives in Vietnam; the education socialisation policy and open distance education. Education policies for adults in Vietnam, referred to as education socialisation policy, have been set up in order to mobilise all segments of the population in a societal effort to contribute to national education, creating a learning society owned by the people. In addition, open and distance education, referred to as ‘non-formal education’ has played an important role in education reforms taking place at all levels throughout the 1990s. People of any age are allowed by the Ministry of Education and Training to take any non-formal course.
Socialisation Policy for Adults

The main objectives of education socialisation policy are to decentralise the responsibility for education development and to open education to all. Priority is given to ethnic minorities in the remote, mountainous and difficult areas especially as 74 percent of the 80 million people in Vietnam live in rural areas. Policies for the recruitment and treatment of teachers who teach in these areas or in areas where there are a large number of illiterate people and uneducated children have also been developed. The government has set national standards for literacy and the universalisation of primary education under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Training. Furthermore, the special funds have been allocated for programmes targeted at priority groups, such as those aged 15 to 35, illiterates, uneducated children and disadvantaged children and adults.

The National Committee for Literacy was established in 1989 to co-ordinate multi-sectoral involvement in the articulation and implementation of the government’s literacy plan. The committee has called on State Offices, social organisations and the whole of the Vietnamese population to participate in the literacy plan. The Committee organises the efforts of many related offices and Ministries including the Ministry of Education and Training, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Labour – Invalid and Social, the Ministry of Culture and Information, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Planning and Investment, National Committee of Population and Family planning, Vietnam Committee for Care and Protection of Children, the Women Association, Youth Union, Vietnam General Group of Labour, Vietnam Farmer Association.

The Ministry of Education and Training develops instructional guidelines for the evaluation of programmes and recognises programmes that have reached the national standards. It designs the programme, compiles literacy and post literacy books, and instructs teachers on the teaching methods for literacy classes.

The Ministry of Education and Training also co-ordinates with the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Planning and Investment to fund local organisations to implement literacy programmes. Organisations such as the blind association is funded to provide open literacy classes for blind people in as many provinces as possible.

The Youth Union has set up special funds to encourage and motivate young people to learn. The Youth Union has also organised volunteer youth groups to teach literacy to ethnic minorities in remote and difficult areas. The Women’s Union actively encourages children of school age children who have interrupted their studies to return to school. The union combines literacy programmes with poverty alleviation and hunger eradication programmes, and also offers loans to speed up income-generation programmes. To help make a contribution to gender
equality, the union has co-ordinated with the Ministry of Education and Training to organise special functional literacy classes for women.

The Farmer’s Union also actively encourages its members to participate in the literacy programme. The Union integrates literacy programmes with population and family planning programmes, and gives technical advice to farmers. The Farmer Union also actively encourages children to attend school and illiterate adults to come to literacy and post literacy classes.

Community based adult education

Today, Vietnam has 431 continuing education centres at the district level and 57 at the provincial level. Each district and province has at least one continuing education centre. The objectives of continuing education centres are: to implement the literacy and post literacy programmes; conduct the equivalency programmes such as the primary complementary education programme, lower and high secondary complementary education programmes; undertake remedial education programmes, periodical training, improving knowledge and updating skills; carry out individual interest promotion programmes and learning foreign languages, and applied IT programmes.

Vietnam now has 83 complementary education schools nation-wide with the to improve the knowledge of civil servants and workers. Vietnam also has 155 village community learning centres. The Ministry of Education and Training has planned that Vietnam will have 1000 centres by 2005 and each village will have a centre of its own by 2010. Community learning centres conduct literacy programmes for adults and illiteracy children, develop post literacy classes, popularise the skills of family life, healthcare, law, work skills, breeding, and planting.

Besides the above organisations, there are many other organisations and individuals that participate in the literacy programme with the motto that everyone should give his or her best to the programme even if it involves mental, physical or financial effort.

Distance Education in Vietnam

The legal status of distance education was first established by a Prime Ministerial Decision in 1992. This aimed to develop 'Open Learning Institutions and courses aiming at training cadres at higher and secondary levels'. Priority groups were identified as cadres holding a leading position, cadres or workers with good professional experience, labour heroes, outstanding farmers, soldiers and workers, women, and members of ethnic minority groups.

The Education Law of 1999 included a reference to 'in-service learning, distance learning and guided autodidactic learning' under the heading of Non-
formal Education (Article 40, 1d). It also proposed the establishment of more distance education centres to achieve the goals of increasing levels of education and training, creating a skilled and flexible workforce, and recognising the importance of lifelong learning.

Open and Distance Education was introduced to Vietnam in 1960. From 1960 to 1988, ODE mainly took the form of correspondence courses, evening classes and part-time courses provided by state institutions. During the first Five-Year Plan, in-service courses, part-time courses and evening classes for workers were provided at factories, offices and workplaces by different ministries. During the war period (1965-1975), local centres for part-time education were established in most of the provinces in northern Vietnam. After 1975 and reunification, several provinces in the south also set up part-time courses based in local centres. The curricula and teaching methods were the same as for the formal education system.

In 1989-1990, approximately 38,800 students were enrolled in diploma-level open learning courses and 6,000 more took correspondence plus videotape courses. In addition, an estimated 700,000 more were described as taking part in distance education by using radio and television programmes.

By 1990, 26 provincial distance education centres existed, set up by provincial People's Committees and recognised by the Ministry of Higher Education. The financing of the Centre’s activities were provided mainly by the provincial People's Committees. Each centre had a director, teaching staff and assistants who monitored activities or helped to made relations with some universities for teaching services. They supported the visiting lecturers and made arrangements for the examinations held by related universities. Distance education centres were also set up in industrial zones. The Continuing Education Department, Ministry of Education and Training supervised distance education provision in universities and provincial centres.

_Open universities_

ODE provided valuable additional access to learning throughout the 1980s, but the system had some weaknesses. To remedy this situation, the Vietnam People's Open University was set up by the Ministry of Higher Education and approved by the Central People's Committee. In 1988, this became the only institution in Vietnam offering distance education and was renamed the Vietnam National Institute of Open Learning. By the early 1990s it was operating in two divisions, one in Hanoi, the other in Ho Chi Minh City, and with 22 study centres in the provinces. Radio and television programmes were introduced in collaboration with the State Radio and Television Centre. The Open Universities of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City had 52,580 students in 1995. Fewer than half of these were studying through distance education.
Since 1993, ODE has been used to meet changing labour market needs and unmet demand for higher education since open and distance education providers are not allowed to duplicate the course offerings provided by traditional universities. The market economy has generated new motivations to learn, either for advancement in the workplace or for change of occupation. ODE has also been used as a resource by some students at traditional universities, who simultaneously enrol in open university courses in order to add computing and English language skills to their degree subjects, in preparation for a competitive job market on graduation.

The number of higher education students in Vietnam has risen from 124,500 students in 1991 to over 750,000 in 1999. Entrance is by examination and capacity is still insufficient to meet demand. One consequence is that the pressures on institutions created by the expansion is causing concern about quality.

In 1999, apart from the two open universities, ten institutions provided distance education. Distance Education Centre provides courses in law, business studies and education. Hanoi Pedagogical University provides part-time courses for around 7,000 teachers. The National Economics University offers a Diploma and Masters level course in economics through collaboration with the School of African and Oriental Studies of London University, UK. As a result, a Distance Learning Centre was established at the National Economics University, with core staff trained in the United Kingdom.

Two open universities, Hanoi Open University and Ho Chi Minh City Open University, were established in 1993 out of existing institutions and structures. The Hanoi Open University is a public institutions with eight faculties, offering courses in business management, accounting, information technology, biotechnology, industrial design, English language, telecommunications, law, fashion design, accounting and architecture. In 1996-1997, of Hanoi Open University’s 26,074 students, 13,248 were taking distance education courses in business management, English, accountancy and information technology. There are three categories of students: full- time and part-time (both taught in face-to-face classes) and distance.

Ho Chi Minh City Open University is a semi-public institution. It also has eight faculties teaching foreign languages, business management, biotechnology, Southeast Asia studies, rural industry, women's studies, journalism and law. In 1999, 17,000 students were enrolled, including 5,000 students taking distance learning courses.

Open universities however receive less government funding than traditional universities. Hanoi Open University receives approximate 10 percent of its budget from the state while Ho Chi Minh City Open University receives around 5 percent. Traditional universities receive about 50 percent funding.
Use of technologies in ODE

The main technologies used for distance education in Vietnam are print, radio, television, audio and videocassettes. The use of visual and audio media tends to run in parallel with printed materials, or stand alone, rather than be closely integrated with the print.

Radio and television signals can reach most regions of Vietnam though all people may not have access. It is estimated that there are 106 radios and 180 television sets per 1,000 people. Hanoi Open University has produced radio and television programmes (Vietnam Television Channel 2) on agriculture, rural development, computing and business management. Foreign language courses are also provided by the College for Foreign Language and the Foreign Language Teacher Training College, in co-operation with Hanoi Television and Vietnam Television.

Vietnam illustrates some of the problems of introducing the use of information and communication technologies in low-income countries. At present, forms of ODE involving new technology (such as computer communications) are not an option for most learners in Vietnam. Up to 1991, telecommunications in Vietnam was ‘an extremely under-developed, not comprehensive system, with very limited capacity and low efficiency’ (World Bank 1999). Rural access to telephones is much less than urban, and not available in all villages so far. It is estimated that only one Vietnamese in 2,000 has Internet access compared to a world average of 17 per 1,000 and subscribers are charged relatively high fees (high in relation to income). Up until January 2000, 30 hours of Internet services cost about 47 US dollars. There are four officially approved Internet Service Providers. Many Internet shops have opened in urban centres since 1999 and have proved popular. Prices are falling though costs still remain high.

Despite the constraints, some initiatives have begun. A few limited networks (Intranets) have been established between universities for research purposes. A Vietnam - Canada ICT (VCIT) Project has been funded by Canada to develop information technology policy, to support improvements in the government’s information technology strategy and management, and promote female participation in ICT. In 1999, about 17 percent of Vietnamese university students following ICT courses were female. A new Information Technology Management Agency has also been set up in the Ministry of Science, Technology and the Environment.

Conclusion

With the education socialisation policy, Vietnam has been able to mobilise all people to participate in the literacy programme and achieve good results within a
ten-year period (1990-1999). 2,444,860 people have come to literacy classes of which 1,273,520 have been recognised as having become literate. In addition, ODE in Vietnam has continued to make an important contribution to education and training provision in the country throughout the 1990s, though it is difficult to quantify the extent for lack of official detailed data and records and clear categorisation of what counts as open and distance learning. The range of learning needs generated by transition to a market economy is wide and it is likely that, in the future, ODE will need to play an increasing role in meeting these.

So far, ODE has been used mostly for target groups in the higher and post-secondary sectors of education, and relatively little for others, such as school-level or basic education non-formal education for rural communities, minority groups or those rural and mountainous areas most need of educational services. The challenges over the next decade will be to realise the full potential of ODE for a wider range of target groups and to improve the quality of existing provision.

Though much has been achieved in ODE in Vietnam during the 1990s, in some ways ODE has been slow to develop beyond its earlier conceptions. The predominant models in 2000 are similar to those existing at the start of the 1990s, relying heavily on face-to-face teaching, short of specially designed learning materials, using media to a limited extent and giving minimal support. However, some reconceptualisation of open and distance learning has begun, assisted by increasing interaction with other countries and influenced by new ideas and examples of different models. One challenge facing ODE in Vietnam, as in many other countries, is the achievement of parity of esteem and a quality equivalent to, or better than, that of traditional providers and modes. Another is capacity building in ODE: in instructional design, systems design, use of media, evaluation and training staff for learner support. A third challenge relates to funding. While there is debate in Vietnam about the most efficient and effective ways to provide ODE and the organisational issues involved, those working within ODE point to lack of adequate funding as a major handicap in putting new thinking into practice and achieving desired standards. A new challenge will come with the use of ICT. So far, the use of ICT for open and distance learning in Vietnam has had little impact, because of the lack of infrastructure and affordable facilities. However, this is likely to change over the next decade. New options as well as new challenges are sure to present themselves.

References


Intercultural Peace Education:
Partnerships among Stakeholders in
Mindanao, Philippines

Myrna B. Lim

This paper presents a case study of the use of literacy and community radio to promote peace education in conflict-ridden Mindanao County, consisting of Muslims, Christians and indigenous communities.

A new basic education curriculum will be implemented in schools in the Philippines nation-wide for the 2002-2003 school year. The new Department of Education curriculum stands on the conviction that functional literacy is most essential for lifelong learning in the country’s quest for socio-economic productivity and growth. With functional literacy, Filipino learners can regulate their own learning, and with enough motivation, seek their own sources of knowledge, read instructional materials, and explore other subject matters or topics that interest them. This is the essence of lifelong learning.

The basic education curriculum also aims at empowering the Filipino learner to be capable of self-development throughout life, be patriotic, ecologically aware, and to promote respect, dignity and virtue. This overall aim entails the acquisition of life skills, a reflective understanding and internalisation of principles and values. The basic education curriculum also focuses on the development of a person’s multiple mental capabilities, such as logical, mathematical, linguistic, interpersonal, spatial and natural sciences.

Children (aged 0-17) comprise one-third of the total population of the Philippines. While the data remains inadequate, available statistics have shown that a great number of the total child population continue to be in situations needing special protection and the number continues to increase in greater proportions over the years. This is particularly true for the conflict-affected areas of Mindanao. Despite its natural and human resources, the Philippines is a poor country. Infant mortality is 49 for every 1000 live births in 1997. The maternal
mortality rate per 100,000 live births now stands at 172. For the 1997-1998 school year data on Early Childhood Care and Development shows only 33.5 percent of three to five years olds have gone to pre-school or day care. The literacy rate in the Philippines is 93.87 percent. In contrast, the national functional literacy rate is 83.79 percent.

**Mindanao: The Great Disparity**

The Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) has a population of 18,133,864 people. Its five component provinces (Sulu, Basilan, Tawi-Tawi, Lanao Sur, and Maguindanao) are the most depressed in the Philippines with a 51 to 54 percent poverty incidence. Elementary survival rate remains at an average of 30 percent compared to the national average of 67.39 percent.

The faces of marginalised people in Mindanao are legion. They include homeless persons sleeping in evacuation centres or under dilapidated dwellings of squatter colonies in the urban areas. They are the faces of the children of Mindanao wasting away from diseases like diarrhea that could be prevented if only their desperate mothers knew how to put together a simple saline solution. They are the faces of struggling farmers in the provinces of the Special Zone of Peace and Development (SZOPAD), whose primitive methods have not changed for generations. They are the faces of the Lumads organising to fight for their rights to the land they used to occupy and now in the hands of the more learned and educated. These are the areas most often affected by armed conflict, lawlessness and criminality.

In the SZOPAD areas, particularly in the province of Maguindanao and Cotabato City, high incidence of children and out-of-school youth who drop out from school has been constant for the past 3 years (1993-1996). Despite government efforts to improve the education status of the region, much remains the same. Illiteracy, low cohort survival, low participation, low achievement rates are still a common and major source of concern. Maguindanao province has a dropout rate of 23.3 percent cohort survival of 37.3 percent and a participation rate of 85.1 percent. These are usually indicative of massive poverty, lack of income generating opportunities and family problems experience by these children and young people.

In the ARMM, the low cohort survival in education is a major issue. Not all pupils who enrol in grade one are able to reach grade six. The persistently low cohort survival rate of the region is affected by factors such as distance of school from their residence, lack of education of their parents, poor health status of children, inadequate elementary schools as well as financial constraints among families. School-age children who belong to poor families eventually dropout from school after a few months to engage in family income generating activities. For the past three years, elementary survival rate in most ARMM provinces has
remained at an average of 30 percent. This is very low compared to national average of 67.50 percent.

The participation rate of 83.48 percent in 1995 in the ARMM is still very far from the national participation rate of 92.70 percent. In contrast to the elementary education, the secondary enrolment in all ARMM provinces had decreased between the 1993-94 and 1994-95 school years. While there was no particular report of its causes, the decline could be attributed to social displacements resulting from occurrence of disasters and armed conflict.

The lack of classrooms in all provinces of the ARMM is evident, as the classroom pupil ration is higher than the established standard rate of 1:40. Maguindanao registered the highest overcrowded classes with an average of 1:110 from school year 1993-1995.

**Education and Learning for Life: Promoting Peace through Literacy and Community Radio**

The Mindanao Peace Agreement signed in September 1996 by former President Ramos and the Governor of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao marked a cornerstone in the path towards lasting peace in the Philippines. Ever since, both the government and local leaders have been committed to the needs of post-conflict reconstruction for peace and development in Mindanao, especially in the SZOPAD.

GenPeace, a UNESCO designed project, was implemented in 1998 in the war-affected area of Mindanao. Three pilot sites were selected based on its previous history of conflict, high incidence of poverty, inadequate basic services and livelihood support mechanism such as water supply and electrification. The poor participation of the impoverished and the marginalised sectors in the development process, the low literacy rate, the patriarchal (sometimes warring) leadership and unstable peace and order conditions are also evident. Furthermore, there is limited communication between local government units and the displaced populace on issues of governance thus denying active participatory planning at the grassroots level. Unclear and fragmented Local Government Unit programmes and service have led to deteriorating relationships leading to distrust and suspicion of government motives. Presence of military troops in the area caused apprehension and animosity among the civilian population. Isolation and discrimination of various tribes, in some of the areas of Genpeace, have caused great disparity in their relationships.

GenPeace has objectives to promote gender sensitive community-based peace education in conflict affected areas and build capacities of communities in developing and managing peace activities. The project aims to mainstream non-formal education programmes of functional literacy and continuing education into community-based actions plans through partnership and improved governance, promote the use of community radio as a tool for enhancing community
mobilisation and collaborative action, as well as develop effective communications among the people.

The first project component of education (literacy, continuing/lifelong learning) integrates UNESCO’s culture of peace learning modules and specifically focuses on women, girls and out-of-school youth. The second project component is communication, through the installation of community radio stations. The core theme of radio programming is gender responsive peace education. The project is a capability building and community-based mobilisation effort to address the basic need for education, skills development and installation of low cost communication facilities in the different project sites, most often rural and isolated communities.

Literacy and peace education focuses on promoting peace at grassroots level in conflict-affected areas. A community radio has been set up and managed by the inter-cultural and inter-sectoral representatives as a tool for enhancing inter-community mobilisation, collaborative efforts, and free-flow of communication among people for peace activities in the area. The use of the community radio as a ‘school-on-the-air’, for public service, and as a religious forum helps to initiate peace and sustainable development in the area.

Non-formal learning classes are organised in the communities based on the needs of the communities. The choice of the nature and kind of NFE intervention is demand driven, that is the community of learners identify the type of classes to be organised. The classes may be functional literacy for level 0 to 3 learners or continuing education for functionally literate out-of-school youth and adults. These classes are designed to raise critical awareness and consciousness for peace building activities that are culture sensitive and relevant.

Community radio stations are installed in the identified project sites. While the Local Government Unit provides monetary support for the purchase of the radio transmitter, the project provides other radio equipment and capacity-building training workshops. The Community Media Council comprising of multi-sector membership is organised to manage, supervise and control the station. The radio station is designed to provide vital community news and information to the residents of the municipality. It is used for regular report of education, literacy and training. Peace promotion and confidence building is regularly aired.

Basically, the project is focused on strengthening the foundation for lasting peace and development in Mindanao and is anchored on building trust and confidence among all stakeholders. Community participation in promoting a culture of peace is a must, for all activities.
Approaches and Strategies

Partnership of all stakeholders
The participation and involvement of all is the focus. Strong advocacy and social mobilisation is undertaken through dialogues, consultations, focused group discussions and orientation to gain the support and participation of the community. The purpose of developing effective partnerships between the community and their elective and social leaders is to empower individuals and their leaders to take development and growth of their communities in their hands.

Community participation and ownership are crucial aspects for long-term sustainability of any development initiative thus partnership is needed. The tri-sector partnership involves the Government, the local community and civil society organisations.

Community-based development initiatives
Community demand-driven development needs are greatly emphasised. The community is encouraged to identify needs relevant to them. Development interventions are identified through a process of intensive orientations and consultations. Most often, education has been considered a top priority and urgent need. The demand driven activities must necessarily integrate the concepts of inclusion and urgency, particularly in the conflict affected areas of Mindanao.

Emphasis on social cohesion and social capital formation
The project anchored on building and sustaining peace is a tedious task for those in development work, particularly for Mindanaoans faced with centuries of hereditary enmity. How can the many traumatised women and men of Mindanao be motivated to believe in themselves, in the neighbouring communities, or even in the government to choose peaceful options in rebuilding their communities? Although cognizant of the certainty of encountering problems, the project holders still persevere. According to them, the values of cultural solidarity must permeate in all relationships.

The over-all theme of the project is to help Mindanao communities journey from conflict to peace through confidence building and conflict transformation processes. The issue of ‘owning peace’ emerges as the key issue. To undertake community-demand driven initiatives requires an environment that encourages the maximisation of stakeholding.

Community management and governance
Training workshops were designed to develop and strengthen the institutional and staff capabilities of community-based organisations to enable them to design, manage, implement, monitor and evaluate projects. The communities are oriented and trained on efficient project management anchored on the concepts of transparency, responsibility and accountability.
Convergence of development services
Development work is based on mutuality, participation and cooperation. It means close collaboration, co-ordination, and co-operation between all stakeholders and commitment of institutional resources for development efforts in the identified project sites.

Advocacy and social mobilisation efforts that were initiated were not aimed only at the target communities, but also gave emphasis to on other development groups working in the area. There was an urgent need to conduct NGO mapping and an inventory of ‘what one is doing, where, who, when and what are their plans’ for the areas of concern. The basic purpose was to determine the activities currently being implemented and to prevent duplication and wastage of funds and efforts. The need to do a ‘scooping’ of various development initiatives was also completed to also determine possible entry points for convergence of services.

Challenges and Opportunities
A different kind of learning for life for the people of these areas is needed to meet the challenges of accelerating change and growth in the conflict affected areas of Mindanao and at the same time foster meaningful and lasting peace, individual autonomy and productivity. The traditional education system in Mindanao has so far not provided adequate educational services that are relevant, accessible, sensitive and appropriate to the Muslim, Christian, and indigenous population of Mindanao.

What is needed in Mindanao is education for life. The new lifelong framework must no longer be restricted simply to recurrent education, to traditional formal education modalities, nor to ‘second chance’ for adults who missed out from schooling. The shift from education to learning, which includes general education and training, should serve multiple purposes from personal development and literacy for citizenship to social, cultural and economic objectives.

Lifelong learning means literally learning through life, from early childhood to old age. Learning happens all the time at many levels of ones life. Most takes place in informal settings, particularly for those living in rural and isolated communities of Mindanao. The use of non-formal education and the installation of a Community Radio are important and adaptable means to meet the need for lifelong learning. Individuals, children and adults may learn many skills through various ways in order to solve personal needs and problems, qualify for jobs, or simply enrich their lives. For the developing world to respond effectively to these new emerging needs, it is necessary to consider the following interventions.

The need for capacity building of community-based partners needs to be adequately addressed. The focus should be to build on the capacity of the local partners, for ownership and sustainability. Training workshops on project management, leadership, problem and decision-making, financial management
and other important human resource development concerns should be given importance. Hands on training on radio management and broadcasters and technician training also needs to be conducted.

To undertake literacy and continuing education for lifelong learning, the need to provide equal access to opportunities and resources is a major issue and concern. Providing access to isolated and underserved adults and potential learners in difficult to reach areas of Mindanao is a challenge to development workers. If Education for All is the collective vision, the need for access to quality educational services for the vulnerable and disadvantage, are concerns that must govern all lifelong learning activities. For Mindanao, the greater concern is affording the big mass of illiterate population access to literacy services before lifelong learning can be considered.

Improving linkages and co-ordination through meaningful partnership of all stakeholders must strongly be advocated. Government agencies, diverse development NGOs, women groups, community of learners and religious leaders all must realise the need to work together and complement each other in the work for NFE and lifelong learning. Supporting one another is the core message of partnerships for adult learning and learning for life.

Today, the biggest challenge is the replication of the project and recognition of good concepts and a ‘best practice’. The basic reason for the core strategy of the promotion of partnerships between the government, local communities, and civil society is to ensure sustainability of the project beyond completion. The main goal and objective is for communities to eventually take over the development of their areas.

Lifelong Learning: Looking Beyond

Adult and lifelong learning for indigenous people must be rooted in the principles of intercultural education. Mutual respect and culture of peace are required modules if intolerance is to be overcome.

The paper has shown that programmes promoting cross-cultural understanding need to give emphasis and importance to literacy that empowers. While focusing on the acquisition of technical skills of reading, writing and numeracy, such programmes utilise the learning sessions for awareness, consciousness raising and participation. Through the learning modules women learners were enabled to understand and be aware of their oppressing conditions. They were also encouraged to take concrete steps to improve their life situations. Literacy has given the women self-confidence to function as independent and autonomous women. Literacy activities are perceived not as an end in themselves but as a means to enable women to have better control of their lives. Literacy cannot exist in a vacuum or in isolation. Literacy that empowers implies a more comprehensive package of intervention of lifelong learning, which paves the way to more empowered and economically productive and independent learners.
Literacy becomes empowering if it enables women to gain access to information and knowledge that has been denied to them. In addition, literacy continuously needs to be strengthened and to go beyond basic functional literacy. The desire to become a lifelong learner— to learn new things, new ideas, to acquire new skills and knowledge is a never-ending motivation. In this process, literacy becomes a vehicle for creative self-expression and determination. Lifelong learning denotes a process of enabling a learner to gain control of one’s own life. It enables the individual to generate choices by acquiring power to direct one’s life towards desired social, political, and economic goals and status.

An important message emanating from this experience with inter-cultural education among conflict ridden cultural groups is that empowerment cannot be seen as an end product that can be obtained within a defined time frame. Empowerment is a dynamic and an on-going process that develops self-confidence to exercise control away from a position of invisibility, vulnerability and exploitation to a position of influence. Empowerment means collective strength and collective voice. This is the beginning of a long journey that will guide our communities towards peace and intercultural harmony. The call of the day is for collective action, of bonding and working together in the service of others through Education for All.

Notes

1 Quite a number of communities have been requesting to become GenPeace sites. The Government of the Philippines and the United Nations Multi-Donor Programme had decided to replicate it in 18 more sites for the next three years.

References


Adult and lifelong continuing education is considered a highly significant issue in Islam and within the Islamic Republic of Iran. The famous declaration, ‘Seek knowledge from cradle to the grave’, by the Prophet Mohammed, means continued education through the span of life irrespective of circumstances. For the past two decades, unprecedented steps have been taken in Iran to promote and upgrade all efforts in developing continuing education programmes to meet and satisfy adult educational aims and ambitions within the country. This paper examines the methods that have employed to make lifelong learning a reality in the daily lives of people. According to the constitution of Iran, access to education of all levels is the indisputable right of all people in the community. In Iran, literacy and adult education are considered integral components of the education system.

**Adult Education**

The adult education programme in the Islamic Republic of Iran includes the education of those who have not been able to finish initial formal schooling. It includes giving adults the opportunity to obtain a 5th year of elementary level through evening classes, general education, and secondary level, both in theoretical and technical-vocational courses. This programme is implemented in semesters and the minimum age of the learner is 18. The subjects are the same as in the formal education stream.

**Technical and Vocational Education (TVE)**

There are many kinds of non-formal TVE programmes in Iran. One of the most important is on-the-job training, in which people are recruited in a workshop to
get the necessary skills. In service training and courses held to upgrade or update the knowledge and skills of the trainees constitute other kinds of the non-formal TVE. Technical and Vocational Education can range from basic education of workers to specialised courses for experts and can be classified according to whether they take place in industrial, agricultural, administrative or business contexts.

**Adult basic education in rural areas**

Adult education is of vital importance in rural areas. It impacts people’s lives in many spheres by eliminating cultural deprivation and illiteracy and raises the level of public awareness. It has been shown to improve health conditions and living standards, strengthen social and occupational skills of individuals, increase the economical levels and incomes of individual and families, and develop positive attitudes and strong motivation amongst rural population towards improving their villages and living conditions. Learning to read and acquire knowledge for all men and women living in cities or villages is a prime right and responsibility.

The ultimate goal of adult education in rural areas is to raise the quality of life of the rural population through programmes and courses of action designed to make the rural areas productive, attractive and profitable, and to bring them to the level of development in urban areas. Progress has been made in providing educational services to the rural population above 6 years old. From 1975 to 2000, the literacy rate has increased from 30.5 percent to 78.3 percent (editor: no date or source provided).

The strategies of rural development derive from the philosophy of human development. Adult education in rural areas aims to inculcate dynamism and ethical values, raise the level of knowledge and skills of the adult population and young persons, and improve their ability to use information and natural resources optimally. Thus, the new philosophy of rural development based on human development places high value on self-reliance and lifelong education, which refers to establishing continuing and non-formal learning systems particularly for rural areas.

**Literacy Movement Organisation in Rural Areas**

In the past, several attempts to fight literacy have been unsuccessful because of a lack of decisive legislation and policy measures. In 1979 however, a new movement began against illiteracy called the Literacy Movement Organisation.

The Literacy Movement Organisation, a state supervised organisation, was established with the help of public support and highly motivated individuals and social groups, with co-operation of religious institutions. It developed different programmes for eradication of illiteracy, particularly basic and technical
education for rural populations, and made the country successful in raising the awareness of this very important social issue.

During the last two decades, the literacy movement organisation has been carrying the main responsibility of rural education. While the Ministry of Education has been responsible for providing free education for school-aged children in all cities and villages, the task of providing educational services of the illiterate rural population has been a difficult task.

Educational services of the Literacy Movement Organisation comprise four basic levels followed by a post-literacy level. The first level of literacy is equivalent to the second grade of primary level in formal education. The learners familiarise themselves with the Persian alphabets and their combinations to make words and sentences and be able to read simple Persian texts and do enough counting to meet their daily needs. The success rate of those who received a certificate was 42.27 percent.

The complementary level is the second education level of literacy and is equivalent to the third grade of primary level of formal education. The objective of this level is to familiarise the learners with words, sentences and texts of Persian language to some extent in order for them to be able to express themselves and understand other people’s ideas by reading. They also acquire necessary skills in numeracy and reading the Holy Quran.

The final level was introduced in 1991 to increase necessary skills in reading writing and numeracy and prepare the learners to attend the fifth grade of primary education, which was introduced in 1989 for those adult learners who are interested in continuing their education further in the formal system.

In order to avoid a relapse to illiteracy and to develop effective functional skills among neoliterates, a follow-up project for promoting a reading culture was planned and implemented. This project has been officially implemented at the national level since 1994. In the period 1995-2000, 888,931 learners were enrolled in follow-up groups and 42 titles of books on health, religion, training, society, economy and science were simplified and distributed among them. An assessment indicates that although the result of this project is not tangible in a short period, in the long run, they will become more visible. An important consideration in the success of these follow up groups is ensuring continuity and quality.

**Implementation of special basic educational plans for adults in rural areas**

Special plans have been established in order to meet the learning needs of adults which has led to the creation and implementation of more literacy programmes. The conscript teacher’s plan provides that surplus draftees of military service, upon receiving some educational and cultural training, act as literacy teachers in rural and disadvantaged areas.

In 1990, the literacy mobilisation plan was established and as a result almost three million illiterate people were enrolled in adult literacy courses including
rural people. The plan for nomadic adults in rural areas mobilised immigrant teachers to accompany these people to their winter and summer resorts. The teachers established classes for school-aged children and adults who have been deprived of the privilege of literacy, while travelling with them. In the period from 1990 to 2000, 143,878 people became literate.

According to the ‘person to person’ plan, a trained literate person takes charge by helping people to become literate. This plan is being supported and encouraged by Imams in different villages, in which literacy personnel, set up in Mosques in each province and township, encourage illiterates to attend literacy classes.

Yet another plan provides that parents attend school in rural areas. This is implemented by principals of schools with the help of the teachers, members of teacher-parent associations as well as the upper secondary students.

**Adult continuing education in rural areas**

Special programmes are developed for neo-literates who have completed basic literacy courses. In book reading programmes, instructors from the Literacy Movement Organisation take charge of the groups varying from 14 to 20 people. The duration of these programmes is 14 months. The activities include reading easy-to-read booklets, discussing book contents, learning income generating skills and handicrafts, promoting the printed culture among learners, teaching the writing of summaries and letters, and preparing wallpaper.

There are correspondence courses in which learners receive one booklet through the district office of the Literacy Movement Organisation. Afterwards, they fill a questionnaire and send it back to the Literacy Movement Organisation office. 12 booklets are sent every year. At the end of the course the neo-literates write an exam. 78,526 persons were covered by this distance education programme.

Using popular people for the promotion of continuing education in remote areas is another programme designed for neo-literates in rural areas. Given the dispersed population throughout different geographical regions, post-literacy programmes must necessarily be flexible. In this regard, in each one of the remote villages and small towns a qualified person who is known to villagers as a social model, will have the responsibility to carry out continuing education programmes. Taking into account the existing information about learners’ reading needs and interests and their immediate environment, the contact person gives them educational packages containing books, pamphlets and evaluation forms, and encourages them to study and helps with their education problems. This is repeated in other groups.

The programme of reading with the literate members of the family has been implemented to promote the habit of reading in the learners and their families. According to this programme, neo-literates at different levels are provided with materials on various subjects to read with the help of their families.
Education through mass media and distance education is increasing in importance, considering that today the partnership between the various media and their integration can improve education and advance its quality and quantity.

Since 1990, half of a page of the Iranian state-supervised newspaper entitled ‘Ettelaat’ (information) has been allocated to educational articles, which convey different messages to the neo-literates on a variety of topics. This organisation has established communication with its addressees. Today there are about 55,000 readers of these articles in urban and rural areas. In addition, special television programmes are presenting these same articles in order to reinforce the above messages and to promote the reading culture among neo-literate individuals who watch this programme.

Since 1997, the production of programmes on functional, religious, social subjects, daily living skills and educational activities suitable to the learning needs and interests of neo-literates has been started and the programmes are broadcast on the radio especially for rural people.

Holding special book fairs is another important activity. Usually, book fairs are available for limited group of people. Neo-literates and people with low levels of literacy, particularly in rural areas are often ignored. Thus suitable books are not available for them in the market. The Literacy Movement Organisation addresses this shortcoming by holding useful book fairs in small towns and rural areas.

Through the approval made by the board of trustees of the public libraries in the country, a shelf in every library is allocated to reading materials suitable for neo-literates. The goal is to expand educational activities and to make a link between literacy and libraries as well as to encourage self-study. Through the cooperation of the Secretariat of the Board of Trustees for Public Libraries, about 3,200,000 books on different topics have been granted to the libraries in cities and villages.

Similar efforts are being made through postal services to reach rural people who do not have enough time to participate in classes and educational programmes. The postal service provides the representatives of the literacy movement who head literacy groups with educational packages, which are then distributed among the learners and returned by post after being studied. The programme covers more than 20,000 people with very low levels of literacy. They study one book per month and then return it. The ultimate goal of this programme is to make a link among neo-literates and individuals with low literacy levels to create a culture of learning and self-reliance.

Income-generating activities for newly literate adults in rural areas
Promoting agricultural knowledge and skill is another important programme, whose aim it is to familiarise learners in the theoretical and practical aspects of cultivation. More than 7 agriculture-related booklets have been produced and circulated among 60,000 rural families.
Promoting agricultural activities of rural women is being implemented in one of the provinces of the country. 4 booklets have been developed and 5000 rural women have participated in several programmes.

In one course, neo-literates learn to make handicrafts. The products of the learners are then exhibited for sale. Income-generating industries are also being established for women and poor families in remote rural areas. Besides literacy and continuing education, the Literacy Movement Organisation is cooperating with other organisations to establish training programmes in rural village industries. Raw materials and tools are provided by the partner organisations. A special bank supports women in the production of goods, and other organisations are involved in marketing their products.

According to the latest statistical reports in the year of 2000 - the Literacy Movement covered 849,603 people. Out of the total learners of Literacy Movement, 81 percent (689,016) were women and 19 percent (160,589) were men. This is an indication of the effort being made to remove discrimination of women’s illiteracy. Out of the total number of learners in 2001, 54 percent (459,216) were rural and 46 percent (383,173) urban.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The tasks of adult education in the Islamic Republic of Iran are many. These include increasing adult participation in functional and continuing education and expanding private sector activities. Young adults have to be encouraged to pursue technical and vocational education. Furthermore, financial and administrative support has to be provided for the expansion of technical and vocational education centres. The quality of adult and continuing education must be improved by reviewing the curricula and textbooks so that they meet the actual needs of individual adults living in different urban and rural areas according to their age, sex, occupation, interest and capabilities, and the society at large. Special literacy programmes need to be provided for all families in rural areas and small villages on the lines of ‘reading with family’ and ‘person to person’ learning programmes. Paramount importance needs to be given to teaching basic and functional agricultural skills to young girls and boys in villages with simple and appropriate reading books for new learners. Teaching simple, useful and profitable handicrafts skills and art works to the interested individuals especially women in rural areas will be an important task. New adult learners will be used in ‘agricultural education’ programmes in different villages. It will be necessary to expand and update libraries and information centres for new learners in rural areas with useful and functional books, informative journals and newsletters. The work of producing simple and functional educational materials, reading books, videotapes and cassettes for rural population will be on going. Family and educational counselling centres have to be established with highly qualified men and women counsellors in every single village. Publishing special newspapers
and monthly magazines for new readers in rural areas will take a high priority. It will be necessary to use new and special radio channels for delivering cultural, professional and educational messages and to produce attractive social programmes for the rural population.

Finally, it is important to keep in mind that the key factor in successful adult education in urban and rural areas is the serious consideration given to attitudes during the development and implementation of different kinds of adult education programmes. Of paramount importance is respecting the personality and value system of every person – youth, adults, men and women living in rural areas. Consideration should be given to their cultural values. Furthermore, attention should be paid to the daily needs and social concerns in developing curriculum and producing reading materials, social programmes and providing professional skills to rural populations. All national and international education authorities should fully acknowledge these vitally important issues.

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Continuing Education for Women in Urban Slums

S.Y. Shah

The Government of India’s policy on lifelong learning conceives learning as a continuum of basic literacy, post literacy and continuing education and envisages its operationalisation through the creation of Continuing Education Centres as permanent institutions of lifelong learning. This paper critically examines the Continuing Education Programme in India and discusses the details of an experimental project implemented in an urban slum in Delhi, which aimed at meeting the learning needs and occupational aspirations of a group of neo-literate women.

Adult psychology and learning theories suggest that effective adult learning takes place when there is a felt need. For adults, it is specific interests and concerns that motivate them to learn. Applicability of knowledge is one of the key factors in the cognitive motivation of adults. Availability and easy access to learning resources within the residential setting also act as a stimulating factor in adult learning. Hence, it becomes crucial that adult learning and skill training programmes need to be identified in consultation with them and in the light of their needs, interests and local conditions. It may be argued that neo-literates being a heterogeneous community with varying learning needs, interests, abilities, livelihood aspirations and belonging to different socio-economic background with fragile literacy are likely to respond to those programmes which provide ample scope for meeting their varied occupational and learning needs. How to identify the learning needs and occupational aspirations of neo-literate adults? How to sustain their interest in learning during skill training? How to integrate the two activities in an interesting but meaningful manner in a continuing education centre? This paper attempts to provide answers to these questions by examining a Continuing Education Programme, ‘Organisation and Management of Creche’ which was designed for a group of women of an urban slum in Delhi.
Policy and Practice of Continuing Education

Each continuing education centre aims at providing diverse non-formal education and training programmes for a population of 2000-2500, which includes 500-1000 neo-literate. Apart from the core programmes relating to literacy and post literacy, the continuing education centres also offer target specific programmes related to improvement of general quality of life. Each continuing education centre is managed by two facilitators – Prerak and an Assistant Prerak who perform a variety of functions ranging from setting up the centre, library, and reading room to organising sports, games, cultural activities and training programmes. They also manage the information centre, conduct need assessment surveys of target group and design appropriate continuing education programmes for them. One of the important features of the continuing education programme is the integration of vocational skills training or quality of life improvement programmes with post literacy activities so that those who attend the centres not only acquire certain occupational skills but also proficiency in reading and writing.

Ever since the launching of the continuing education programme in 1995, several continuing education centres have been established in different parts of India. As of 2002 there were 110,563 continuing education centres in twenty-two states. Currently about 250 centres are functioning in Delhi. Field surveys of selected centres in the urban slums of Delhi reveal considerable gap between the policy and practice. Continuing education centres rarely give the impression of a vibrant lifelong learning institution. A number of them function as mere libraries. Programmes are implemented as isolated activities. There has been hardly any integration between skills training and post literacy programmes. In most of the centres it was observed that with the commencement of skill training, post literacy activities almost ceased. By the time the neo-literate acquire the skills, most of them relapse into illiteracy since they have rarely any opportunity to practice during the training period.

Informal discussions with Preraks reveal that not only to do they lack the required training to design and implement programmes aimed at meeting the learning needs and livelihood aspirations of the clientele, but they are also pressured by their superiors to initiate continuing education programmes. Discussions with local community members reveal that some of the Preraks – mainly due to their eagerness to launch continuing education activities – opt for stereotyped programmes revolving around tailoring, candle and soap making, embroidery and baskets weaving which rarely attracts adults or sustains their interests.
Living and Learning in an Urban Slum

The urban population in India has increased from 10.8 to 27.78 percent during 1901-2001. Of the 15.4 percent of the urban population in India living in slums, nearly 30% are in Delhi. Depending on the infrastructure facilities, the slums are classified into two categories – the declared (notified) slums and undeclared (un-notified) slums. 47.1 percent of slums in Delhi are undeclared. Life in these slums is extremely tough and challenging. There is not only a lack of basic amenities and infrastructure facilities but also rampant poverty and illiteracy. Kusumpur Pahadi is one of the undeclared slums located on a hillock in South Delhi surrounded by the posh residential colony of Vasant Vihar inhabited by retired civil servants, diplomats and executives of multinational companies. Mainly because of its accessibility and proximity to several research organisations and NGO’s, Kusumpur Pahadi has been attracting the attention of several developmental workers, activists and researchers.

The Kusumpur slum came up during 1960s, when there was a demand for construction workers in the Vasant Vihar area and the building contractors brought workers from the neighbouring states of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. According to the survey conducted by Delhi Administration in 1990, there were 2500 dwelling units (Jhuggi Jhonpari) at Kusumpur Pahadi. It is estimated that at present, total dwelling units at Kusumpur may be in the range of 4500-5000. Each household has 4-5 members. According to a rough estimate the total population may be about 20,000 of which 12,000 persons, should be above 18 years old as they possess voters ID Cards. The majority of the householders belong to the Balmiki, Dhobhi, Kahar, Poolan, Jatav Caste. The slum dwellers are engaged in a variety of low paying occupations viz. fruits and vegetables selling, construction work, petty trading, sweeping, plumbing, carpentry, tailoring, running petty shops working at Dhabhas (road side restaurants). In Kusumpur less than 5% of women work and are engaged in low paying occupations.

There is no dearth of learning opportunities in and around Kusumpur Pahadi for children and adults. Apart from the two private primary schools in the slum, each with an enrolment of 200 children, there are two high schools in the vicinity which provide education up to Class VII education. Seven nursery schools are also functioning in the slum each with an enrolment of 30-40 children. A number of agencies, viz. Rotary Club, YMCA, Naya Prayas, Jawaharlal Nehru University, and Delhi Administration have been providing adult education programmes at various points of time for the slum dwellers. Since the last year, the State Resource Centre of Jamia Millia Islamia has been sending their Mobile Library to provide books to neo-literates. According to a survey conducted in 2001 in ‘C’ Block of Kusumpur, sixteen organisations have implemented twenty types of non-formal education and skill training programmes during the last three
years (See Table 1). In spite of these, there is high illiteracy (91 percent) and dropouts (80 percent) from primary schools. The physical and socio-cultural climate seems to be hardly conducive for learning.

Table 1: Participation of Kusumpur Women in Different Programmes (1998-2001)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broad Areas</th>
<th>Specific Programmes</th>
<th>Number of Women participated</th>
<th>Sponsoring Agency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I Health</td>
<td>1. First Aid</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bharat Scouts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Dispensing Medicine</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Shanti Devi Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Survey of Health Status</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Action India (NGO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Health Education</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>ASHA (NGO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Reproductive and Child health.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>SEARCH (NGO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II Education</td>
<td>1. Literacy</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>JNU, Rotary Club, YMCA, Delhi Administration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Adult Continuing Education</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>JNU, Rotary Club, YMCA, Jamia Millia Islamia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Non-Formal Education</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Delhi Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Nursery Education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Meera Bai Polytechnic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Typing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Arya Samaj, Rotary Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III Vocational Skills</td>
<td>1. Chalk Making</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Rotary Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Candle Making</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Shramik Vidyapeeth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Embroidery</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Naya Prayas, Meera Bai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Beauty Culture</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Polytechnic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Tailoring</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Kasturba Polytechnic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rotary Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV Awareness Programmes</td>
<td>1. Pollution</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Law</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>JNU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Women’s Empowerment</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Nirantar (NGO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Minimum Wages</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>JNU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Interpersonal Relations</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>JNU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Twenty Programmes</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>Sixteen Agencies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The duration of different programmes varied from three days to two years. In all, 259 women participated in different programmes. Of these, 84 women enrolled in the post literacy programme for a period of 2-3 years and continue to be active members of mobile library. However, when a literacy test was administered to these women, only 22 women passed the National Literacy
Mission test. The rest, though they participated in post literacy programmes, were found to be weak in writing and arithmetic.

**Identification of Learning Needs**

A series of three focus group discussions were held with the 22 neo-literate women, with a view of identifying their further learning needs, interests and livelihood options. In the first session women were encouraged to critically comment on the contents, duration and relevance of the different programmes they attended. The discussions during the second session revolved around the possibilities of identifying one or two new continuing education programmes, which could be taken up. The third session was devoted to discussion on the possibilities and problems of the organisation of the chosen programme.

All the women were unanimous that the general quality of programmes attended by them was poor. They felt that the approach of the organisers was very casual and programmes were implemented in an adhoc manner, often with long gaps during the programmes leading to dropouts. Whatever skills they learnt did not equip them for taking up income generation activities independently or seeking wage employment. Most of them mentioned that the organisers rarely tried to identify the needs and interest of participants, nor was there any follow-up after the implementation of programmes. There was not only disillusionment with the charity approach followed by the programme organisers but also aversion to development functionaries. In spite of their frustration the women were keen to explore the possibilities of participating in new programmes which could equip them with marketable skills and enhance their knowledge. They had an intense desire to improve their quality of life.

During the second round of focus group discussions, the women could not identify a continuing education programme that would fulfil both their occupational aspirations as well as learning needs. It was suggested that a programme should be developed to teach women about organisation and management of creche so that some of the slum women could set up creches and augment their income. There were several creches in the nearby Vasant Vihar Colony that charged high fees, however no such facilities were available for the working women of the slum who often left their siblings under the care of young girls or old women. In the absence of training, these women could not provide childcare or charge fees. The formal courses on early childhood care were 1-2 years in duration and available only to those who passed Class X or XII.

**Design and Replication of the Programme**

The main handicap of starting a proper creche in the slum was due to the lack of trained workers. Hence it was felt that if a continuing education programme could
be designed for neo-literate women, some of them could be trained and could set up proper creches in the slum and start a new source of livelihood within their locality. Management of the creche may also provide some scope for application of literacy through maintenance of records related to the physical growth of children, their height and weight, administration of medicine, organisation of games, story telling etc. All the women of the group endorsed the idea.

Having identified a new continuing education programme, discussions during the third focus group session was confined to the logistics of the training. Women discussed the issue of timings and venue of training. Most of them did not have the time or resources to travel long distances for training. Accordingly, the continuing education programme was planned to be undertaken in the local community hall.

The content of continuing education programmes was developed in consultation with the women. The one year training curriculum designed by the Mobile Creche, a reputed national level NGO working the field of child care, was pruned to an eight month programme. Two trainers of the Mobile Creche were identified to impart the training. The broad content areas included the need and importance of creche, procedures to set up creche, care of pregnant mother, vaccination, nutrition, physiological and psychological aspect of child growth, and common diseases of children and their cures. The transaction of the curriculum was through lectures, demonstration, role-play, discussions, screening of films, field visits to other creches, development of low cost toys and practical work related to childcare.

The training programme revolved around setting up and managing a model crèche in the community consisting of fifty children. The twenty-two participants were divided into groups in which each devoted a day to work so that all the members could get the practical experience. After the first month, the women started charging a token fee. Part of the income was used to pay for a cleaning person and provide for milk and biscuits to children. The remainder was shared among the training women.

Skills training was linked to the post literacy activities by developing a set of three booklets on mother and childcare based on the contents of training curriculum, profile of the community and the slum. The booklets were designed in a workshop in which experts, the trainers and selected community members participated. The first drafts of the booklets were given to all the participants during the third month of training and it was regularly used for discussions and preparation of assignments. As a part of training each participant was expected to maintain a record of the growth of children and details of vaccination and health problems, which provided some scope for the application of literacy skills.

The demand for the replication of programmes from the local community and regular attendance of all the participants may be important indicators of success of the programme. The continuing education programme has motivated the women to approach the local Municipal Counsellor for a grant of land for the construction of an improved creche, which could enrol more children and create
more job opportunities. While the programme can be easily replicated within a modest budget, additional training must be provided to the Preraks in terms of facilitating focus group discussions and identifying local resources in order to tailor the programme to the learning needs of the participants.

In conclusion, the programme described in this paper is an ongoing activity. It has given the women an opportunity to interact more frequently and also plan for the improvement of their quality of life, learning and working. Most of the participants being young women in early 20s feel that the experience of creche training has been personally rewarding and enriching. Most importantly, the operationalisation of the programme has highlighted the importance of networking among institutions and sponsoring bodies such as government agencies, local administration, educational institutions, voluntary organisations and NGOs, libraries, universities, and local community groups.

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Institutional Responses to the Social Demand for Learning in Uzbekistan

Alisher Ikramov

Compared with areas of primary, basic and secondary education, adult and lifelong education in Uzbekistan have developed substantive organisational and institutional response to the tremendous social demand for new knowledge and skills, corresponding to the challenges of emerging market economy and democracy.

The existing mismatch between adult and lifelong education and the labour market is reflected in the high number of graduates and diploma specialists due to the structural adjustment policies in the public sector. Enormous public resources were spent to teach overspecialised disciplines, but the students and graduates were defenceless in the face of a market economy. Even a higher education diploma was no longer a guarantee of employment or adequate remuneration.

National Programme of Educational Reform

As a response to these new challenges the Parliament of Uzbekistan adopted the new Law on Education in 1997. On this basis, the Government of Uzbekistan developed a long-term national programme on human resource development. The programme is the normative basis for the education reforms that have been progressively implemented since 1997. The Act paved the way for radical reforms in the structure and content of education system, including nine years of compulsory general secondary education followed by three years of compulsory vocational education taking place in professional colleges and academic lyceums. Study in academic lyceums and professional colleges equips learners with deep and broad knowledge to help enter specific professions. The graduates of these educational institutions receive state diplomas that enable them to pursue higher education and to begin professional activities. The essence and distinctive
peculiarity of the new model is the integrated system approach incorporating components such as personal development, state and community participation, continuing education, science and production.

In accordance with national legislation, the Ministry of Public Education of Uzbekistan covers issues related to adult education. It also regulates the training process with local municipalities and communities by providing technical, programme and personnel support. These programmes provide learning opportunities for adults to obtain recognised educational qualifications and enhance their empowerment in society.

Creating a Lifelong Learning System

Establishing institutions
The transition to the new system of education entails the development and rational placement of new educational institutions within the system of secondary specialised and vocational training. New educational standards were adopted by the Government of Uzbekistan in 2001. On the basis of these standards, educational institutions have elaborated their own curriculum and introduced new training facilities. These facilities focus on issues such as expanding the service sector, offsetting redundancies in manufacturing and farming, developing small-scale enterprises, encouraging social pluralism for democratic societies, and restoring the values of merit, risk-taking, innovation and hard work.

The necessary conditions have been established for citizens of the country to be trained at different kinds of educational establishments such as vocational, secondary special and higher schools, universities, advanced training courses, cultural houses, studios and community learning centres. Adult education, particularly in the transitional period, plays an important social role and provides possibilities to improve the potential of manpower. The training courses on functional literacy of adults have been organised by the Government of Uzbekistan within various educational institution that take into account the implementation of the long-term programme of transition from Cyrillic to the Latin script.

Types of educational organisations
Adults may continue their education in the several types of educational organisations, extending their knowledge and experiences. Education is offered in various forms including full-time or evening training, training by correspondence, family and extension education.

The evening secondary schools take the leading role among these educational establishments. The evening secondary schools (grades 5-12) have existed for several years and the current programmes are the same as in traditional secondary schools, but shortened. During the last three decades the number of people entering these schools has increased. These are mainly people who could not
continue their education in the full-time secondary schools for various reasons. This is increasing with the change to 12 years of compulsory education.

The network of Centres of Adult Education (CAE) has been established, located on the premises of evening schools. Their distinctive feature is to provide theoretical as well as practical knowledge. There are fifty-four CAEs where curriculum is designed for three years of education (grades 10-12), and students may achieve professions such as accountant, master of electronic equipment, designer, restorer, clothing-industry worker, and stenographer.

In accordance with the Education Law, the Ministry of Public Education is considering issues such as regulating the development of the network jointly with local executive authorities, strengthening technical equipment base, creating and recommending curriculum, programmes, textbooks, as well as teacher preparation.

During the next decade both secondary and vocational education will become more significant. Changes in the labour market as a result of the transition to a market economy has led to changing needs of education. In this connection improving the relevance and quality of textbooks to now meet the new requirements of the economy become paramount. The main concern of youth is getting a job after completing vocational education and upgrading their competencies from time to time for example through correspondence courses and training consultancy centres for working youth.

Adult education is financed through local budgets. The funds are allocated to the education sector as a whole, taking into consideration the requirements of evening schools and CAEs. Subsidies to education are rising yearly in Uzbekistan. The Government is spending 11.8 percent of its GNP on the education sector. In addition, educational institutions are allowed to mobilise non-budgetary funds providing additional educational services by trainees or giving premises for rent. The report on the development and quality of training conditions is reviewed by the boards of directors of the public educational institutions.

Decentralisation and privatisation
The new programme involves the transition from public to private ownership and the switch from centralised to largely decentralised decision making process. It entails the democratisation of educational management by means of broadening autonomy of educational institutions, attracting the private sector, NGOs and local community in the construction of a learning society.

All these efforts are creating positive attitudes in youth towards lifelong education and professional careers. Youth are unfavourably positioned to compete with working adults for long-term jobs, but have more chances of acquiring new jobs created in the private and informal sectors. The younger generation in Uzbekistan is increasingly pragmatic and active in the informal sector and self-employment. According to sociological survey, the majority of youth try to improve their qualifications and to find a job corresponding to their
education. This is an unusual phenomenon for Uzbekistan which is undergoing profound transformation.

These trends have stimulated the creation of alternative non-governmental educational centres, which provide short-term training courses for upgrading professional qualifications for adults. In this regard, the example of UNESCO’s support in creating community learning centres in Uzbekistan has accelerated the process of introducing new modes for adult and lifelong learning, particularly in rural and remote areas.

As a consequence, there is a greater demand in the country for qualified educators in educational centres. The Ministry of Public Education and the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialised Education are developing skills upgrading programmes and structures until 2005. The current system of skills upgrading includes two academies, 22 institutes (retraining scientific-pedagogical institutions), 21 faculties at the various Universities, 4 nation-wide centres, 14 specialised courses and the Ustoz (Teacher) National Foundation. These educational institutions offer programmes in the areas of education, humanitarian sciences and arts, social and economic sciences, business and law, natural sciences, engineering and building construction, agriculture and farming, health care and social welfare, and public services.

Information centres have been set up within public educational institutions to support the lifelong learning system. The centres are charged with rendering telecommunication services for distance education and disseminating scientific literature, teaching aids and marketing information. The centres also have publishing facilities for the provision of learning materials, establishing the virtual library system, and elaborating teaching materials with the help of multimedia. The information centres are pivotal for establishing a ‘knowledge society’. The monitoring and evaluation of activities of are carried out by the respective academic council of the educational institution.

**Conclusion**

The trend towards adult education and lifelong learning for human resource development in Uzbekistan is inevitable and indisputable. The challenge is to facilitate the process in appropriate forms for meeting the demands of democratic communities, societies, labour markets, and youth.

An important challenge for central and local educational institutions in creating a lifelong learning environment is the need for co-operation between lifelong education institutions at the international level, as well as with industry and commerce. Collective action between different stakeholders is needed particularly in the development of curriculum and training materials for different levels and types of adult education, and to give due attention to the new emerging informal sector and self-employment operations. Collaboration is necessary for teacher training and retraining schemes for improving the competencies of
trainers and enhancing the relevance and quality of education. Market-oriented changes in teacher training institutions will be necessary. International exchanges are also required in the area of creating professional networks for lifelong and adult education to help in the co-ordination of activities and better dissemination of ‘good practices’.

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This paper will review from a historical perspective the Thai Government’s educational policies for meeting the learning demands of its people. The Thai government’s commitment to the development of adult education and lifelong learning are reflected in its policies.

In 1932 absolute monarchy ended. The government announced the Constitution Act confirming the right to education for all. All citizens would have access to educational opportunities. Article 62 of the Constitution stated that education shall aim to equip young people to become good citizens, healthy and strong with a capacity to earn their own living. To bridge the gap between the urban and the rural education, the Constitution identified that primary education shall be extended to cover the whole country. It took the government almost 14 years (1921-1935) to put the law of compulsory primary education into effect in every village. Unfortunately by 1937, illiteracy was rapidly increasing. Approximately 68.8 percent i.e. 10,000,700 people over ten years of age were illiterate. This situation required an urgent solution. It was the seriousness of the problem that drove the government to put adult education under state responsibility and appoint the National Adult Education Committee.

In 1940, the Adult Education Division, which in 1979 became the Department of Non-formal Education (DNFE), was established. The Act of Compulsory Literacy for All Thais was passed which stated that all illiterate adults must attend adult education classes. In 1941, the first school for adults was established. In the first phase, combined with reading and writing ability, the policy of adult education aimed at making adult learners practice and learn
how to live in democratic society. Adult education became a vital tool to inculcate a sense of national identity and social cohesion. The idea of networking and intersectoral partnerships was applied at an early stage of adult education provision. To increase the growth rate of literacy, the government requested the support the rural population and every ministry.

In 1943, a compulsory education programme for adults was announced which advocated that all members of civil servants’ families, prisoners, soldiers, workers in mines and farmers must go to adult classes within three years of the campaign (1941-1943). Through the implementation of this programme, the literacy rate increased by approximately 20.49 percent, i.e. 1,409,688 adults.

In 1946, when the World War II resulted in widespread poverty in the country, adult education became a key factor for achieving economic development. Adult education had three major roles. It was intended to help eradicate illiteracy, improve the economy, and foster national security.

Effective methods of teaching and learning were designed in order to build the capacity of adult learners. From 1946-1960, vocational adult education attracted a large number of adult people. The work-oriented Functional Literacy Programme implemented in 1968 included various kinds of training for small-scale business in handicrafts, sewing, livestock, motor-bicycle repair, haircutting and carpentry. In 1969, problem-based learning was introduced and themes affecting the lives of people were taken up for discussion in groups. *Khitpen* (critical thinking) was the principle approach to learning. By the end of the decade, adult education was assumed to play a vital role in creating happiness and harmony and was considered compensation for those, particularly in remote areas, who lacked the opportunity to go to school.

From 1972 to 1981, the government’s policy in the Third and the Fourth National Education Development Plans (NEDP) included concrete guidelines for action emphasising adult education for the out-of-school population. In 1980, the National Census revealed that approximately 3.8 million Thai people were still illiterate. Most of them lived in remote areas and came from poor families. When the literacy campaign was initiated in 1984, the main target group was the illiterate population in the age group of 14-50. Literate families and community members were mobilised to serve as organisers or instructors. The campaign’s success showed that knowledge could be promoted through self-learning and community mobilisation. Local men with wisdom, skill and knowledge acted as instructors in the literacy campaign. Learning was flexible and took place at any time. Mass involvement in delivering non-formal education was a vital strategy to overcome the lack of teachers of adult education.

By 1994, the demand for literacy showed real signs of increase. The 1994 census of the National Statistical Office indicated that approximately 45,932,300 persons or 91.5 percent of the population aged over 6 years was literate. The literacy rate of the 15-24 age group was 98.57 percent. Data from the
Community Development Department Ministry of Interior showed that 97.7 percent of the population aged 14-50 was literate by 1998.

**Policies on Education for All**

Thailand formulated a policy and framework for action on education for all in the 1992 National Education Scheme, in compliance with the *World Declaration on Education for All* adopted by all UNESCO Member States during the World Conference on Education for All in March 1990 held in Jomtien, Thailand. The policy emphasised: reduction of the adult illiteracy rate by the year 2000 to one-half its 1990 level, with sufficient emphasis on female literacy; expansion in the provision of basic education and training in other essential skills required by youth and adults, with programme effectiveness assessed in terms of behavioural changes and impacts on health, employment and productivity; increased acquisition by individuals and families of the knowledge, skills and values required for better living and sound and sustainable development, made available through all education channels including the mass media, other forms of modern and traditional communication, and social action.

After the adoption of the Jomtien Declaration, the Ministry of Education assigned the DNFE to implement the action plans as follows: set up a network of learning covering all areas to provide wider scope of learning; promote and support the introduction of modern technology into educational service extension for rapid knowledge dissemination and exchange; promote and support the role of family, community, other social institutions and mass media in the conservation and development of natural resources, environment, local culture and knowledge; encourage the private sector to provide education at all levels, managed flexibly and with technical and resource support that would facilitate the certification of competency standards; and mobilise, allocate and utilise educational resources in a fair and efficient way.

The Action Plan defined laid down the ethical dimension necessary for promoting harmonious coexistence in society including happiness, skills for lifelong and continuing search for knowledge, ability to adapt to the future changes in society, ability to earn a living self reliantly and with dignity, and the ability for self-development, responsibility and willingness to participate in the development of society in an appropriate manner.

**The New Policy of Lifelong Learning**

Thailand has shown interest in the overall framework of lifelong education and the integration of formal, non-formal and informal education into a broad and holistic vision. In 1999 the Education Action was passed. The Act identified
three principles for the future provision of education: lifelong education for all; participation of all segments and stakeholders in society in the provision of education; and continuous development of the body of knowledge and content and learning processes.

The Educational Act of 1999 was a means to improve the learning process for personal and social development through knowledge, practice, training, transmission of culture, enhancement of academic progress, creating a proper learning environment and a society supported by appropriate structures conducive to continuous lifelong learning.

In the context of this Educational Act, the Thai government introduced several educational reforms. The government undertook to decentralise educational service to educational institutions and local administration. Strong partnerships were formed with individuals, families, communities, community organisations, local administration organisations, professional bodies, religious institutions, enterprises and other social institutions. Such organisations would have the right to provide basic education and be entitled to the benefits of tax rebates and state subsidies.

For non-formal education, the Act identified that ‘non-formal education shall promote flexibility in regard to the aims, modalities, management procedures, duration, assessment and evaluation. The contents and curricula shall be appropriate, respond to individual requirements, and meet the needs of individual groups of learners. Non-formal education of disadvantaged groups shall be regarded as being equivalent to basic education’ (Office of the National Education Commission 1999).

Informal education was identified in the Act as education that enables learners to learn by themselves according to their own interests and potentialities. The Act recommended that all stakeholders must be involved in the organisation of basic education and that 9 years of compulsory, to 12 years of education should be free of charge.

Vocational education and occupational training shall be held in close cooperation with the private sector. Significantly, Section 22 of the Act stated that ‘education shall be based on the principle that all learners are capable of learning and self-development. The teaching and learning process shall therefore aim at enabling the learners to develop themselves at their own pace and to the best of their potentiality’.

Education through formal, non-formal and informal approaches shall lay emphasis on knowledge and ethics. The learning process should provide substance and arrange activities in line with the learners' interests and aptitudes, bearing in mind individual differences. It will focus on training the thought processes and how individuals should face various situations and apply knowledge for solving problems. It should organise activities for learners to draw from authentic experience, undertake practical work, think critically and acquire the habit of reading and the continuous thirst of knowledge.
In conformity with the Educational Act, the DNFE has made an effort to revise the non-formal education curriculum and decentralise authority, and institutionalise a new pattern of activities to serve all target groups recommended by the Act.

The demand in rural areas for adult education is increasing, particularly among workers who require a certificate as evidence of their qualification during job recruitment. Since it is difficult for the DNFE to serve all learning needs centrally, it has set up learning network centres. The Regional Non-formal Education Centres, in charge of academic services at the regional level, undertake need assessment surveys, produce learning materials, undertake action-research and design projects and programmes.

These centres work through the Provincial Non-formal Education Centres, previously known as Lifelong Learning Centres. The Provincial Non-formal Education Centres act as a co-ordinating centre to convince local leaders, volunteers, local schools and non-governmental agencies to participate in the programmes. The Village Reading Newspaper centres were established to instil a habit of reading and circulating news and information to neo-literates. District NFE Centres set up in 853 districts work closely with local people by contacting each family to encourage the villagers to continue learning by taking up non-formal courses. By 1994, approximately 4 million adults enrolled in general adult education classes.

The establishment of Community Learning Centres (CLC) was an innovative approach to lifelong learning. The CLC has become a place to practice lifelong learning. Villagers do so by managing and administrating the Centre themselves, designing and planning activities, surveying data, discussing their problems and determining available resources for improving the quality of learning. Through lifelong learning networks, the villagers are not only able to cope with the new changes, but also contribute to the creation of learning communities and thus to the empowerment of the community as a whole.

**Access to Lifelong Learning Programmes**

Three types of non-formal education are being presently offered. Functional literacy programmes, continuing education which includes general education from primary to upper secondary education to encourage adult learners to continue learning up to the university level if possible, and vocational education. Vocational education offers skill training of short period as well as vocational upper secondary education. Credits are given to those adult learners who have gained experiences in prior work. Lastly, information education is offered which includes the distribution of current news and information on life skills and
quality of life organised through radio and television programmes, libraries, village newspaper reading centres, scientific centres among others.

The Functional Literacy Programme
Implemented in 1971, the Functional Literacy Programme is designed to equip adult learners with basic skills in reading, writing, calculating, as well as problem solving through the Khitpen process, which consists of information on academic knowledge, self-knowledge, and environmental knowledge. The programme is equivalent to grade four of formal schooling and is designed to be responsive to the needs and relevant to the daily lives of the target learners. The Hill Area Education Project is an example of a programme specifically designed for hill tribes who live along the mountain ranges in the northern and western parts of the country. The educational services adapted to the needs and problems of the hill tribe community have greatly helped them to become literate.

The programme has attracted many adult learners to improve their knowledge on family planning and skills training. Problem based learning is given high importance in group discussions. Women have particularly benefited from sharing ideas and experiences related to the problems facing them and their communities through group discussions. The learners go through a process of self-discovery in a sense and are able to reflect on their own problems. Problems are used as core themes of learning.

Continuing education programmes
Continuing education programmes provide out-of-school adults and young persons with an opportunity to increase their knowledge and obtain certificates equivalent to those offered upon completion of grade 6, 9 and 12 of formal school. There are three types of learning approaches in this programme; classroom learning, distance learning and self-learning. The interest group programmes are provided to serve specific vocational needs and interests of individuals and groups. A minimum of 15 persons can request for specific skills training. The course duration is not more than 30 hours. The group members have to pay for learning materials, while the government covers the remuneration of resource persons.

Short-term vocational courses ranging from 100 to 300 hours are meant for people who are interested in getting skills training with minimum cost for training materials. Most of the training is conducted at the provincial and district NFE centres, as well as community learning centres.

The Vocational Certificate Curriculum B.E: 2533 (Office of the National Education Commission 1999) is a three year programme provided to those who have completed primary education or grade 6 and would like to seek knowledge about the world of work, and get guidance on occupational choice suited to their needs and conditions of work and life. For example, many rural students would
like get practical skills for working on land. The students who complete this programme will obtain the certificate equivalent to grade 9 or lower secondary education in formal schooling system.

Vocational Certificate Curriculum B.E. 2539 (Office of the National Education Commission 1999) is a three year vocational certificate curriculum programme is provided to those who completed lower secondary education and are in business or self-employed for at least 3 years. This curriculum is particularly designed to upgrade vocational skills of the learners who already have workplace experience. The learners who complete this programme are offered a vocational certificate equivalent to grade 9 or upper secondary education in formal schools.

Information education
Information services are provided through various kinds of media to give people access to educational opportunities at any time they need. The main activities organised in this area of services include public libraries, Village Reading Centres, Community Learning Centres, educational radio and television programmes and National Science Centres for Education.

To cope with the dramatic increase in the number of adult learners, the DNFE has invested in Thaicom Satellite television broadcasting which is combined with other forms of media such as programmed texts, videotapes, radio programmes, as well as mobile libraries skills training units. Volunteers are recruited to teach adults at home or in field areas. Teachers of some schools are sometimes requested to organise a learning group, which is conducted three hours per week. Experts with local wisdom or retired teachers are requested to play a part.

Adult education in Thailand has reached a threshold in the area of non-formal education and lifelong learning. The government is implementing programmes that are based on the concept of lifelong education. It is advocating the concept by making people aware that learning throughout life and learning in all contexts is necessary for survival and for improving quality of life.

Accreditation and Equivalency of Lifelong Learning Programmes

Equivalency education
Equivalency education is an important strategy of lifelong learning because it provides a strong motivation for adults to continue their education. Equivalency programmes promote the education of those persons who drop out from school for various reasons, including the necessity of earning a living. Under
equivalency education programmes, adults are able to return to adult classes within one year, by having credits transferred to them for their prior experiences.

The system of transferring credits aims to build bridges between formal and non-formal education. The system validates and recognises the prior work and learning experiences of the learner by assessing competencies acquired. Through the validation and assessment of non-formal education, which includes also informal experiences, the adult learner is able to get a formal certificate and study further.

Credits can be granted and transferred in the area of non-formal education in the following areas: Vocational subjects conducted by the Ministry of Education; skills confirmed by the workplace or private company; work or occupational experience in a business; accumulation of knowledge and skills during a career. Skills are validated according to the standards of the core-content of the occupational subjects.

At present the Equivalency Programme offers courses from primary compulsory education up to the university level. The National Education Act of 1999 (Section 15) identified that ‘credits accumulated by learners shall be transferable within the same type or between different types of education, regardless of whether the credits have been accumulated from the same or different educational institutions, including learning from non-formal or informal education, vocational training and from work experience’.

The Equivalency Programme is flexible because learning takes place in the classroom, in or out of school contexts or at a distance. The adult learners may study at home, in the community or in temples. The learners enrolling in lower secondary education may have accumulated knowledge, skills and experiences in, for example, the context of a business. The learner can be accredited for up to three elective subjects for skills and knowledge in the areas such as management and administration, marketing, data survey, book-keeping, small business investment, cash flow, career development and profit-sharing.

If adults and youths require a primary or secondary education certificate, they submit an application requesting the competency-based test. An official certificate is awarded when graduates perform knowledge and skills equivalent to a certain standard set in the core content of subject. DNFE allows credit transfers for not more than three elective occupational subjects. Permission to use evidences of prior learning experience is allowed.

Maintaining standards
To maintain quality, the DNFE designed competency-based tests and set up standard core contents to assess the applicant’s skills and knowledge. The recognition of prior learning, work, and life experience gives adults the opportunity for further education. These methods of study motivate out-of-school people to gain experience and to seek knowledge that can be accredited to get a
certificate in order to improve job prospects. By accrediting courses which take into account prior experiences, adults are encouraged to study without unnecessarily repeating what they have already learned. It saves on opportunity costs by allowing individuals to use their time to learn and work and to ensure that the time used for study is relevant to their present employment.

A significant educational reform has been the inclusion of non-formal education into the Basic Education Programme. It follows the structure that is adopted by the state curriculum and incorporates contents and local curriculum that are useful to rural people. Credits obtained through non-formal education are accredited as elective subjects in formal schools. In addition prior experiences are recognised and accredited as a part of a course curriculum. In this way the adult learner is able to complete the course in a shorter period than the student of a formal school.

Conclusion

Since the demand for non-formal education and lifelong learning is increasing, effective strategies will have to be adopted. Integrating programmes of all agencies in the operational areas will be of paramount importance. Literacy is a building block of lifelong learning and therefore it should form an important component of all programmes. Strong partnerships are needed for providing networks of lifelong learning, from the local level to the international level. The quality of lifelong learning will depend on the effective training of personnel, and engaging all stakeholders in all aspects of the programmes from production of learning material, to research and curriculum planning. More work is required in the areas of measuring competencies and designing instruments for testing them. Competency based and curriculum-based assessments should be examined to ensure high standards are maintained. Technology and science literacy need to be integrated into the new curriculum structure to prepare adults and young children to be capable to live in a global society. Local leaders and authorities as well as rural people need to be motivated and encouraged to seek education and made aware of the importance of non-formal education and lifelong learning for improving working and living conditions. Local people will have to take the management of educational programmes into their own hands to promote the ownership of the programmes by the community. The government should reaffirm its commitment to the policy of non-formal education and lifelong education and achieve the objectives of education for all by the year 2015 with a sufficient budget allocated for lifelong education. The purpose of lifelong learning should be to strengthen family capacity, child development and youth leadership. These are building blocks for achieving all other development goals.
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Lifelong Learning for Gender Justice and Empowerment of Cultural Minorities in Sri Lanka

Menaha Kandasamy and Periyasamy Muthulingam

The Fifth International Conference on Adult Education held in Hamburg (CONFINTEA V) in 1997 stimulated policy makers and civil society to give due consideration to adult education in their respective countries. It emphasised that the forces of globalisation make it imperative for developing countries to push adult education in order to take up the challenges that it brings with it. Adult education is necessary not only for keeping up with competitive development and the information age, but also for human development and personal fulfilment. This paper will trace the Sri Lankan government’s neglect in providing adult education among the minority tea plantation worker community, especially women. It also highlights the importance of lifelong learning programmes in solving problems of isolation and exclusion which plantation workers and women face as a result of decades of discrimination.

Article 27 of the Constitution of Sri Lanka enshrines the right to education for everyone and Sri Lanka is one of the foremost countries, which has achieved the highest literacy rate in the South Asian region. The literacy level of the country is 91.8 per cent. The agitation for free education started during the pre independence period. As a result of this, free education was introduced in 1945. Free education in the vernacular language was extended up to university level in the sixties. Far-reaching changes were introduced in tertiary education and vocational training sectors in the latter part of the seventies. There are 10,338 government schools existing to cater to the 4,190,657-student population. In addition to this, 561 private (Buddhist) and 78 private schools cater for another 146,531 students.

The government has created separate units in several universities in order to step up education in information and technological fields. The private sector has taken up the leadership in training information technology personnel demanded by the market. Several private IT institutions conduct degree programmes by
linking themselves with foreign universities. In the state sector, the University of Moratuwa, Institute of Computer Technology (ICT) of the University of Colombo and the National Institute of Business Management are the main institutions providing IT education. In addition to these programmes, the government has introduced non-formal education to cover school dropouts and adults in order to promote skills for them to enter modern labour markets.

Sri Lanka has been able to reach a high level of social development in terms of accepted measures such as infant and maternal mortality, literacy and life expectancy. In terms of the Human Development Index, Sri Lanka ranks quite high compared to other low-income countries.

Notwithstanding this high level of achievement at the national level, and the role of the school system in literacy, there are highly neglected segments within Sri Lankan society that remain educationally backward and excluded. These segments can be found among all communities (Sinnathamby 1997). Most of these segments are illiterate or dropouts from the formal schooling.

At present in Sri Lanka there is a lack of official recognition of non-formal and adult education. Although Sri Lanka has a separate desk for non-formal education, it doesn’t reach the above-mentioned communities, particularly women. Women are most disadvantaged in these programmes. Even vocational education facilities in the country are inadequate to meet the needs of female and male school leavers. Aside from the apprenticeship programme, vocational education has few linkages with the labour market (Shadow Report 2001). The government’s adult education programmes are considered as constituting part of formal education, simply because primary school teachers conduct these programmes in school buildings, even though there exists no special training for these teachers.

NGO’s also conduct adult education programmes, which include programmes dealing with reading and writing, health, income generation and family planning. However, most of these programmes tend to be directed to individuals rather than to disadvantaged communities as a whole.

The Tamil Plantation Community

As already stated, Sri Lanka is one of the countries in the Asian region, which has always been ahead in the education sector. In spite of this, a section of the population is far behind compared to the national level. Comparative literacy figures for the estate population in Sri Lanka shows that the estates lag behind other sectors. The estate population has a 76.9 per cent literacy rate compared to the national rate of 91.8 per cent. Those without schooling in the estate is 22 per cent while the corresponding urban and rural rates are 5.7 per cent and 8.3 per cent respectively. Disparities also exist in the male (82.7 per cent) and female literacy rates (67.3 per cent) (PALM Foundation 2001).

The education level of the Tamil plantation (Up country Tamils) community of Indian origin is very low. Tamils are recent migrants from South India who were brought by the British during the colonial period to toil in the coffee and tea
plantations. The culture, polity and education changed according to mode of production of the country. The export-oriented crop cultivation changed the education system of the country. The British introduced English education in order to serve the interests of the emerging capitalist production and the capitalists. Due to the nature of the cultivation system, a low value was placed on the education of workers since the plantation mode of production needed only unskilled workers. This resulted in neglect of the educational development process of the community. Hardly any schools were introduced in the plantation sector by the government. Although, the community people started some assembly line room schools, it was only in 1904 that the East India Association London addressing the Secretary of State for the colonies raised an awareness of the education problem of the plantation children. As a result of this, the colonial government appointed Mr. S.M. Burrow to submit a report on plantation education, following which the colonial government requested the British planters to establish vernacular primary schools in the plantations. Classes were conducted up to grade five mostly with one teacher. However, during the 1960s tea estate schools began to be taken over by the government. 1990 took about 721 schools over by the government Ministry of Education 1999)

Presently, among the 827 schools operating in the plantations, 679 are primary schools, conducting classes from grade 1 to 5. The majority of the schools lack infrastructure and human resources. From 1986 onwards several international agencies have developed primary schools by providing infrastructure facilities.

At the same time secondary education was not accessible to most of the estate children for various reasons, including poverty. Prior to the take over of the estate schools those who intended to continue the studies attended the nearby secondary schools, which catered to the students of lower middle class. In 1986, some estate schools were promoted to senior secondary schools. However, due to transport problems most of the students were unable to continue their education. A labour survey conducted by the Lanka Jathika Estate Worker’s Union shows the low school attendance of plantation children.

Lack of access to education has resulted in high illiteracy among the plantation people. Table 3 gives a glance into the prevailing literacy rates in the community.

Table 3: Literacy Rates - 1981/82 - 1996/97 As a Percentage of Population Aged 5 Years and Above

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<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>92.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>90.1</td>
<td>92.8</td>
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<td>Estate</td>
<td>78.0</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>87.2</td>
<td>52.6</td>
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<td>67.3</td>
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<td>68.5</td>
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<td>All Sector</td>
<td>89.9</td>
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Literacy among Plantation Women

Historically women have been denied access to schooling, literacy and other educational opportunities. This has resulted in the wide gender gap in the plantations. Literacy rate among the women is 67.3 per cent in comparison to 87.2 among men. The prevailing high illiteracy among women reflects their low social status and their inability to defend their rights, including labour rights. Majority of the women are workers and although they are mobilised by trade unions, none of the working women have become leaders of any of the trade unions. On the other hand, men with even little literacy have become branch leaders and leaders of unions. Employers in the estates do not give the women worker due respect. Although, the literacy rate has risen among the plantation girls during the last decade, this has not helped their lifelong learning since parents tend to send young girls to serve as housemaids in the houses of affluent families.

Although Sri Lanka has a policy on Education for All, women continue to be neglected and discriminated against. Gender role stereotyping in the curriculum prevails. There are also behavioural expectations and self-perceptions of educators, women and their families regarding culturally appropriate courses for women. Policy level changes including policy analysis are woefully lacking in this regard (Shadow Report 2001).

Although violence against women cuts across class, race and caste, it particularly affects women who come from disadvantaged communities or who are illiterate. Most of the empirical research findings show that all forms of sexual harassment and domestic violence are prevalent in these areas. Working class women suffer most from sexual harassment and domestic violence.

Sexual harassment is never taken as a violation of a worker’s right, but a mild affair that needs only some mild action. It is taken seriously only when it becomes an issue leading to worker unrest (Wijayatilake and Zackariya 2001). Although sexual harassment was introduced as an offence in 1995, the amendment to the Penal Code and its implementation is very poor. Power relations are one of the main reasons for the violence against women.

In Sri Lanka although it is men who cook in hotels for paid work and who do the cleaning work in big companies, it is the women who are responsible for household work including cooking and house cleaning. 95 per cent of the women are responsible solely for household work. Unfortunately, the prevalent view among both women and men is that household work belongs to women. There are hardly any programmes to change these stereotypes and attitudes.

Media plays a key role in the daily lives of people as it shapes attitudes and values and is an important way of reaching vast audiences. Presently most of the programmes portray stereotyped images of problems that women face.
Non-formal Adult Education

As a signatory to the *Hamburg Declaration*, the Sri Lankan government has taken some steps to implement adult education through the Ministry of Education. It has created a separate unit called the Non-Formal Education Unit, with a separate unit and a director. Under this unit, literacy, technical and preferential classes are conducted in selected schools in the evening or during weekends for youth and adults. According to the 1999 annual report 736 literacy classes, 1281 technical classes, and 513 preferential classes were conducted all over the island (Ministry of Education 1999).

In the Central province, with 75 per cent Tamils and the majority of plantations, 32 literacy classes, and 202 technical and preferential classes were conducted by the non-formal unit. However, only five literacy classes and 27 technical classes were conducted in the plantation schools. Dressmaking, screen-printing and flower making are the classes taught to the young persons. The total beneficiaries are 227 of which 29 are male. Apart from this, several non-governmental organisations are conducting literacy classes and some skill training programmes in the plantation area.

Some Proposals for Overcoming Discrimination

The current state of underdevelopment of the Tamil plantations worker shows that they urgently need affirmative action to overcome their educational disadvantage. The State is the main actor that can play a major role by forming partnerships with the civil society. Unlike other countries, the Sri Lankan State can overcome the problem without many difficulties. The state has already solved the literacy problem among other communities of the country, and it has promoted a tertiary education. The government should implement the CONFINTEA V *Hamburg Declaration* which stated that youth and adult education should be viewed as a lifelong process. The international non-governmental agencies should support the local NGOs to carry out the CONFINTEA V declaration.

Although there is an EFA policy, it does not reach isolated groups and backward communities. Yet it is precisely these groups which should be the main targets of educational policies. Mainstreaming special groups into educational policies is a big challenge for Sri Lanka’s education system. There is a need for giving equal emphasis to both the formal and non-formal education modalities of learning and attempts should be made to build bridges between them. Lifelong learning needs to be linked to other social issues such as domestic violence and gender discrimination. Instead of using media for commercial purposes alone, it can be used as an effective tool for lifelong learning.

Lifelong learning is important for every individual, therefore the government has a responsibility to act together with the support of NGOs and civil societies in
planning and implementing such programmes. People from neglected communities clearly need to live worthier and more dignified lives. Sri Lanka has to realise the importance of lifelong learning, because it is through lifelong learning that an increase in the quality of life for individuals and community can be reached. Lifelong learning is broader than literacy skills, including basic reading and writing; issue-based knowledge on economic, gender, health, politics and culture; personality development in terms of self-confidence and self sufficiency; as well as collective action and the ability to overcome isolation.

Since community support can be a very important way out for women who are victims of the sexual harassment and violence, lifelong learning must be designed at the personal and community level. An awareness of gender oppression, and most importantly, action to stop or minimise the situation are important elements of the strategy of lifelong learning for improving the lot of women.

One way to change these stereotypes could be to include topics dealing with violence and discrimination against women in schools and lifelong learning programmes for all. Media for adult learning must take into account the need for the diversity and integrity of language and culture and include a commitment to the support of the neglected segments of society (Institute for International Co-operation 1997).

There is need to take cognisance of the key role played by community development which integrates the concerns of both women and men’s development. There is a close connection between education and development and also a very close connection between lifelong learning and development. The approaches adopted by civil society organisations are different from those adopted by the government. Therefore it is very important that the government collaborate with civil society and implement lifelong learning programmes.

Sri Lanka has no comprehensive state policy on adult and lifelong learning. Where some isolated programmes exist, these do not take into account the interests of the poor. This is because the poor working people do not have influence over public policy. The socio-economic conditions at the grass-roots level also make it difficult for village communities to hold their elected leaders responsible and to take advantage of the opportunities provided through such initiatives (Institute for International Co-operation 2001).

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Building a Culture of Quality: Monitoring, Evaluation and Impact Assessment
Developing Indicators for Evaluating Quality and Impact of Adult and Lifelong Learning

Supote Prasertsri

This paper describes key issues and the rationale for monitoring and evaluation of adult and lifelong learning programmes. It proposes methods and indicators to be developed and used in evaluating quality and impact of adult and lifelong learning programmes in the framework of EFA and Millennium Development Goals agreed upon by Member States and the civil society in 2000 and 2001 respectively.

EFA and Millennium Development Goals

While countries have experienced the globalising economy and speedy communication for almost a decade, around 850 million poor adults are still illiterate and poor, and 113 million children are out of schools. Under the Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All, countries have committed themselves to achieving six major goals of education development, four of which (Goals 3 to 6) are relevant to lifelong learning, which is mainly designed for youth and adults over 15 years of age.1

A broad definition of adult and lifelong learning, continuing education or learning throughout life, takes into account cultural values, practices and development needs of diverse groups of lifelong learners, illiterate and literate alike, particularly those facing the risk of social exclusion, poverty and marginalisation. Illiterate and the excluded persons, due to their disadvantaged position in the society, in fact need even more access to adult and lifelong education as a means for empowerment. The approaches to learning are also diverse and include informal, non-formal and formal.
A set of inter-connected and mutually reinforcing development goal, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for 1990-2015, was adopted by 189 nations in September 2000. These goals aim to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and empower women; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability; and to develop a global partnership for development (United Nations 2000).

In order to achieve the eight major goals mentioned above, basic education and adult and lifelong learning must play an active role in enhancing the capacity of learners, empowering disadvantaged groups and ensuring equitable participation in sustainable development.

**Developing Indicators for Monitoring**

*Key issues in monitoring*

The main purpose of programme monitoring is to assess the extent to which activities or actions are implemented and learning effects achieved according to the plan of action. The following key issues or questions should be considered.

First, baseline data is needed at all levels to monitor changes in access and achievements of adult and lifelong education programmes. Second, the target groups of adult and lifelong learning programmes must also be determined. By definition, literacy, post-literacy and adult education include beneficiaries who are 15 years old and above. Though the Dakar Framework does not suggest an adult and lifelong learning indicator per se, Core Indicator No. 16 suggests the age group of 15-24 as the priority group for monitoring literacy rates, while Indicator No. 17 requires that the population over 15 years of age be included. The gender parity index is also required (World Education Forum 2000).

Third, what are the learning needs and scope of the adult and lifelong learning programmes? They may include functional literacy, post-literacy, equivalency, income-generation and continuing education programmes.

Fourth, what are the approaches or delivery systems being utilised by the various target groups and programmes? Programmes are being offered by communities, temples, public schools, private institutions, ICT-based services, radio, television, postal services and through self-learning.

Fifth, what are the resources spent on the services and learning? The availability of the financial data will enable us to conduct a cost-effectiveness analysis.

Sixth, who is responsible for the monitoring functions? What is the level of participation by the communities and learners in monitoring the adult and lifelong learning activities, especially at the grassroots level? Community leaders and members should be encouraged to monitor the activities and become accountable to their communities.
Seventh, what is the database system being used to store and utilise the data and information? Are the computerised database systems available at the village, sub-district and district level, or on the website? Are ICTs available for the communities?

Lastly, what are the frequencies of the monitoring cycles - annually or every five years? More frequent data collection requires more resources.

**Developing indicators**
The Dakar Framework recommends twelve strategies as essential factors for achieving the EFA goals. For this reason, it is important that each Member State establish a mechanism to monitor the extent to which these strategies are adopted at the national and field levels. The author hereby suggests some mechanisms and indicators, which could be used to monitor the strategic actions.

**Table 1: Proposed Indicators for Monitoring of the EFA Strategies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Promote EFA policies within a sustainable and well-integrated sector framework clearly linked to poverty elimination and development strategies;</td>
<td>2.1. Percentage of population living below the national poverty line who has access to adult and lifelong learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Ensure the engagement and participation of civil society in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of strategies for educational development;</td>
<td>3.1. Proportion of the civil society engaged in the process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Develop responsive, participatory and accountable systems of educational governance and management;</td>
<td>4.1. Creation of adult and lifelong learning committees at the grassroots level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.2. Decentralisation of funds and resources to adult and lifelong learning service providers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.3. Inclusion of adult and lifelong learning data into the national Education Management Information System or census.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Meet the needs of education systems affected by conflict,</td>
<td>5.1. Percentage of adult and lifelong learning teachers and facilitators</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| National Calamities and Instability and Conduct Educational Programmes in Ways that Promote Mutual Understanding, Peace and Tolerance, and that Help to Prevent Violence and Conflict; | Trained in Peace and Living Values Education.  
|---|---|
| Implement Integrated Strategies for Gender Equality in Education Which Recognise the Need for Changes in Attitudes, Values and Practices; | 6.1. Gender Parity Index on Access to Adult and Lifelong Learning Programmes.  
6.2. Literacy Gender Parity Index-Ratio of Female to Male Literacy Rate. |
| Implement as a Matter of Urgency Education Programmes and Actions to Combat the HIV/AIDS Pandemic; | 7.1. Percentage of Adults (15+) Who Know About HIV/AIDS and Know How to Prevent It. |
| Create Safe, Healthy, Inclusive and Equitably Resourced Educational Environments Conducive to Excellence in Learning with Clearly Defined Levels of Achievement for All; | 8.1. Percentage of the Population Having Access to Adult and Lifelong Learning. |
| Enhance the Status, Morale and Professionalism of Teachers; | 9.1. Ratio and Availability of Teachers to Learners in Deprived Areas.  
9.2 Percentage of Teachers Who Are Engaged in Adult and Lifelong Learning Themselves. |
10.2. Ratio of Population Having Access to the Internet (Number of User/10,000 Population). |
| Systematically Monitor | 11.1. Monitoring Mechanism Established |
Monitoring progress in adult and lifelong learning for achieving EFA goals

Among the six EFA goals, the following three can be monitored with both quantitative and qualitative methods. **Goal 3**: ensuring the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes; **Goal 4**: achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults; **Goal 5**: eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, and with a focus on girls’ full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.

Monitoring may be conducted at least at two levels, the programme level and the national level. The implementing partners in close co-operation with independent monitors and involved communities should conduct monitoring at the programme level. At the national level, monitoring should be done by the responsible ministries, the EFA Forum, or the professional bodies created to promote the adult and lifelong learning programmes. Data from random surveys are needed for national level monitoring.

Since adult and lifelong learning takes place in different settings, it requires different methods of monitoring. For institution-based learning, monitoring on access to programmes can be done through the use of statistical reports or education management information system provided annually by concerned ministries and institutions. For self-directed, informal, or non-formal adult and lifelong learning, a random survey on a limited sample of learners and communities is the only cost-effective option to obtain national level data.

**Evaluating Quality and Impact**

In evaluating the quality of education, we normally assess the internal efficiency and external effectiveness of the education system or programmes. In adult and lifelong learning it is proposed that programmes be minimally evaluate in the framework of the EFA goals 3 to 4 and all the eight MDGs. The EFA Goals
reflect the minimum internal efficiency of education while most of the MDGs reflect the external effectiveness of education, the quality of life of the learners, and the impact of education on society and the economy.

**Methods and sources of data collection**

In the case of evaluating the learning outcomes in programme-based activities, evaluation can be conducted by the teachers or facilitators themselves, using appropriate testing instruments. Once the learners have completed the programmes, evaluation can be done only through random survey.

The impact of the programme also needs to be evaluated. The impact on the quality of life is multi-dimensional in nature. The extent to which adult and lifelong learning contributes towards poverty reduction, a lower rate of population growth, reduction of risk on HIV/AIDS, gender equality, higher life expectancy, improvement in the quality of environment, freedom of expression, and good governance should be evaluated. Results derived from annual socio-economic surveys conducted by Member States provide adequate information and data for evaluating the impact. In some countries, this random survey is conducted annually. For example, Cambodia has been conducting annual socio-economic survey since 1994, including the national census in 1998, and their results are available on the website (www.nis.gov.kh). However, in most census and socio-economic surveys, only three education questions are asked: school attendance, literacy, and educational attainment. There is a need to include a question on the access to lifelong learning of one or more categories: literacy, equivalency, languages, income-generating skills, religion, computer skills, etc.

**Adult and lifelong learning for poverty reduction**

Among the eight MDGs listed earlier, eradicating extreme poverty and hunger appears to be the most important goals. In quantitative terms, the ultimate target is to reduce the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by half between 1990 and 2015. Most countries have data on the size of population living below the national poverty line, food and environmental security. Therefore, in evaluating the impact of adult and lifelong learning programmes, especially programmes targeted towards poverty groups, programmes must be monitored and evaluated against the access to basic education and lifelong learning among the population living below the poverty line. Several countries have in fact already achieved EFA and Millennium Development Goals within their territory. The most important question education planners must ask themselves are: What is the net primary enrolment, rate of adult literacy, rate of access to continuing
Figure 1: MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF ADULT AND LIFELONG LEARNING

ALL: Adult and Life Long Learning
MDGs: Millenium Development Goals
education and life skills among the bottom quintile of the population? As the economist knows the share of income among all the quintiles, education planners must know the share of education access, too, because poverty reduction cannot be achieved without the empowerment and participation of the poor in educating themselves and their children.

There are several factors, which contribute directly or indirectly towards achieving the goals and impact of development. These include development policies, investment, infrastructure, freedom and democracy, peace and stability, and good governance. Education or intellectual capacity has been recognized as the most important factor, not only in transforming the society, but also ensuring sustainable development, especially in the resource-poor countries.

Notes

1 The six major goals of development are: Goal 1: expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for most vulnerable and disadvantaged children; Goal 2: ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances, and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free, and compulsory primary education of good quality; Goal 3: ensuring the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes; Goal 4: achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults; Goal 5: eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, and with a focus on girls’ full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality; Goal 6: improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

References

Monitoring EFA Goals Three and Four

Simon Ellis

This paper will concentrate on two of the Dakar goals where it is more difficult to measure progress; Goal 4: Achieve a 50 percent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults and Goal 3: Promote the acquisition of life-skills by adolescents and youth. Ensure that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes. Reference also needs to be made to Goal 6, enhance educational quality, as it is relevant to all other goals. Goal 6: Improve all aspects of education and ensure excellence so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

Literacy

The literacy goal gives a precise measure to a rather imprecise concept. It is well known that literacy is relative to cultural context, language of instruction, and many other variables.

At present the main global measure of literacy are the literacy projections, which are taken from national censuses and fitted to an econometric model. In most countries censuses take place every ten or more years. National Censuses, in common with many other forms of literacy assessment, test literacy using a self test but in a much simpler format than specific assessment survey; normally ‘the ability to read and write a certain sentence’ which is a fundamental criteria for basic literacy.

Other sources of such literary assessments are local surveys, either under the aegis of national government or of major aid agencies. These sources can be very
difficult to compare with one another for reasons such as different samples or questionnaires, making them difficult to use for EFA Monitoring above the national level. Given this situation, it is necessary improve literacy projection methods and databases through examination of other data sources including local surveys.

Various techniques of literacy assessment need to be reviewed. This project has three elements - a review of the OECD IALS survey (OECD and Statistics Canada 1995), learning the lessons from local surveys such as those of Cambodia and Laos, and case study assessments to consider what can be learnt from past experience and make recommendations for future practice. Major projects should be reviewed for their methods on school and educational assessment.

Life Skills

Moving from Dakar goal 4 to Dakar goal 3, another unclear concept is ‘functional literacy’. Certainly there is a distinction between literacy for its own sake and literacy that is directed at carrying out a number of fundamental tasks. This distinction can become blurred when, for example, you are functionally literate in your mother tongue but not in the national language.

Within the northern European context, life skills is reminiscent of ‘key skills’ or ‘generic skills’, and are defined as - communication, literacy, numeracy, management, and IT skills. To these may be added team building, problem solving, and even behavioural traits such as self-motivation.

The OECD driven DeSeCo movement has been running for several years to investigate a core set of such competencies (OECD/SFSOD/DeSeCo 2001). They have identified three generic competencies - ‘acting autonomously and reflectively; using tools interactively; and joining and functioning in socially heterogeneous groups’. However, there is a second completely different view of life skills, which has so far been voiced by African colleagues. This views life skills as ‘survival skills’. This skill set thus includes awareness of agriculture, health protection, and other safety issues. It can also encompass citizenship.

Other definitions of life skills are certain to emerge. Whereas much of the debate on literacy can be reduced to a technical level the whole notion of life skills requires international agreement before any progress can be made in measurement.

2002 EFA Monitoring

Quite simply, EFA monitoring must measure countries’ progress towards meeting the Dakar goals; have, or will these goals be met. The task of EFA monitoring is therefore to develop indicators for each country and disaggregate as many
statistics as possible by gender using both net and gross enrolment figures. Countries will be encouraged to break down enrolment by age, grade, and gender, allowing for a wide variety of enrolment and participation calculations. A definition of ‘completion rates’ will also need to be developed.

Equally EFA monitoring must have a global coverage. Measures must be found which cover all countries, so that the international community may judge its priorities in distributing resources to help countries achieve EFA. Monitoring needs to be a collaborative production, which involves a wide range of different agencies.

International statistics however are not sufficient to provide a full picture of progress towards EFA. EFA monitoring will require contributions from countries to help set national statistics in context. These contributions would include best practice and innovative projects related to EFA as a whole but not necessarily to any specific Dakar goal. This represents an opportunity for projects to be viewed in the light of global progress towards EFA. In this context important questions arise: What are countries views for addressing literacy issues? How are countries measuring progress towards the 2015 literacy target? What are countries expecting the monitoring of literacy and non-formal education statistics? What do Asian countries understand by the term life skills? How do/would they measure progress towards the EFA life skills target?

Notes

1 The most recent set of literacy projections, and proposals for their improvement, will form the backbone of the literacy chapter in the 2002 EFA Monitoring Report by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics. More detailed analysis will be published in the Compendium of Statistics on Illiteracy, 2002 edition.

References


A New Approach to Literacy Assessment in India

I. V. Subba Rao

This article traces the policy framework, assessment approach, tools, and quality of implementation of literacy assessment in the areas of adult learning as well as elementary schooling under the two National programmes - the National Literacy Mission (NLM) and the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP).

It also outlines household-based enumeration and surveys both in the decennial census and the National Sample Surveys. The literacy test administered as a part of one National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) survey in 1991 is examined in detail for the insights it offers and possibilities it opens up. This study also documents two innovative assessment processes adopted in two programmes conducted by non-governmental organisations to give a glimpse of the variety of approaches that are currently in place.

The Literacy Scenario in India - A Historical Backdrop

This section presents a historical overview of the growth in literacy and education levels over the last century and documents some major trends in current literacy assessment practices. While only a little over 5 percent of the Indian population was literate in 1901 and 16 percent in 1950, the latest census conducted in 2001 indicates that the literacy rate is 65.4 percent. The decadal growth rate in literacy during the last century shows substantial progress, especially during the periods 1931-41, 1951-61 and 1991-2001.
Table 1: Progress in Literacy (1901-2001)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>(in million)</th>
<th>(percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Population</td>
<td>Illiterate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>235.10</td>
<td>225.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>248.20</td>
<td>233.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>246.70</td>
<td>229.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>273.40</td>
<td>47.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>312.00</td>
<td>261.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>5 and above</td>
<td>316.10</td>
<td>300.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>5 and above</td>
<td>372.84</td>
<td>267.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>5 and above</td>
<td>468.60</td>
<td>307.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>7 and above</td>
<td>581.78</td>
<td>340.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>7 and above</td>
<td>688.16</td>
<td>328.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>7 and above</td>
<td>869.15</td>
<td>302.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While in 1950-1951 only 32 percent of school age children were in elementary schools, over 80 percent are in school today. Literacy and the universalisation of elementary education have been national goals since independence in 1947. The Constitution of India envisaged provision of free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of 14 years. Considerable progress has been made in the expansion of primary education since independence (Table 2). The number of illiterates has declined substantially during the last decade, however there are still approximately 302 million non-literate adults today, and over 40 million children are not in school.

The first part of this study focuses primarily on the efforts made to impart literacy skills to youth and adults aged more than 15 years, and touches upon a major national initiative for improving access to quality primary schooling. Literacy assessment practices in both these cases are then analysed.

Table 2: Progress in School Education since 1950

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>1950-51</th>
<th>1999-2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary Schools</td>
<td>2,10,000</td>
<td>6,42,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Primary Schools</td>
<td>13,600</td>
<td>1,98,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers in Primary</td>
<td>5,38,000</td>
<td>19,19,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher in Upper Primary</td>
<td>86,000</td>
<td>12,98,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment in Primary</td>
<td>19.2 million</td>
<td>113.61 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment in Upper Primary</td>
<td>3 million</td>
<td>42 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Expenditure on Education (% of-GDP)</td>
<td>0.68 %</td>
<td>3.77% (1998)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>16.60%</td>
<td>65.40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Government of India (2001) working group report on elementary and adult education Tenth Five Year Plan

*Literacy campaigns in pre-independence period (1900-1947)*
A number of initiatives during the last century aimed at spreading literacy and education acquired new momentum because of the freedom struggle in the first half of the 20th century. The efforts were further strengthened and intensified after independence with the formulation of various national plans and programmes. Certain provinces in pre-independence India like Mysore, Travancore, Baroda and Punjab established night schools to enable adult learners and school dropouts to master the ‘3 R’s’ viz. reading, writing and arithmetic. In the 1930s, after the British allowed the provincial autonomy of some provinces, a number of mass literacy programmes were initiated under the leadership of nationalist leaders who took it as a sacred mission and integrated it with the Indian Independence movement. These mass literacy movements during the 1930s resulted in substantial improvement in the literacy levels. By 1941, 24 million people were made literate, an increase in the literacy rate of 6.6 percent to 16.01 percent. This is in contrast to the earlier 10-year growth rate of 0.5 percent during 1901-1911, 1.3 percent during 1911-1921 and 2.3 percent between 1921-1931.

Post-independence literacy policies and programmes (1947-2001)
After independence in 1947, literacy became central to national reconstruction and community development efforts. Imparting basic literacy skills became a part of a larger social education programme launched in the first five-year plan (1952-1957). The objectives of the social education programme had roots in the Gandhian concept of ‘basic education’. It was a comprehensive programme encompassing life skills, values and productivity-oriented knowledge.

In the 1960s, policy pronouncements clearly emphasised the urgent need to improve literacy levels. These policy directions however were not effectively translated into specific programmes nor were delivery mechanisms designed. Certain non-governmental organisations in various states did continued their efforts to spread education and literacy, such as Gram Skikshan Mohim in Maharashtra. These efforts were isolated initiatives and were not replicated on any large scale.

National Adult Education Programme (1978): The first nation-wide initiative
The first countrywide programme to be launched was the National Adult Education Program (NAEP). Started in 1978, the NAEP viewed literacy as a means to bring about fundamental changes in socio-economic development. It was based on the premise that literacy would enable the poor to move from being merely passive spectators on the fringes of development activity to its centre, as active participants.

The learning process under the NAEP emphasised not only basic literacy but also stressed the importance of ‘functional literacy’ and creating awareness
among the poor and the illiterate. This was the first major national effort intended to cover 100 million illiterate persons in the age group of 15 to 35 in a large number of adult education centres across the country. This programme was built on the experience gained in UNESCO’s Experimental World Literacy Programme as well as the experience of other countries where literacy programmes had been successfully implemented. The project was well conceived and had taken into consideration various linkages and recognised the importance of systematic monitoring and evaluation.

A review committee headed by Professor Kothari in 1980 identified a number of inadequacies in this programme. These inadequacies included; time for the preparation of a proper district plan; training of instructors and participation of all priority groups; the duration of the programme was felt to be too short; little provision for follow-up activities. The Committee suggested that future adult education programmes should take into consideration these aspects and emphasise better planning, more focused attention to the content of the programme, and make the programme flexible and closely related to the needs of the learners and the local environment.

Setting up the National Literacy Mission and launching Total Literacy Campaigns
Based on the feedback and evaluation of the NAEP, the National Literacy Mission was set up in 1988 with the objective to achieve a sustainable threshold level of 75 percent functional literacy rate for the 15 to 35 year age group by 2005. ‘Functional literacy’ included self-reliance in the ‘3 Rs’, awareness of the causes of their deprivation, moving towards amelioration of their condition through organisation and participation in the process of development, acquiring skills to improve the economic status and general well being, and imbibing values such as national integration, conservation of environment, gender equality and small family norm.

The Mission adopted a well-defined campaign approach. It was goal-oriented (imparting basic literacy and social awareness), area-specific (planned, implemented and monitored at the district level) and time-bound (12 to 18 months, 200 hours of instruction).

The campaigns began with mass mobilisation and environment building through locally designed cultural events, conventions and extensive use of traditional and modern media. The pedagogical techniques to teach adults were improved and standardised. A new methodology called Improved Pace and Content of Learning (IPCL) method was adopted. Groups of illiterate adults met at any convenient time and place and were taught by local educated youth that volunteered to teach them basic literacy skills with the help of three graded primers. These primers, prepared by an academic team at the district level, had built-in exercises for practice, self-evaluation, testing and certification. On an
average there was one voluntary instructor for every ten learners. The monitoring and evaluation system comprised a set of self-evaluation exercises and tests at the end of each learning unit in the primers, and a final external evaluation by selected institutions. Unlike the earlier programmes like the Farmers’ Functional Literacy Program (FFLP) and the National Adult Education Program (NAEP), it was probably the first time that learning outcomes were sharply focused and defined.

The initial literacy campaign was followed up with a Post Literacy Programme intended to prevent relapse into illiteracy, to enrol dropouts and enable non-achievers to upgrade their literacy skills. It was also intended to enable learners to use literacy skills in day-to-day life and acquire skills for economic self-reliance. It was expected that this process would promote collective action and facilitate the learners to embark on life long learning process through continuing education. Projects were formulated and neo-literates were identified and enrolled for this yearlong programme. The final evaluation was done by an external evaluation agency nominated by the National Literacy Mission Authority.

Following the Post-Literacy Programme, the National Literacy Mission envisaged that life long learning opportunities should be provided to all people beyond basic literacy and primary education. For this purpose, continuing education centres were proposed to be set up. These centres provide facilities like libraries, reading rooms, learning centres, training centres, information centres, discussion forums, cultural centres, and sports centres. One Continuing Education Centre serves a population of 2000 to 2500 and is expected to undertake the following target-specific functional programmes; i) Equivalency Programmes which are designed as alternative education programmes equivalent to existing formal education or Vocational Education Programme. ii) Income Generating Programmes, where the participants acquire or upgrade their own vocational skills and take up income generating activities. iii) Quality of Life Improvement Programmes which aim to equip learners and the community with essential knowledge, attitudes, values and skills to raise the standard of living. iv) Individual Interest Promotion Programmes which provide opportunities for learners to participate and learn about their individually chosen social, cultural, spiritual, health, physical and artistic interests.

The effort was to make learning relevant to the real life situations by providing mechanical and vocational skills, encouraging creative thinking through participative group activities, and establishing active linkages with other developmental departments at the grassroots level.

To date, 574 districts have been covered under the literacy programmes. Of the total 598 districts in the country 302 districts have entered continuing education phase. 125 million learners have been enrolled so far and more than 12 million volunteers have participated in the programme. As of the latest evaluation reports 91.53 million adults have become literate under all schemes of
NLM, 71.45 Million through the literacy campaigns and 20.08 million through other schemes. 61 percent of the learners are women and 36 percent belong to the disadvantaged social groups - (23 percent belong to the Scheduled Castes and 13 percent to the Schedules Tribes).

**Literacy Assessment Practices in India: An Overview**

An analysis of the important trends in literacy assessment in India during the last three decades reveals the following six broad patterns:

*The decennial census* estimates remain the most widely accepted and frequently quoted estimates of literacy.

*The National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO)* conducts periodical sample surveys in which data on literacy status is collected along with a number of other socio-economic characteristics. Occasionally reports on literacy published by the NSSO are based on the survey data and follow the Census definition, however in 1991 one report adopted a slightly different approach. A literacy test was administered to a sample of those persons who said they were ‘literate’. The present case study examines the methodology of this special assessment pattern and the results of the test.

*The National Literacy Mission* initiated a nation-wide literacy movement and created a sound monitoring system and formulated guidelines for literacy assessment practices. This framework is universally followed throughout the country and therefore is described in greater detail in the present case study.

The literacy campaigns are usually followed by a *post-literacy programme* and a *continuing education programme*. Assessment practices in these programmes tend to be both literacy assessments as well as programmatic evaluations. Since there are only a few evaluations conducted under these programmes only the guidelines evolved for these two components are briefly touched upon.

The literacy campaigns in the country have generally focused on adult learners beyond 15 years. However, since the literacy rate is calculated in the census for the entire population above 7 years, and since many of the children in the age group 7-14 are expected to be in school, the quality of learning in schools has a direct bearing on the literacy rate of the country. The present case study therefore has described briefly the literacy assessment practices at the school level and the achievement surveys that are conducted at periodic intervals across the country under a massive national programme for school improvement called the *District Primary Education Programme (DPEP)*.

While NLM and DPEP are nation-wide programmes which have adopted two different sets of assessment practices for two different segments of population, there are a number of non-governmental initiatives where literacy assessments
are done in a more participative, innovative manner and are integrated into the
learning process. Since these have not been replicated on a large scale, they have
been briefly mentioned in the case study to show the diverse ways in which
literacy assessment is being viewed and practised.

**Census and National Sample Surveys: Traditional
Enumeration and Introduction of New Measurement Tools**

*Population Census*

Conducted every ten years, the Directorate of Census has been collecting data,
among other demographic features, on literacy. The estimates are based on the
response given by individuals to the enumerator’s question - ‘Are you literate’?
‘Can you read and write?’

The definition of a ‘literate person’ according to the Census Directorate is,
‘A person should be able to read and write with understanding in any language.
The person may or may not have received any formal education.’ The literacy
rates given in Table 1 are based on these census estimates. There is no test of
comprehension and proficiency in reading and writing skills. There is also no
mention of Arithmetic or ‘numeracy’ that is traditionally associated with
literacy.

This assessment has obvious limitations. It is based on a self-declaration of
the respondent and there is no objective measure to test the literacy status. It
classifies all individuals into only two categories - literate and illiterate. It does
not tell us how strong and sustainable are the literacy skills. There is a possible
underestimation or over estimation depending on how, and in which language,
the enumerator poses the question, and how the respondent understands it. For
instance, the question ‘Are you literate?’ could in some languages and cultures
be understood to mean ‘Have you gone to school?’ or ‘Can you sign?’. Despite
these limitations, census figures are quoted in all official documents and are used
for inter-state, inter-district, inter-region comparison. They are generally taken
as authentic measures of literacy.

*Sample surveys conducted by the National Sample Survey
Organisation (NSSO)*

NSSO collects data on literacy and education as a part of its sample surveys once
every five years. This exercise covers the entire country and adopts the census
definition of literacy, but it takes a sample as a basis for estimation. This gives
estimates of literacy rates in between censuses and therefore can be viewed as
useful midterm assessment of progress in literacy. These surveys take fairly large samples as can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3: Sample sizes and design in N.S.S.O. Surveys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Year</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July- December 1991</td>
<td>305,078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1995-June 1996</td>
<td>371,820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1999-June 2000</td>
<td>600,016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two stage stratified design with villages or urban blocks as first stage and households as second stage has been followed in all these surveys (Source N.S.S.O. 1995, 1998, 2001)

The NSSO surveys also collect information on different demographic features which give us more insight into correlations with other parameters, such as the economic activity of the person, economic status, the social group to which one belongs, and the amount of land owned by the household or person.

The 1991 survey added a novel feature to the survey. A ‘literacy test’, with reading, writing, and numeracy components was administered to a sub-sample of persons who had declared themselves to be ‘literate’. This was among the earliest efforts to devise a test for literacy assessment for the entire country. It is a remarkably simple test, presented in as many as thirty languages. The investigator would select a passage that was suitable from the point of view of individual member’s age, sex, general status, and background. The individual respondent was shown the passage and was asked to read it. No time limit was fixed, so the individual had adequate time to read the passage. One or two questions were asked to judge the individual’s comprehension. To test ‘writing ability’, the individual was asked to write a simple message or, alternatively, to write one or two simple sentences dictated by the investigator from the passage. Numeracy skills were tested through reading, writing and counting numbers, as well as knowledge of simple arithmetic operations (NSSO 1995).

This test was administered to a small sample of 5433 persons drawn from those in the age group of 15 years and above who are reported as ‘literates’ by the informants, but had received less than five years of schooling. Those with more than 5 years of schooling were assumed to be literate.

Certain interesting features of the NSSO survey

Approximately 66 percent of those who took the test qualified and could be classified as ‘literate’ which means 34 percent of those whom claimed ‘literate’ status had failed to qualify. This points to a distinct possibility that the actual literacy levels might be quite low if an objective assessment of literacy were
made instead of relying only on the respondent’s self-assessment and statement as in census surveys.

More than 4 percent of the total persons could not be tested due to language barriers regardless of the test being administered in an incredibly large number of languages. This raises the complex issue of language and dialects in literacy instruction and testing and the need to be sensitive to the language used by the learners in conceptualising the assessment process.

The gender gaps in achievement were also more evident in the urban than the rural areas. A surprising result of the test is that while writing is usually considered more difficult than reading, more people could write than read in urban areas, and a greater number of people could write in the rural than the urban areas. There was also a large difference in achievement between the rural and urban areas in terms of the numeracy components.

The survey brings out another dimension of literacy assessment - the relapse into illiteracy. It is estimated that around 3 percent had lapsed into illiteracy. However, very few persons (0.9 %) who had 4 years of formal schooling lapsed into illiteracy, pointing to the close relationship between literacy and schooling and the policy implication of taking action to strengthen schooling alongside adult literacy programmes.

The survey has analysed the reading habits of literates and the usage of libraries and continuing education centres, which enhance literacy usage and ensure its permanence. Nearly 60 percent of urban literate persons read newspapers (compared to 31 percent in rural areas) while only one-fourth read books. Library use in urban areas is 7 percent whereas in rural areas it is only half of this figure. This shows an inadequate literacy environment, especially in rural areas, to enable literate persons to sustain and improve their literacy levels.

The NSSO estimates are lower than the 1991 census estimates. The differences could perhaps be greater if the test were to be administered on the entire population or a larger sample. This could be an indication that the literacy figures need to be checked for accuracy; however, this might have larger political and cost implications if census figures were to be subjected to a rigorous testing of literacy acquisition.

This pioneering effort opened up new possibilities of assessing actual literacy levels through an objectively verifiable measuring instrument - the literacy test. The information obtained on literacy is far superior to the census figures because each component of basic literacy skills has been tested, which prevents a simple dichotomous classification into ‘literate’ and ‘illiterate’ categories. However, being the first attempt of its kind, there are some limitations. The test results give us a broad countrywide picture without a state-wise breakdown. If this were done, it could be more useful in planning appropriate strategies for schooling, adult literacy, and setting up libraries.
**Co-ordinated Decentralisation: A New Approach to Assessment of Literacy Attainment**

**Total Literacy Campaign**
This is a programme unique in India, which operates according to a co-ordinated, decentralised approach. The Government of India issues the policy guidelines, and district level committees implement the programme within the broad parameters of the Scheme guidelines. There is considerable flexibility in terms of the preparation of the three literacy primers, which are used in the campaign. The language, cultural context, and location-specific illustrations afford a degree of contextualization within the broad contours of a national policy framework.

Each of the primers has built-in assessment and self-evaluative exercises that enable the learners and instructors to periodically monitor literacy acquisition. The lessons are designed in such a way that not only are literacy skills and competencies inculcated but also they simultaneously focus on themes which are closely related to the life and environment of the learners.

In order to make an objective assessment of literacy acquisition and to have a uniform yardstick for assessment of the success of the campaign, a committee was constituted in 1992 by the Government of India under the Chairmanship of Professor R.H. Dave. The need for literacy assessment, according to the Dave Committee, is fourfold. First, it brings social accountability. ‘Since the total literacy campaign is a massive programme in which considerable resources have been invested, the evaluation would help the public at large to know what have been returns against the investments in terms of time, energy and resources.’ Second, it provides valuable feedback to organisers and, third, the pains of the campaign would help secure increased political support. Lastly, sharing information about rising literacy levels would create greater awareness about education and hopefully stimulate a desire among parents to send their children to school, thereby increasing school enrolment.

While designing the assessment for a vast and diverse country like India, the committee considered the socio-cultural and linguistic diversity of the country and the capacity to carry out the evaluation exercise. It adopted the guiding principle that learner evaluation should be simple, intelligible and non-threatening, as well as systematic, progressional, technically sound and universally applicable. The Dave Committee started with a clear delineation of
goals in terms of competencies and aligned the evaluation process and particularly the testing design to the prevailing norms of literacy skills under NLM. Then a blueprint of a test was prepared to give practical guidance on what the framework should be, the relative weight given to each competency, and procedures for evaluation. This test is sharply focused on basic literacy and numeracy skills and consciously leaves out a few aspects like ‘reading speed’ and application of the concepts of ‘proportion’ and ‘interest’ in daily life.

As we shall observe later in this study, a similar pioneering effort was made in the sphere of learning achievement at school level. The blueprint was not a rigid, one-size-fits-all design but rather a framework enabling test designers to construct a number of parallel tests. Life skills and functional aspects such as the competencies of reading and writing with respect to road signs were also included.

While deciding on broad elements of learning, the committee used the NLM definitions of functional literacy. However, it was felt that initially it would be enough to evaluate learning outcomes in the ‘3 Rs’ and it was assumed that ‘functionality’ and ‘awareness’ components would be automatically developed if the teaching-learning materials like the primers were properly used and tests included in the primers conducted. Since the contents of the primers had a sharp thematic focus on contemporary socio-economic concerns, this was possibly a reasonable assumption.

As far as literacy was concerned, the Committee felt that the tools and instruments for evaluation of learning outcomes should serve to help us to know ‘what the learners could learn rather than find out what is not known to them or what they have not learnt at all’. Therefore, a dichotomous classification of learners into literates and illiterates or ‘pass’ or ‘fail’ was not favoured because every illiterate person would have made some gain as a result of the campaign. It was felt that learner performance should be described according to a range of scores in reading, writing, and numeracy skills, separately and also in aggregate. It was suggested that to be declared ‘literate’ a person should have a aggregate minimum score of 70 percent in the three tests of reading, writing, and numeracy, with at least 50 percent in each of the competency areas. The Committee assigned a greater weight to reading than writing and numeracy, on the assumption that reading is a more frequently used skill. The tests were customised to suit the local cultural and linguistic situation, being based on the local literacy primers and prepared by a local team.

The Arun Ghosh Committee set up in 1994 went into issues related to sampling design which is now being adopted quite uniformly in all external evaluations. Following the Committee recommendation, sample sizes are now consistently over five percent.

Impact assessment

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Almost all the evaluation reports contain the impact of literacy on other social indicators and document the growing awareness of learners about social issues. For example, the Srikakulam survey (Gopalakrishna Reddy, f/vl. 1994) examines the attitudes of learners toward the following issues: Amelioration of poverty; prevention of ill health; development programmes; sending children to school; recognition of equality of women; giving up superstitions; liquor prohibition; environment protection; small family norm; savings habit.

A study by the Centre for Media Studies, New Delhi in 1997 analysed the impact of adult education programmes on socio-economic development of individuals and communities on a sample of 1669 neo-literates (1068 in the treatment group and 601 in the control group) in the three states of Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal and Bihar. The study found that the size of the effect on socio-economic variables was particularly high for the following: better knowledge of health issues; better health practices; better expenditure management; better hygiene practices; better personal habits; and self confidence. Adult literacy also has a positive effect on enrolment and retention of children in school, particularly for girls aged 12-14 years. The field study also shows that the adult education programme has led to reduced gender disparity in education of children (CMS 1997).

The assessment practices under the literacy mission have a number of significant features. The programme is very low cost (Rs 90-180, or $2 to $4, per learner) and so are the costs of assessment. The cost of evaluation have been fixed by the National Literacy Mission based on the number of the total learners in the 'universe' based on which the sample also will be drawn. The costs vary from Rs 150,000 to Rs 300,000 - at a cost of Rs 3 to Rs 1.75 per learner. For the entire country, sample survey of this sort to cover the 300 million non-literates would cost approximately Rs 525 million or nearly $11 million.

The tests take a set of competencies as the criteria and assess the acquisition of these competencies. These are all, therefore, criterion-referenced tests. However, the Mission has set certain norms for declaring a person 'literate', and therefore the assessment process has both the dimensions of criteria-referenced and norm-referenced testing.

The assessment process has been simplified and explained in such a clear manner so that practitioners can easily implement it. The framework includes detailed procedures offering practical guidance. This makes system-wide replication possible.

The assessment design developed by the Dave Committee, and later refined by the Arun Ghosh Committee, is perhaps the most appropriate strategy for large scale literacy assessments in countries like India with extraordinary diversity in cultures and languages. A common framework ensures uniformity of design and comparability across states and regions. In addition, the assessment is highly contextualised, due to the fact that assessments are based on a set of primers the learners have gone through and the tests are conducted by institutions in
collaboration with grassroot level organisers in a language the learners understand and use. The contents are therefore closely aligned to materials and themes familiar to the learners.

The surveys collect demographic information on a number of parameters that helps to explore the relationship between literacy and other variables. For instance, data is collected on the following parameters: Mother tongue, gender, caste, occupation, level of schooling, religion and educational level of parents.

Stratified random sampling procedures give adequate representation to disadvantaged groups such as tile scheduled castes, tribes, and other minorities, which enhances the validity, reliability, and credibility of the assessment process.

The assessment process under the Literacy Mission had, however, certain problems in the initial stages of the campaign period. Every district committee was competing to declare their district ‘totally literate’. In quite a few cases, this high-stakes testing led to the phenomenon of ‘proxy learners’. Persons who were actually literate showed up for the test as non-literate. The Mission authorities therefore evolved guidelines and discouraged districts from declaring that they had achieved ‘total literacy’.

**Post-literacy and continuing education programmes**
The fourth set of literacy assessment practices relates to two other literacy mission programmes, viz. Post-Literacy and Continuing Education Programme. These are an extension and continuation of the Total Literacy Campaign and focus more on life skills and functional literacy skills related to the world of work. In each of these programmes, the norms have been laid down, and the competencies expected to be achieved by the learners spelt out. Tests have been designed and administered within a larger national framework. The model test paper designed for these two programmes follows the same weight for reading, writing, and numeracy skills as in TLC, however the skill levels are higher. In the case of continuing education centres, there are additional instruments used for programme evaluation such as questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions.

**Policy and Initiatives to Assess Learner Achievement at Primary School Level**

*The National Education Policy*
The National Education Policy of 1986 provides much of the current policy framework for literacy assessments in basic education as well as adult literacy. It was the first time that ‘essential levels of learning’ and ‘minimum levels of
learning’ were talked about in policy documents. This was followed by the constitution of a National Committee to specify the minimum levels of learning (MLL) in 1990. Prof. Dave headed this Committee, which offered clear direction regarding assessment of learning outcomes reflecting the quality of learning at primary level. The focus shifted from inputs and processes to learning outcomes, learning areas, and competencies. The ‘minimum levels of learning’ project focused on competencies around which the teaching-learning process, teaching-learning materials, teacher training, textbook preparation and pupil evaluation were woven. It was a major educational reform which has since been internalised and integrated into almost all the national projects including the District Primary Education Project (DPEP) and the recently launched Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). Launched in 1994, the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) is a major initiative to revitalise the primary education system and to achieve universalisation of primary education. It currently covers about 50 percent of the children at primary stage in India.

**District Primary Education Programme**

In the field of basic education, assessment of literacy levels of school children has been undertaken on a large scale under the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP). Starting with a baseline assessment of learning achievement in children, it was followed up by a mid-term assessment in 1997. These were large, country-wide achievement surveys built upon the two earlier studies on learning achievement, one conducted under the Primary Education Curriculum Renewal (PECR) by NCERT under the guidance of Prof. P.N. Dave, and another by Prof. Snehalatha Shukla. All these achievement surveys are also based on samples of varying sizes and designs. By and large, they have adopted stratified random sample designs. Intensive orientation of test designers and administrators was conducted. The competencies assessed were in the areas of language and arithmetic. Detailed item analysis was done to check the reliability of the tests.

**Minimum Levels of Learning Programme**

In order to arrive at an assessment of the existing learning levels, a baseline assessment study (BAS) was conducted in 1994 in 46 districts covering 8 states. A sample of roughly 50,000 children in 1817 schools was covered in this study. The assessment study intended to profile the learning achievement of primary school students in reading and mathematics at the end of the primary school cycle. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used. Standardised tests were used to assess learning achievement in the subjects of mathematics and reading. Table 4 shows the composition of the learning achievement tests.

**Table 4: Composition of learning achievement test**
Subsequently, in 1997, there was another midterm assessment survey (MAS) in which achievement tests both in literacy and numeracy for Class I students, and in language and mathematics for Classes III and IV were conducted. The assessment had similar sampling design but had minor variations in the weight given to various competencies as compared to the baseline assessment survey. For example, the Class 1 Language Test under MAS focused on the ‘recognition of words’, rather than the ‘recognition of the alphabet’ tested under BAS.

The National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) developed the design, instruments, and framework for data analysis. It also trained master trainers from states who in turn trained field investigators. Since the tests under MAS were slightly different from the earlier test used in the BAS, the results could only be used only to assess the average performance of the students and find out achievement gaps between gender and social groups. To measure improvement in students’ performance over the three-year period the BAS had to be re-administered.

The two assessment surveys conducted by DPEP covered large samples across the country and showed the range of achievement levels. The invaluable database for each district helps make a trend analysis of literacy acquisition. It facilitates midcourse modifications to policy framework and implementation. Since it is done on a nation-wide basis, it provides a broadbrush picture of how students across the nation are performing. When the data is analysed at the district level according to gender and social groups, it becomes easy to identify target groups and poorly performing areas that require more focused attention.
Thus, as in the case of adult literacy, assessments help to better target resources to unreached areas.

A unique feature, which cuts across all these literacy assessment practices, is a very clear delineation of ‘competencies’ and formulation of an easily understood framework for constructing the tests and parallel tests, and guidelines for ensuring that the tests are reasonably reliable and valid. This includes collection of background information on the learners, the village, and other demographic particulars, which could help in further analysis. The fact that there are more than 250 evaluations conducted on the Total Literacy Campaigns by nearly one hundred agencies shows that the country has the capacity to make such assessments on a periodic basis.

While census figures are the most frequently quoted regarding assessment of literacy, they certainly do not reflect the range of literacy acquisition which emerges from assessments made by evaluating agencies under the Campaign and also in the two achievement surveys conducted for basic education. However, the census is the only complete enumeration where the entire population of persons above 7 years is covered. In contrast, other surveys are based on samples. For international comparability, the census figures are taken as the most valid data. Inter-district and inter-state comparability has been achieved to a large extent in India because of the uniform assessment framework, which is being followed across the country by and large.

The literacy assessment practices in formal primary schooling and in non-formal adult learning show a striking similarity. In both cases the framework for assessment is laid own at the national level. Both assessments are based on well-defined learning areas and competencies and are criterion-referenced assessment procedures. However, the major difference is that in the case of DPEP the standardised test designed at national level is translated into different Indian languages. In the case of literacy campaigns, only the framework is standardised. The content of test items is determined by district level groups and is based on district-level teaching-learning materials. This builds in considerably greater contextuality into this mode of assessment.

Both these assessment practices give us a more comprehensive picture of the levels of learning and literacy acquisition than the census data. They offer great opportunity to make further analysis of the results to make these instruments more useful for planning district-level strategies and work towards improvement in preparation of primers, text books, pedagogical skills of the instructors and formulation of test items.

Examples of Innovative Assessment Practices in Two Non-Governmental Organisations
The sixth set of literacy assessment practices relate to non-governmental organisations which have taken up innovative programmes in the field of basic education and non-formal education like ‘Digantar’ in Madhya Pradesh and Indian Institute of Education in Maharashtra.

**Indian Institute of Education**

In an innovative programme, ‘Promoting Primary and Elementary Education’ (PROPEL) launched in Pune in 1979 by the Indian Institute of Education, assessment was made free of stress and progress oriented. Common standardised tests were not favoured because they do not recognise the principle of learning at one’s own pace.

Apart from regular self-evaluation done by students with the help of simple testing materials, a children’s fair is held every five and half a months. Attended by students and instructors from several Non-Formal Education (NFE) centres in the same area, the fair is often the first chance girls have had to go outside their village and take part in a celebration for their age group. The host-village helps organise the fair. The children display their skills in story telling, singing and drawing, games and sports, often rehearsed for several weeks. In the afternoon, children do tests marked by an external teacher on a detailed evaluation sheet. The sheets are used by both students and teachers and give each student a different goal to reach by the end of the next semester. Rather than a device to pass or fail students, the tests are seen as a means for them to assess their own progress and set goals for the next stage of learning. This way, the community also rallies around education; the fair lasts a day and the children take obvious pride and delight in sharing their achievements with an audience that comes from several villages to watch them (Guttmen, Kosonen 1994).

**Digantar**

Digantar, an NGO working in Madhya Pradesh, believes that schools should be run on principles of democratic education. Developing in children an inquisitive attitude is central to the pedagogy in their schools. Conducting learning assessment differently, the organisation has developed a method of monitoring the progress of each child through a rigorous and meticulous system of recording and reviewing students learning. A recent evaluation of this project highlights some salient features of this process.

Digantar has broadly outlined a set of curriculum objectives in the areas of Hindi, Maths, Environmental studies, Handwork, Art and English that they feel that any child should achieve/develop in five years time. Its strongest assumption is that each child has her/his own pace of learning. Their experience has shown that some children can develop these curriculum abilities in 4 years while some may take even 6 years or more. Children who enter at the over the age of 8 may even complete this in 3 years. Both these kinds of children are treated as normal.
The former is not praised, neither is the latter stigmatised. Both are respected and encouraged to enjoy learning and maximise their potential.

Learning is organised with one teacher for a group of 20 to 30 children. Children usually enter at the age of 5, but older children who have never previously been to school or who have dropped out can also join. There is a phase of preliminary activities for every new entrant. Thereafter, the abilities of reading and writing numbers one to twenty and addition and subtraction are taught, and so it progresses to cover the primary school curriculum. Another strong assumption of Digantar philosophy is that knowledge is organised in logical structures. Such organisation gives rise to some school subjects. It is not possible to develop an understanding of any area of knowledge without such a logical structure. Some of these structures, for example in Mathematics, may be fairly linearly sequenced while others like Geography or Environmental Sciences may be organised more in themes and webs. Hence learning material is fairly structured according to these areas of knowledge. The sequence also incorporates a review of earlier concepts, not as tests but entwined in the learning material itself and in exercises for reinforcement.

Thus, each child moves through a learning sequence in Hindi, Maths, Environment, English and Art, at her or his own pace. Over time, this gives rise to a theoretical situation where one teacher may be handling a group with children at the preliminary reading ability while some may be transiting to fluent reading, and still others may be operating at the top end of the spectrum. This can be handled when there is one teacher to 20 students. Practically however, where the teacher needs to plan for each individual child everyday, this can increase the strain. Therefore, the group of teachers has decided that they will review the groups once every year and try to keep each group within one broad level so that the groups are more manageable. For this purpose, three broad levels are indicated - the beginners, the middle group and the top group. There are no rigid defining characteristics for a level - each year the teachers decide on the grouping for that year. The number of groups at the beginners, middle and top levels may also be different in different years or be overlapping. For example, the middle group may range from children in level 7 to those in level 12, while those in the beginners group may range from those in level 2 to those in level 11 (Noronha, Anjani 2001).

While assessment is totally integrated with learning process in ‘Digantar’, the ‘PROPEL’ experiment of Indian Institute of Education showed that literacy assessment can be a very powerful environment building, tool and can contribute to enhanced social accountability if it is made a part of participative joint evaluation and performance based assessment. These two projects are however only illustrative. There are a number of similar initiatives taken up in various parts of the country where assessment has been viewed as an integral part of the total literacy process itself and serves to enhance the motivation levels of the
teachers and the learners. The learning-ladder approach adopted by Rishi Valley School in Andhra Pradesh is a case in point.

**Summing Up**

The present case study of literacy assessment practices in India shows that the national level data collection agencies like the Census and National Sample Survey organisation (NSSO) have been gathering statistics on literacy as a part of larger demographic and socio-economic data gathering exercise. These have been generally accepted as the most authentic figures for assessing literacy and making intra-country comparisons. An innovation introduced by the NSSO in 1991 of administering a literacy test offers interesting insights into how a combining national level data collection with a sample survey of literates could help arrive at more realistic estimates of the levels of literacy attainment.

The second set of major assessment practices documented in this case study relate to the two national programmes, the National Literacy Mission and the District Primary Education Programme. These two assessment techniques are a combination of programme evaluation and assessment of learner achievement. This has been a major departure from the assessment pattern of earlier decades in which the focus used to be on various parameters related to programme effectiveness and rarely on the actual level of literacy attainment of the target group. Evaluations of the National Adult Education Programme for instance, dealt with the duration of the programme, training of instructors, the response of the learners to the programme, the distribution and relevance of teaching learning materials and the impact of adult literacy. There was hardly any objective measurement of actual levels of literacy attained during the duration of the programme.

There was a perceptible change in literacy assessment practices only after 1986 when the National Policy on Education emphasised the need to measure literacy and achievement levels. Assessment practices under the National Literacy Mission incorporate both the formative and summative evaluation of the programme through exercises included in the literacy primers and the end-of-programme evaluation by an external agency. The assessment design incorporates collection of data on background information of the district, village and the individual, as well as an assessment tool for evaluating the literacy level of individuals.

In the case of DPEP, the assessment practice is closely aligned to the programme objective of moving towards higher levels of learner achievement. Earlier studies of learning achievement by Prof. Dave and Prof. Shukla formed the basis for the national policy, and the Dave Committee in 1990 helped...
establish the framework design to measure and achieve minimum levels of learning.

What is common in these two areas of literacy assessment is a clear focus on learning goals and preparation of test instruments based on these identified competencies. Considerable effort had gone into the preparation of these assessment tools. The designers of a test for literacy assessment for school children across the country encountered a number of key issues in trying to design a test for children with diverse socio-economic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Pre-testing, pilot testing, and systematic checks of reliability and validity have been an integral part of the development of testing instruments in the country.

In the case of adult literacy, there has been a similar, though slightly different, process. The basic literacy skills were identified and a framework for test construction was developed at the national level. There was no single national test that was administered as in the case of DPEP or as in the case of the literacy test administered by the NSSO in 1991. Literacy assessment here was done at village level by a team of investigators who administered a test designed by an institution working in close collaboration with a local academic body. The test was based on the literacy primers used in the district. So the language and the culture bias that must have crept in if the test were to be prepared centrally was considerably reduced. There was substantial contextualisation, and the themes and language selected for inclusion in the test paper were familiar to the learners.

The aspect of comparability and the sharebility of these instruments must also be mentioned. In the case of DPEP, there was one single instrument designed at national level, field tested and modified and later translated into a number of languages for use in different states. In the case of the literacy programme, the framework was standardised but the content was varied. The tools developed at the district level were comparable in terms of the overall weight given to various competencies and the clear scoring and reporting pattern of outcomes of the test. In both the NLM and DPEP assessments, the test instruments were criterion-referenced and there was a clear indication of how literacy attainment should be evaluated and graded. This common framework ensured that the results were comparable across the states.

The third set of literacy assessment practices relates to the post-literacy and continuing education programmes of the National Literacy Mission. These are by and large programme evaluations and incorporate impact assessment along with learner assessment. The test of literacy is however an integral part of these two assessments.

The fourth set of literacy assessments outlined in the present case study relates to initiatives taken by certain non-governmental organisations.

The case study also demonstrates that relevant background variables are included in the survey. Questionnaires and quite a few reports incorporate
effective outcomes in terms of attitudes, values, reading references, and the use of library and mass media. This would help study the impact of literacy on other variables.

The sampling design issues have been gone into very carefully, following generally a stratified, two or three stage random sampling design. The assessment designs ensure that the disadvantaged groups and minority populations are adequately represented to make the assessment more reliable, representative and credible. The Arun Ghosh Committee, in the case of adult literacy surveys, and NCERT in the case of DPEP studies, suggested rational and practical ranges of sample sizes. The NLM gave guidelines for checking the sampling error from two sub-samples.

While census enumeration classifies persons as ‘literate’ and ‘non-literate’, efforts in the last fifteen years have tended to look at literacy as a continuum and place the learners on a learning scale. While a range of scores has been indicated, some assessments have categorised the learners slightly differently (‘Good’ to ‘Poor’ and ‘Quite ignorant or levels I, II, III).

Capacity to handle literacy assessments on a large scale is evident. There are nearly 100 institutions that have been engaged in literacy assessment under NLM. The baseline assessment survey and midterm assessment survey of DPEP also involved a large number of personnel both at the national and state levels. Training of investigators and personnel involved in literacy assessment has been an on-going process to build capacity for continuous monitoring and evaluation of programmes as well as conducting literacy assessment tests.

Given the socio-cultural diversity in the country, the principle of designing assessment tools at local levels within a larger national framework seems to be the most appropriate strategy. Since competencies at the elementary stage are fairly simple and comparable across the states, designing a national test for the school stage was a difficult but not an impossible task. Moreover, the test was confined to only two learning areas - language and arithmetic. While functional and life skills are integrated into literacy instruction, to devise appropriate assessment tools for these areas also would possibly be among the next steps.

To sum up, the literacy assessment practices in India are a blend of programmatic evaluations and assessments of individuals’ literacy attainment. There is an overarching national policy seeking to universalise literacy and enhance the quality of learning in schools. This facilitates periodical literacy assessment surveys at various levels. Basic learning competencies have been defined and appropriate measurement tools designed. The learning outcomes measured through these tools can be compared, compiled and further analysed to inform policy formulation and more focused programme implementation.

Notes
The number of primary schools has increased by more than 3 times. The number of upper primary schools increased 15 times and the enrolment at primary stage by 5.9 times, and in the case of girls, the increase was 9.16 times. At the upper primary level, the increase in enrolment during this period was more than 13 times, and in the case of girls, it was about 33 times.

Nearly 3% in rural and 6.5% in urban areas could not read. 12.6% in rural areas and more than 20% in urban areas could not write. 87% could write in urban areas, while only 78% could read.

41 percent of the men in rural areas could do all the arithmetic operations, the percentage was more than 71 percent in urban areas. While only 19 percent of rural women could do these operations, 52 percent in urban areas could.

Professor R.H. Dave is an eminent educationist and former Director of UNESCO, Institute of Education, Hamburg. The Dave Committee laid down the principles, rationale and modalities for literacy assessment, possibly for the first time on such a systematic basis. These guidelines were supplemented by the Arun Ghosh Committee, set up in 1994, which while endorsed the broad principles of the Dave Committee, suggested a framework for evaluation including the objectives, approach and design.

For Class II simple literacy and numeracy tests developed by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) for the Primary Education Curriculum Renewal project were used. For dropouts, simple literacy and numeracy tests were adopted from those employed in the World Bank Research Project in other countries.

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Building Effective MER* Systems for Non-formal Education in the Context of Lifelong Learning

Zia-Us-Sabur

The purpose of this paper is to delineate the achievements and shortcomings in Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting (MER) of adult literacy programmes in Bangladesh. The paper also elaborates on the recent attempts to build on past experience and wealth of information base, in order to develop quality oriented MER systems. These efforts undertaken in Bangladesh demonstrate the need for an institutional mix of government, NGOs, intermediary agencies and communities for establishing MER systems. Effective MER systems are the net results of policies and co-ordinated strategies based on a sound premise, vision and national framework, and backed up by adequate resources.

The evolution towards a holistic approach to literacy in Bangladesh has played a decisive role in influencing policy directions and strategies for implementing literacy, post-literacy and non-formal education programmes in Bangladesh. Effective MER systems need to go beyond mere quantitative target achievements to serve as a management tool for developing policies, strategies, in the framework of a long term NFE vision based on the principles of lifelong learning.

Evolution of Concepts and Terminology

The history of development in Bangladesh has been a very complex process. Bangladesh started off as a war ravaged economy in 1971. At that time the trend

* Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (MER)
of development was largely based on relief and rehabilitation, leading to a proliferation of NGOs. The hope behind such initiatives was that through the institution of small community based organisations the benefits of development interventions could more effectively reach beneficiaries. However, after 30 years it has been observed that even though some have benefited to some extent from micro-finance interventions and various awareness raising programmes, most are not in fact able to emerge as independent self-reliant entities.

There are over 500 NGOs in Bangladesh active in development activities utilising external aid. They face several problems. There is a widespread uncertainty on the continuation of their existence. It is often argued that NGOs often tend to perpetuate the dependency of their beneficiaries. Unfortunately, the issue of NGOs role in empowering communities seldom takes into account the legitimate concerns of development workers. The claim that a progressive shift is taking place from an assistance model to an empowerment model is still a theory. More concerted efforts by the Government of Bangladesh are needed to address the issue of sustainability, as it has implications for viable and replicable MER systems.

Lack of consistent and coherent definitions has been one of the major problems in articulating policy and future directions. The political events and doctrines have largely influenced the definitions. The ultimate objective of governments after Jomtien was to ensure that a maximum number of the adult population is made literate with a minimum amount of time and resources. Even though non-formal modes of delivery were seen as the strategy to provide adult population with basic literacy, it was carried out basically on the principles of formal education; as a result, the non-formal mode of delivery became a cheap form of formal education. Furthermore, the implementation process of basic literacy programmes lacked adequate planning and preparation.

The basic literacy programmes also lacked the element of sustainability in the form of continuing education. As a result over 17 million people were made literate without any additional support to sustain their literacy skills, or to link the acquired skills with economic gains. All these problems have emerged on account of a lack of understanding about non-formal education and its relationship to the basic learning needs of adults. Policy makers are now vigorously revisiting these issues.

A first step in the institutionalisation of adult literacy in Bangladesh took shape with the establishment of the Directorate of Non-Formal Education (DNFE) in 1995 under the Primary & Mass Education Division. For the first time the Government-NGO co-operation took a concrete shape under government leadership. The experiences of NGOs with the people at the grassroots as well as their intimate understanding of the grassroots conditions were utilised to deliver basic literacy. DNFE was given the responsibility to select, contract, monitor and evaluate the functions of the NGOs. This approach is known as Centre Based Approach (CBA). Even though the amount of coverage is somewhat slower under this approach, it provides the NGOs with the strategic advantage of extending
support to beneficiaries that fall under their on-going development programmes. Unfortunately no initiative was taken to establish linkages between acquired literacy skills and economic gains since policy makers solely concentrated their task on basic literacy.

To address this issue, the DNFE implemented an experimental Post-Literacy Continuing Education (PLCE) project with the support of twenty-three NGOs. The project included a three months post literacy phase where the learners were provided basic literacy skills for recollection, retention, and upgrading of the skills acquired through earlier basic literacy intervention. The continuing education phase involved six months of activities that included identification and training of income generation skills, and creating linkages with various credit institutions.

The PLCE experimentation has opened the door to a holistic approach leading towards sustainability. Installation of a functional MER system in this domain is challenging, as it will have to address complex interplay between government, NGOs, private sector, training delivery institutions and above all the market elements. However, it can be safely concluded from the experience that while the scope of MER under PLCE will be much wider and complex, the principles of installing an MER system that measures the effects and impact of programmes by progressively assessing the performances of actors at all levels, essentially remains the same.

Once NFE received recognition it was pushed forward without much consideration for institutional capacity and sustainability of programmes. The experiences of the NGOs and communities also went largely ignored resulting in the duplication of systems and structures thereby creating additional pressure on limited resources.

The concept, which supported the idea that NFE can be implemented on a massive scale in a short period of time with minimum resources with a centralised system, has fallen far short of its objectives. The oversimplification of terminology has resulted in a shortsighted vision and has largely contributed to the installation of MER systems with flawed design.

Clearly defined concepts and terminology are essential to establish effective and efficient MER. The concepts and terminology play a pivotal role in determining what kind of information is to be collected, and the nature of processing, analysis and interpretation of information for effective follow-up and feedback. The formal approach to NFE in Bangladesh has resulted in administrative monitoring which essentially is interested in inputs like; whether the learners have received their materials, whether the teacher has received training, whether the learners are coming to classes etc. This is not to say that this information is not needed, but it only fulfils partial conditions in ensuring quality. To ensure a deeper understanding of the acquisition and application of literacy skills is achieved, information needs to be collected that determines the effects and impact of the programme.
Decentralisation of Monitoring and Evaluation Activities

The existing monitoring and evaluation and reporting for adult literacy programmes are conducted at primarily three levels: Department of Non-Formal Education (DNFE), NGO and the district administration level.

**Monitoring at the central level**
DNFE was established as the outcome of an experimental project known as the Integrated Non Formal Education Project (INFEP) and subsequently embarked on three large adult literacy projects almost simultaneously. So far, 17 million learners have been covered within a period of 7 years. The rate of literacy has increased more than 20 percent over this period.

The main reason for establishing a MER system for adult literacy was to strengthen the institutional capacity of DNFE. To start with, a Management Information System (MIS) section was established with the prime objective to monitor the performance of NGOs. The terms and conditions stipulated in the contracts with the NGOs became the basis for monitoring. A number of DNFE commissioned studies have clearly shown that the problems faced by the MER system are twofold: i) The nature of information collected at the Management Information System section are quantitative in nature and primarily cater to administrative requirements; ii) The huge volume of information collected and its limited analysis do not help managers to make decisions.

The computer programmers have largely created the Management Information System at DNFE with little consultation with NFE implementers creating a highly centralised system that generates a large quantity of information, but does not facilitate the process of decision making. The MER system has, however, been successful in determining the number of centres to be allocated to each NGOs for implementation. The DNFE is attempting to decentralise its office into 6 divisional offices; yet it must to ensure that these decentralisation initiatives are not duplicating existing governmental structures and functions.

The main problem being faced by DNFE at the moment is its lack of professional and financial resources. A redesign of the MER system is required not only to deal with the Total Literacy Mission approach, which is replacing the Centre Based Approach, but also to implement the upcoming Post-literacy and Continuing Education (PLCE) projects. The institutional capacity of DNFE was found wanting in implementing the basic literacy phase, which is a relatively simple field compared to the up coming PLCE projects. The MER system must go beyond the monitoring of training delivery institutions. With the PLCE it requires the ability to further monitor not only credit-providing institutions, but also assess the extent beneficiaries are able to utilise their skills by effectively responding to the market needs.
The district administration monitoring

The central government is also implementing basic literacy under the direct leadership of the district administration. This is a nine-month campaign model to ensure total literacy within a district. However, this model creates extreme pressure on the resources of district administration as the districts have been asked to start TLM as an additional duty to their on-going responsibilities without the provision of additional resources, training, or incentives. Moreover, each district attempts to show that his or her programme is unique. These factors make it difficult to install a uniform and workable MER system.

The capacities of the communities have also not been effectively utilised. There is a Centre Management Committee for each basic literacy and PLCE project, however the Committees have no clear guidelines on their roles and responsibilities and above all no incentives to contribute to centre operations.

Experience has clearly demonstrated that if literacy programmes, in whatever forms and content, are to be made sustainable, it is imperative that the communities progressively take up the responsibility of managing the programmes. Vigorous involvement of the community in the monitoring process enables communities to develop their competency to manage the programmes once support has been discontinued.

Monitoring mechanism at the NGO level

NGOs have their own monitoring mechanism and a long experience in working with people at the grassroots. Broadly speaking, there are three large categories of NGOs in Bangladesh: i) Large NGOs are NGOs with massive investments. Such NGOs can be the size of an entire ministry. These NGOs have become substantially self-sufficient and operate on corporate principles; ii) Medium size NGOs are not very large in number. These NGOs have a relatively better capacity to manage programmes however due to an increasing scarcity of external resources, are mostly interested in expansion rather than assigning importance to quality. iii) Small scale NGOs commonly known as 'briefcase' NGOs are proliferating in numbers. They mainly rely on their individual connections and influences to get projects, but do not have a minimum capacity to manage any kind of development programmes effectively. Ironically, this category of NGOs implements the largest share of NFE programmes.

From NGO experiences, there appears to be direct correlation between the size of NGOs and efficiency. The larger the NGOs, the higher the probability of the NGOs being efficient. Once an NGO achieves a level of credibility, the donors tend to provide increasing support to them to ensure that their investments are well utilised. This has led to a crystallising effect of resource accumulation and the continued growth of efficient NGOs.

NGOs have evolved with the purpose to support and complement government initiatives, yet have been seen by members of the government and media to be replacing government initiatives. The NGOs perceive that the government is
treat them as contractors or as junior partners at best and have been excluded from TLM, where all cross sections of the communities are involved.

The government is however increasingly recognising that the development problems in Bangladesh are too massive to be solved by government alone. It has embarked on two programmes in the domain of PLCE, implemented and monitored by NGOs and supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank. This Government-NGO co-operation in the education sector under the leadership of DNFE is perhaps one of the few good examples were NGOs have been brought together to implement literacy programmes.

**Strengthening Monitoring and Evaluation in the Context of the Total Literacy Mission Project in the Rajbari district**

Recently DNFE commissioned an experimental project to strengthen the MER system in the Rajbari district. The government, through its district administration, is implementing the Total Literacy Mission project. Under this project more than 150,000 learners are to be made literate by the end of this year.

In strengthening the MER system, due attention is to be paid to the definition of NFE as an inclusive, responsive, and flexible process of education. Of great importance is the need for the MER system to be able to assess the desired effects and impacts of literacy programmes in terms of the acquisition and application of literacy skills resulting in the economic emancipation of the rural poor in a sustainable manner.

Implementation of the MER system consists of important steps. Training has to be conducted on the system at all levels (teachers, supervisors, and district administration officials) and retraining has to take place on a monthly basis. Finally the MER system has to be decentralised. Whereas previously all information was sent to the central MIS department, this experiment provides for the processing of information through computers at the upazila level. This has created the possibility for more efficient troubleshooting by information collectors and enables the decentralisation of the decision making process.

*Collection of information*

Information is being collected through a form, which provides the benchmark assessment at each level of the programme, as well as enables comparisons on the progress made during literacy courses. Each form has three parts. Part 1 consists of a personal profile of each level of actor. Part 2 contains information on performance, problems identified, reasons for problems, actions taken and outcomes of the information. Part two also provides a monthly picture of the progress made by the each level of actors. The analysis of information collected in this way provides insights into problems faced and possible solutions and
enables necessary action to keep the programme in its desired track. Part 3 consists of information regarding the final achievement of each level of actors.

The benchmark assessment is a definite improvement over the previous method of collecting and processing information. Instead of processing the information many months after the completion of literacy programmes, information is now processed immediately after the end of the literacy programme, thus making it possible to make timely decisions and adjustments.

Previously DNFE had attempted to process 100 percent of the information collected. Now, a list of centres to be monitored is randomly selected by computer generation in two categories; those to be monitored continuously and new centres randomly selected to be monitored each month. Through such an arrangement it is possible to monitor more than 60 percent of the centres, ensuring that centres in remote areas are also monitored.

**Monitoring indicators**

A large number of findings made in the domain of NFE literacy cannot be substantiated due to an absence of verifiable and measurable indicators. Perhaps the biggest challenge in elaborating indicators is being able to find the right evidence on inputs, processes and outputs.

While inputs related to provision of materials are relatively easy to identify, process related indicators are indeed very difficult to identify. This is due to the fact that processes are a sum total of activities and events that lead towards the accomplishment of tasks. Similarly, while it is relatively easy to identify quantity-based outcomes of the project, it is difficult to find indicators that clearly determine the effects and impact of a project.

In the case of basic literacy, the immediate output or result of the project would mean scoring an expected level on a test at the end of the course. The ability to comprehend, and the willingness to carry out, various ‘quality of life’ enhancing activities, for instance, buying, using, and maintaining a community tube-well, show effects and impact. Impacts refer to the benefits derived by the individuals or community as a result of practising acquired skills, for instance, increase of income, reduction of infant mortality, and reduction in occurrences of water-borne diseases.

The existing MER system does not address these factors comprehensively.

**Follow-up and feedback**

An effective and efficient MER system ought to be 'simple' and 'user-friendly' in order to be able to identify problems in a timely and manageable fashion to facilitate decision making.

Experience suggests very clearly that grassroots operators like teachers, supervisors, and Centre Management Committees, known as the core groups can largely deal with application of literacy. Experience also suggests that an Information Processing Centre can be established at the sub-district level to support the decision making process. If this can be implemented successfully, it
will mean significant steps towards effective decentralisation of the MER system. This will relieve the huge burden of processing information at the centre.

**Role of MER Systems in Policy Development and Technical Support Initiatives**

*Macro level policy*

Diagram 2 shows how the combination of MER and research and development can help to transform information into applied knowledge at the policy, strategy, and implementation level. Clearly, the role of MER systems has to be seen from a macro level policy dimension rather than a narrowed operational perspective alone.

*Standarisation*

An effective MER mechanism can only be developed when properly assessed standards are determined at the input, process, and output stages of the programme. As the project is implemented, new experiences accumulate and standards need to be revisited. Diagram 1 shows the process of standardisation required to install an effective MER within an organisation.

**Diagram 1: The process of standardization for installing an effective MER system**

- Clear articulation of organizational vision and mission
- Setting standards for DNFE’s departmental performance….
- ….and performance standard of literacy delivery at different management levels and functions
- Programme review on the basis of lessons learned
- Implementation of literacy projects
- Installation of MER system
Diagram 2: A thematic outline of managing knowledge through combined functions of MER systems and R & D
Transfer of skills – the changing role of technical assistance

The co-ordination of technical assistance has been beset with problems. Since technical assistance teams do not have executive authority, they must rely on the approval of DNFE decision-makers. These decision-makers however have terms of a short duration and therefore are reluctant to undertake any major initiatives. As a result, the transfer of capacities to DNFE in a sustainable manner is impossible. Diagram 3 shows the cycle of technical support. To ensure the continuation of the cycle, it is indeed important that maximum participation of the stakeholders is established from the outset and that the ownership of the knowledge is transferred to the stakeholders.

Diagram 3: The cycle of technical assistance support

Stage 1: Factors largely within the control of TAs

Stage 2: Factors largely not within the control of TAs

Conclusions

Over the years Bangladesh has acquired vast experience in the field of literacy, post literacy and continuing education through non-formal modes of delivery. These experiences have created a wealth of an information base over a period spanning 30 years. The paper has shown that the challenge of adult and lifelong learning in Bangladesh is to integrate these experiences into pragmatic plans leading towards worthwhile action. The paper has also demonstrated the need for multiple institutions, involving government, NGOs and community groups, in the creation of effective monitoring, evaluation and reporting systems. The purpose of MER systems has been clearly highlighted in terms of its threefold function. Firstly, it is a tool for operational purposes at micro level functioning. Secondly, it has a macro level function of being a potent tool for facilitating the process of policy and strategy. Thirdly, it can provide critical information to strengthen technical support initiatives in the form of training and human
resource development plans. Both the macro and micro-level functions can be achieved by linking MER and research and development.

References


Developing the measurement of lifelong learning is a major forward-looking monitoring initiative that will have a considerable impact on the advancement towards a learning society. Based on the work and progress made by the Task Force on Measuring Lifelong Learning (TFMLL), this paper attempts to generate further reflections on a number of additional practical issues that will have to be addressed when it comes to the stages of planning and implementing the collection of data on lifelong learning.

Definition and Scope of Lifelong Learning

The Task Force on Measuring Lifelong Learning based its work on the European Union’s definition of lifelong learning, which ‘encompasses all purposeful learning activity, whether formal or informal, undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence. Within this definition, correct interpretation of the term ‘ongoing’ will have practical implications when it comes to actually measuring lifelong learning and determining what kind of learning should be included, or excluded during the European Labour Force Survey and other surveys. Here, the interpretation of ‘ongoing’ refers to ‘the elements of duration and continuity’ and ‘in principle without any lower duration limits’ embodies certain contradictions, hence may need further clarifications.

Concerning the scope of lifelong learning, the TFMLL agreed that purposeful learning can in principle be divided into three categories: formal education, non-formal education, and informal learning (including family-directed, socially directed and self-directed learning), which constitutes the priority categories to be measured. It may be kept in mind that from both a conceptual as well as empirical
point of view, lifelong learning also encompasses random learning which can occur at anytime and any place: during a conversation; when glancing through an article; watching a television programme; observing a phenomenon; or even when going from one place to another. Learning can occur either spontaneously or after a period of reflection and assimilation and may be neither necessarily purposeful nor organised for learning. The measurement of random learning can present considerable difficulties, yet it is nevertheless suggested that future work on measuring lifelong learning does not lose sight of this important part of learning.

How to best implement the currently defined scope of lifelong learning during actual measurement requires considerable additional conceptual and methodological work. Whilst the scope, definitions, and classifications of formal education have been more or less clearly specified in the ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education), further clarifications of the definitions and classifications of ‘types of education’, ‘modes of delivery and ‘providers of education’ will be needed to provide a conceptually correct and comparable basis for measuring lifelong learning that includes non-formal education and informal learning, if not also random learning.

Diagram 1: Scope of Education and Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Random learning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Formal education</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Family, socially, or self-directed)</td>
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<td>(Media and communication)</td>
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Conscious of the complexities and difficulties in measuring all types of learning/education, UNESCO started in 1990 to develop the statistical measurement of non-formal education through the organisation of two expert meetings and the preparation of a Manual for Statistics on Non-formal Education. A number of preliminary criteria have been identified for characterising and distinguishing between formal and non-formal education. It emerged from the work of the TFMLL that within the concept of lifelong learning throughout life, those criteria such as: age, institutional framework, channel and mode of delivery,
admission requirements, registration, and full or part-time learning are of only secondary relevance to the measurement of lifelong learning. Whereas, the key criteria for distinguishing between formal and non-formal education should focus on learning objectives, contents, methods and organisation, in particular the level-grade structure, academic year and minimum duration, even though these are also becoming less rigid nowadays.

One may bear in mind that in actual learning situations and educational delivery, the three categories of formal and non-formal education and informal learning often overlap and there are many borderline cases which can vary from country to country, and from location to location within countries.

For example, in some countries, the lack of government capacity to provide basic education opportunities to all school-age children has encouraged NGOs, local communities and private bodies to organise alternative basic education programmes for out-of-school children and youth (those who either never enrolled or dropped out of school). These programmes do not necessarily follow the regular basic education grade structure and schedule and are frequently not considered to be regular and formal education, even though successful completion of some of them may lead to recognition of level and grade equivalence to formal basic education. Some national governments are attempting to ‘formalise’ these programmes by providing pedagogical and resource support as well as formal recognition, whereas certain local governments are ‘de-formalising’ their regular basic education by introducing flexibility in its contents, methods and modes of delivery to cater to different learning needs and situations.

Of course there remain numerous purposeful and organised non-formal educational and training activities that take place in the workplace, community centres, professional associations and other non-educational institutions that clearly do not match the characteristics of formal education. It will be crucial that these activities be included within the ambit of the measurement of lifelong learning, to the extent that they can be rigorously and meaningfully measured.

Neither are the distinctions between informal learning and formal and non-formal education water-tight. By including family-directed, socially-directed and self-directed learning, informal learning clearly emphasises the purposefulness of the learning activity, and to some extent also an organised nature in that it is either the learner, parents or family members, the local community, or some other social organisation that organises the learning activity. Taking the case of a person following a distance-learning programme organised by an Open University, it will be quite feasible to collect data on this participation from both the learner and from the Open University. But in the case of a father giving additional mathematics lessons to his child during the evening, or a young person taking part in a social initiation activity in the local community, it may not be easy nor reliable to systematically collect the relevant data. Besides, for measurement purposes (also see following sections on Priority Information Needs, and Data Sources and Channels), one may have to be very careful in
distinguishing between the perspectives of learners and of providers, especially when it is about participation in less organised and less institutionalised forms of learning activities.

These go to show that there remains considerable conceptual, methodological and practical issues in measuring lifelong learning which will have to be taken into account when it comes to actual development and implementation of the measurement process. One way to proceed may be to pragmatically inventory and analyse existing concepts, practices and emerging issues, and to distil the particularities and commonalities so as to begin establishing more and more universally applicable criteria, norms and measurement methods. It will be essential to combine these developments with further work on the revision of ISCED regarding types of education, education providers and modes of delivery.

**Priority Information Needs**

Initial efforts to measure lifelong learning must be preceded by a clear identification of the policy information needs. Policy documents from UNESCO have given indications that, based on a learner-centred approach, the measurement of lifelong learning will have to place special emphasis on gauging the demand for various types of learning opportunities by different population groups in different geographical locations, and the extent to which such demands are satisfied (Delors 1996, World Education Forum 2000). To do so, more refined measurement of people’s motivation to learn, their knowledge of available learning opportunities, and of their quality and accessibility, as well as past and present levels of access and participation in lifelong learning can provide salient answers to these questions regarding how well supply matches demand.

Of particular interest and importance in the measurement of lifelong learning will be information about the efficiency, effectiveness and quality of the learning process from the perspectives of both the learners and the providers. Such measurement may cover aspects regarding the degree of correspondence of learning objectives between the learners and the programme design; the relevance and quality of learning content, materials and methods; the effectiveness of educational delivery and learning methods; and the speed and depth of knowledge and skill assimilation among the learners.
A third major policy information area is no doubt the outcomes and impact of lifelong learning, in both the narrow sense with regard to the learner’s personal development and well-being, more broadly, about its impact on general social, economic and cultural development of the society and nation. On the learner’s side, this may include data on the his/her performance while participating in the learning activity, completion/non-completion of the learning objectives, plus periodic follow-up monitoring of changes in the person’s knowledge and competencies, occupation, employment and income, access to further learning opportunities, culture and leisure, and other salient aspects of quality of life. Such information on personal learning outcomes will on the one hand help the providers of lifelong learning to better cater to the learning needs and expectations, and on the other hand pave the way for more responsive policies on lifelong learning with the dual vision of promoting individual growth together with developing the communities, society and the nation.

To the extent possible and subject to further clarification of the definitions of formal, non-formal and informal education/learning, it will be a policy priority to understand the relative shares, contributions and complementarity among these learning channels in terms of capacity, quality, learners’ participation and learning outcomes, so as to lead to more balanced and effective lifelong learning policies, strategies and measures.

The processes of planning and implementing the measurement of lifelong learning must therefore be preceded by a clear determination of the priority information needs before examining the possible data sources and channels, as well as feasible and rigorous ways to collect, analyse and interpret the data.
Data Sources and Channels

Lifelong learning is an all-pervasive and broad-based activity that takes different forms, caters to different learning needs of people of different ages, gender, ethnic, linguistic and religious groups, educational attainment, occupation, income and social status, and takes place in all kinds of places and at any time. It is only plausible that its monitoring and measurement will have to resort to a multitude of data sources and channels.

Possible data sources for the measurement of lifelong learning can in general be categorised into two types: individual persons (learners and non-learners) and providers of lifelong learning opportunities (schools, universities, business enterprises, adult learning centres, professional associations, local communities, NGOs, private bodies, etc.). Each type of data source lends itself more readily to particular channels and modes of data collection, and responds to specific policy information needs.

Diagram 3: Measuring Lifelong Learning - Data Sources & Channels

For example, individual persons are often monitored through population censuses and demographic surveys including household surveys and labour force surveys. Whereas, providers of lifelong learning can be covered by various sectoral surveys such as education, business, industrial, or agricultural surveys, as well as other social surveys that collect data from institutions and agencies known to provide education and training. Among the priority policy information needs outlined above, it can be said that surveys of individual persons can be more effective in collecting data on demand, access, participation, the learning process, and learning outcomes. Additional questions may also be introduced to identify
the reasons for participation and non-participation, and to gather learners’ perception of the relevance and quality of the learning activities. Longitudinal follow-up surveys of individual former learners can be particularly useful in gauging the impact of lifelong, learning activities. A major limitation of this data channel is its inability to provide comprehensive information on the level of supply of lifelong learning opportunities, plus it relies on self declaration, recall from memory, and personal impressions when it comes to the perception of quality and relevance.

Complementing the above surveys of individuals, surveys of providers of lifelong learning opportunities will above all help to assess the level of supply, access, and participation. The surveys also assess the correspondence of existing capacities with demand so as to indicate gaps, shortfalls and/or over-supply so that appropriate regulatory mechanisms can be put into action to re-directing learning resources. Besides enabling the building of comprehensive databases of providers of lifelong learning and of trainers/educators/facilitators for promoting access and participation, such surveys can go into more detailed data about the quality of human and material resource inputs into the organisation of lifelong learning activities. The survey can also provide more detail on the effectiveness of the learning process and learning outcome in terms of the number of learners who succeeded in completing each activity.

It can therefore be seen that both data sources and channels will have to be utilised in order to constitute a more balanced, comprehensive and meaningful understanding of what is happening in lifelong learning, so as to lead to sound policy and decision-making. In addition, one has to be mindful of the possibility that a variety of practical problems can occur during data collection using either channel. One of these problems relates to the criteria and norms to be applied in determining whether a certain learning activity qualifies as a lifelong learning activity, hence is to be included in the surveys.

### Types of Non-Formal Education

- Adult literacy programmes
- Basic education for out-of-school population
- Functional literacy and life-skill training
- Agricultural extension and rural development
- Production and service trade training
- Non-formal tertiary education
- Language and communication skills training
- Religious education
- Culture and leisure education
For example, while organised educational programmes by academic year and semesters are clearly covered under the measurement of lifelong learning, should the surveys include a half-day seminar on a specific topic as a lifelong learning event? Or a visit to the museum? Or the act of watching a documentary film on television about penguins in the Antarctic? It can be noticed that there can be a wide range of activities spreading across formal and non-formal education and informal and random learning that require very clear-cut operational criteria and norms to serve as the basis for correctly determining whether they should be included or excluded during the measurement of lifelong learning. Can a certain minimum duration of learning be one of these criteria? Or should such measurement be limited to only organised learning programmes as defined in the ISCED, excluding any ad hoc and short-term learning activities?

In developing the monitoring of non-formal education, UNESCO advocates the adoption by each country of a pragmatic approach in cumulatively building a database of non-formal educational institutions and programmes, beginning with existing types of non-formal education for, which information is available, to gradually expand to include information on other types and sub-types, to develop a standard typology of non-formal education (UNESCO 1997). This approach can be applied by some of those countries interested in developing the measurement of lifelong learning, so that they may feedback experiences, problems, issues and solutions to both UNESCO and Eurostat.

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Key Competencies for Lifelong Learning

Adama Ouane

This paper deals with lifelong learning as a concept and practice and highlights its implications for key competencies. Key competencies are analysed from the dual angle of personal fulfilment and realisation of social responsibility. A particular emphasis will be laid on personal and individual dimensions as well as the requirement for citizenship and participation in community life. Special emphasis will be given to enlarge the definition adapted by the Definition and Selection of Competencies, (DeSeCo) project (OECD/SFOD/DeSeCo 2001) in which individual and workplace dimensions are slightly overweighing the others, in spite of the clear acknowledgement of the importance attached to both dimensions.

The role of various learning institutions will be examined in relation to their contribution in forming, transmitting and renewing key competencies for lifelong learning. Here again, in contrast to the excessive importance given to school and formal education, this paper will underline the contribution of adult and non-formal learning modalities.

Coping with the Challenges of Today’s World

Lifelong learning

Lifelong learning is a continuous process beginning at birth and providing learning opportunities over a life span to communities, individuals and organisations, who are confidently able to handle and make use of them and contribute to their creation and transformations. The idea of lifelong learning rests upon integrating learning and living both horizontally across family, community, study, work, leisure, and ‘life spaces’ and vertically from birth to old age.
According to Yeaxlee, it is reflected in the knowledge, experience, wisdom, harmony and self-realisation rooted in the practical affairs of ordinary men and women (Yeaxley 1929: 165). Learning itself has been defined as a basic need. The World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) held in Jomtien in 1990, defined basic education as a foundation of lifelong learning and an education aimed at meeting basic learning needs of all. In the Declaration of this Conference ‘basic learning needs comprise both essential learning tools (such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy and problem solving) and the basic learning content (such as knowledge, skills, values and attitudes) required by human beings to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions, and to continue learning.’

As Suchodolsky puts it, the concept of lifelong learning is based ‘on the idea that the continuous development of man (and woman) forms an integral part of his existence’ (Dave 1976: 65). Dewey had the same expectation from the education of children and adult learning: ‘To prepare him (the child) for future life means to give him command of himself…so that he will have the full and ready use of all his capacities’ (Dewey 1966: 27).

The concept of lifelong learning embraces the basic notion of relating school, but also out of school and adult learning to the whole sphere of life. It makes the significant idea of recognising all life’s situations, institutions and professions. From the Faure Report, Learning to be in 1972 to the Delors 1996 Report Learning: The Treasures Within, it has been recognised that lifelong learning is integral to a meaningful human life, which could equip people to tackle the challenges they face throughout their lives. An individual must be able to act upon his or her life and have the capacity to perform, with ease and self-control, the roles and functions expected from and demanded by different situations. He/she must be able to live as a family member, worker, member of society, citizen of a nation and ideally as a world citizen. Conversely, a society or its collective constituencies - communities, groups, families - should be inclined towards learning and mastering competencies, skills, know-how, wisdom, attitudes and values of conviviality, respect and ‘learnablity’. Longworth and Davies of the European Lifelong Learning Initiative offer a definition of lifelong learning based on the needs of individuals or groups and the processes that make lifelong learning important to them in all situations: ‘Lifelong learning is the development of human potential through a continuously supportive process which stimulates and empowers individuals to acquire all the knowledge, values, skills and understanding they will require throughout their lifetimes and to apply them with confidence, creativity and enjoyment in all roles, circumstances and environments’ (Longworth 2001: 592).

Adopting lifelong learning as the new paradigm for education and learning in the 21st century is not adopting a slogan or opting for an abstract ‘edutopia’. It implies defining in each particular context, sometimes for each individual learner
or group of learners, the understanding and concrete response to the question of goals, content and learning modalities.

According to the report of the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V), ‘the objectives of youth and adult education, viewed as a lifelong learning process, are to develop the autonomy and the sense of responsibility of people and communities, to reinforce the capacity to deal with the transformations taking place in the economy, in culture and in society as a whole, and to promote coexistence, tolerance and the informed and creative participation of citizens in their communities, in short to enable people and communities to take control of their destiny and society in order to face the challenges ahead’ (UIE 1997).

It is essential that approaches to adult learning be based on people’s own heritage, culture, values and prior experiences and that the diverse ways in which these approaches are implemented enable and encourage every citizen to be actively involved and to have a voice.

**Competencies**

*Conceptual and methodological issues*

Competence is defined in Webster’s dictionary as ‘fitness or ability’. Words given as synonyms or related terms are ‘capability’, ‘capacity’, ‘efficiency’, ‘proficiency’ and ‘skill’. There are basically three conceptions of the nature of competence. The first, probably most widely held concept is task based or behaviourist. Competence is thus, conceived in terms of discrete behaviour associated with the completion of atomised tasks (Edwards 1996: 247). The second approach is a generic attempt to identify, analyse and to map general attributes that are needed to perform a concrete job optimally. The third concept seeks to establish a synthesis between these two approaches.

Nonetheless, competency is interpreted as the possession of and actual capacity to use some skills in order to learn, to do something or to reach an aim. This applies to individual dispositions or to the distribution of such dispositions within a social group or an institution.

The way competencies are defined matter much, as their selection condition and determine validation and assessment criteria and benchmarks. However, what seems still more important in the definition and selection criteria is the ultimate use of competence, its manifestation in the form of performance or other attributes.

In this regard, the question statement of the DeSeCo project, namely what competencies are needed for the individual to lead a successful and responsible life, and for contemporary society to face present and future challenges, raises some fundamental issues, that will be dealt with in this paper.

The first question that needs to be asked is whether competencies are primarily for individual success, or are competencies needed mainly for a
fulfilling social and community life and for carrying out social responsibility? It is suggested that social reasons for fostering lifelong learning are as powerful as personal reasons and both aspects should be given equal consideration in defining key competencies.

Although this dimension was taken into account and analysed in the DeSeCo project, most current research and current conceptual assessments on this question are concentrating on the individual dimension and only giving passing reference to the social implications. It is therefore being suggested that more emphasis should be put on how to widen the social dimension as well. This is very important, as it conditions life itself and compels individuals and communities to purposefully acquire competencies, skills and attitudes in order to face and master real as well as virtual life situations.

Similarly, the normative, generic and derivational definition of competence will conflict with an inductive search of the same competence in real situation. It is not enough to ask how competence is defined in general; rather it is essential to ask how competence is defined in particular situations, and how are the normative agreements constructed. An equally difficult issue is defining and selecting competence in relation to future and even unknown jobs and changing social and personal relations, rather than in relation to current jobs, lifestyles and social relations alone. This means taking into account the future social and work relations, and the implications that technology and complex process changes are having on them. This exercise, however, can be particularly perilous, as assumptions about human beings contain an element of unpredictability.

**Development of key competencies for lifelong learning**

The term ‘generic’ emphasises key competencies. What key competencies are needed by individuals, groups and society in order to lead happy and fulfilling and successful lives and to promote a sense of well-being in today’s society? Although it must be said that no term is more difficult to define than happiness, it appears to be the ultimate goal, the raison d’être of individuals and groups. However, success entails both accomplishments in terms of personal development and happiness as well as leading enlightened, accomplished lives beyond the world of work and wealth creation, and placing value on interaction with other citizens, peers, family members and workers, as well as understanding oneself and one’s surroundings and actions.

These key competencies seen from an individual’s standpoint imply empowerment and self-fulfilment and the capacity to be a part of heterogeneous groups and strive for common goals. They can also be perceived from a social point of view to mean cohesion, happiness, well-being and the good functioning of a group. It also means how individuals should perform in order collectively arrive at self-empowerment, self-expression and happiness. These points of view are often opposed to one another, but are actually different sides of the same coin.

The concept of key competencies assumes that individuals and societies share important basic or universal characteristics, which need to be emphasised over and above the differences in lifestyles as well as cultural and societal differences.
For instance, the capacity for autonomous action is an element of the human condition and not dependant upon any particular society or culture.

However, most activities over the life course take place in a variety of contexts (political process, social networks and interpersonal relations including family life), and sectors of human existence. Therefore, it is in the context of these different life situations that key competencies need to be adapted and contextualised. The individual must be able to be a worker, a family member, a citizen in the community, and a member of a religious group.

When defined generically, key competencies can be referred to as general competencies which presuppose that the human being is most importantly a social being rather than an isolated individual. The foremost key competency is to live with dignity as a human and social being, as a citizen and then as an employee, a worker and an entrepreneur. It implies that individuals need to act critically in order to change the conditions of inequality, poverty, dependency and deviant behaviour. Key competencies need to be viewed as a constellation of interrelated competencies.

Key competencies cut across all ages, gender, and different statuses. Some of them, like critical thinking or respect for the others, must be learned at a very early age and developed throughout life. They are the base, upon which other competencies can be built. They open the door to mastery of other competencies and are also multifunctional. They are all encompassing. The development of key competencies through and for lifelong learning can help to create a harmonious society where equality and democracy rather than conflict and injustices dominate.

From the point of view of the individuals this package of key competencies is related to their success in personal and professional life as well as their capacity to contribute and profit from group and social life. Success has to be seen not only in relation to possessions, wealth and work, but in relation to being, feeling, relating to others and living together. The idea of success is not only the accomplishment of a happy working life, but also the creation of a self-fulfilling life outside the world of work and wealth creation.

In the context of groups, key competencies cannot be assessed and established by the sheer sum of the achievements of its individual members, but rather these must result from holistic and integrated indicators of living together, respect and tolerance of differences and diversity, and active participation in community, group, work and social life.
Identification of Key Competencies

The following key competencies pertain to both individual success and group and social performance.

**Communicating**

Communicating is the ability to express, listen, hear, document, convey, argue and analyse using various communication tools. The ability to communicate belongs a set of tools of which literacy is the base and the meta-tool. *Literacy* is both a process and a product and as such can be singled out as a key competence in itself. Literacy is a gateway to fuller participation in social, cultural, political and economic life. Through literacy individuals can function more effectively in their societies. Literacy is an evolving concept. It includes communication skills that are not necessarily related to reading and writing, but also include other interactive skills, including orality and the new digital modes of communication and other skills such as logical and critical thinking, problem posing and problem solving. This package of skills could be classified under a broad denomination of basic foundations for learning skills.

Communication is the means by which individuals and groups understand who they are, what they do and believe, in relation to the family, community and workplace. Communicating entails a process implying the establishment of human contact for exchanging information, thoughts and experiences. It also implies a product or outcome of the process, which is manifested in a common identity, group membership and accepted norms that guide behaviour. It is only when individuals access information directly, when they autonomously and critically select, assess, use and value overt and covert messages, can they be said to have the ability to manage and create the conditions of living together with others, function in socially heterogeneous groups and participate directly in a group. The ability to communicate should not be narrowly reduced to communication deriving from communication technology or from the communication sciences. Rather it is the individual and social ability to transact messages and contents with others that is implied in its use. It also entails a capacity to be critical and selective in the use of information. Therefore it is inseparable from critical thinking, negotiation and co-operation skills.

The individual dimension of this competence has been referred to and documented abundantly. It has to be stressed that groups, communities, whole societies and nations also need to master and use this key competence for expressing their collective identities, wishes and priority concerns in relation to others.

The ability to communicate is fundamental to the development of other competencies such as the ability to live together, ability to positively relate to others and communicate effectively for current and future activities. Creativity is also an important attribute for communicating within a group. The enhancement of group and community identity depends on the ability of the group to express
itself and interact as a cohesive unit, and to share and convey concerns, demands, claims, identity features and future projects that distinguish different groups from each other. Social groups are permanently in need of stabilising their internal cohesion while confronting and solving issues and tensions to transform themselves.

Another competence which is closely related to the ability to communicate is key competence of communicating in the mother tongue, in national languages or foreign languages. The mastery of languages is a key element of this competence. In the context of the current digital revolution, the ability to use ICTs is integral to this key competence. Their importance is growing at such a pace that they are increasingly being recognised as key competencies in themselves.

**Being able to live together**

This is the capacity to develop an understanding of other people and otherness in general. It is the ability to appreciate and respect values of pluralism, mutual understanding and peace. Experience shows that it is not enough to organise contact and communication between members of different groups that are in competition with each other or have an unequal ranking in society. Such contact can inflame latent tensions and degenerate into conflict. On the other hand, if contact takes place in an egalitarian context, and there are common objectives and shared purposes, then prejudices and latent hostility can dwindle and give way to more relaxed co-operation. It would seem therefore, that learning involves two complementary paths: on one hand it entails the gradual discovery of others, and on the other, it means experience of shared purposes throughout life. Learning in this double sense is the most effective way of avoiding or preventing latent conflicts (Delors 1996: 92).

Living together is the capacity to establish partnerships between equals and to be ready for a dialogue. ‘Dialogue is not merely a set of techniques for...enhancing communications, building consensus, or solving problems. It is based on the principle that conception and implementation are intimately linked with a core of common meaning. During the dialogue process, people learn how to think together...in the sense of occupying a collective sensibility, in which the thoughts, emotions and resulting actions belong not to one individual, but to all of them together’ (Senge 1994: 358). Being able to live together is also the willingness to take responsibility not only for oneself, but for others as well.

The result of learning to live together is decent work and living conditions and positive attitudes to cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity. The ability to live together is closely related to the key competency of communicating. Communicating and understanding the different views and perspectives of others is an important factor in conflict resolution. Other related competencies are understanding, flexibility, tolerance and ability to manage interpersonal and group conflicts. Conflicts often arise when individuals or groups with varying belief systems come together on a task. Managing interpersonal conflict is the ability to identify sources of conflict between individuals and groups and to take
steps to overcome disharmony. Also the ability to negotiate is important for finding acceptable solutions to conflicts. It requires rule-guided co-operation, and ability for team-based working arrangements. As the New Zealand report of the DeSeCo projects states: ‘While the concept of joining and functioning in socially heterogeneous groups is important, it is equally important that heterogeneity is not to be understood as leading to assimilation within the dominant culture. In many contexts like in the New Zealand one it is more a matter of acknowledging and valuing cultural differences and their diversity, than overcoming them’. (OECD/SFOD/DeSeCo 2001: 273-290). Heterogeneity is not conflictual in itself and therefore should be valued positively.

Critical thinking
This is the capacity to understand, appreciate and value the meaning of facts, as well as hidden and covert actions and intentions. It is also the capacity to judge, to draw conclusions and to act purposefully and value and behave accordingly. It implies reflection and acting autonomously. To take critical distance, express compassion, to be able to doubt, express solidarity, but also revolt in the face of inequality, oppression, discrimination and unequal treatment, poor living conditions, manipulation and corruption. A critical reflection of the conditions and circumstances as well as values and customs are crucial for developing a vision for transforming the negative conditions into better conditions of life, better relations within groups, and tolerance and respect for other groups. The linkages between the individual attributes and the transformatory group dynamic, between mentality and action is critically essential. Critical thinking is both a cognitive and behavioural attribute.

Being able to change and adapt to change
This is the capacity to direct changes and deal with the transformations taking place in the society as a whole, as well as the ability to face the challenges ahead. We have to learn to change as well and to accept change; individuals need to learn to adapt to change, but also act as agents of positive change and proactively direct or re-direct change for human well being and development. Today, one of the major purposes of lifelong learning is to adapt to rapid changes and uncertainties. ‘Flexibility, team work, entrepreneurship, autonomy, and even creativity and problem solving skills are needed for being able to change. The idea of individuals and social groups taking part, deciding and actively controlling the nature and direction of such changes, is for the most part absent from political, social and educational discourse’ (Torres 2002).

Critical thinking and creativity as well as innovation and risk taking are important competencies in regard to technological advances, social progress. Senge mentions aspirations as being an important capacity for change. ‘Aspiration is the capacity of individuals, teams and eventually larger organisations to orient themselves toward what they truly care about, and to change because they want to, not just because they need to.’ (Senge 1994: 18).
Learning is a response to change, but it also creates it; learning is a mechanism of adaptation, but it also the capacity to evoke it.

Creativity
Creativity is both individual and social. It is linked to both thinking and acting processes, as well as to aesthetic expression. It is the clearest manifestation of human freedom to express beliefs and thoughts. It is the achievement of something new, which transforms the field of endeavour in a significant way. Amabile describes creativity ‘as the confluence of intrinsic motivation, domain-relevant knowledge and abilities and creativity relevant skills. The creativity relevant skills includes: a) a cognitive style that involves coping with complexities and breaking one’s mental set during problem solving, b) knowledge of heuristics for generating novel ideas, such as trying a counterintuitive approach and c) a work style characterised by concentrated effort, an ability to set aside problems and high energy’ (Amabile 1983).

According to the theory of Sternberg and Lubart creativity requires a confluence of six distinct but interrelated resources: intellectual abilities, knowledge, style of thinking, personality, motivation and environment (Sternberg and Lubart 1999: 10-11). ‘Three intellectual abilities are particularly important: a) the synthetic ability to see problems in new ways and to escape the bounds of conventional thinking, b) the analytic ability to recognise which of one’s ideas are worth pursuing and which are not; and c) the practical-contextual ability to know how to persuade others of …the values of one’s ideas. The confluence of these three abilities is also important. Analytic ability used in the absence of the other two results in powerful critical but not creative thinking. Synthetic ability in the absence of the other two results in new ideas that are not subjected to the scrutiny required, first to evaluate their promise and second, to make them work. And practical-contextual ability in the absence of the other two may result in the transmittal of ideas not because the ideas are good, but rather because they have been well and powerful presented’ (Sternberg and Lubart 1999: 11).

Creativity is closely related to flexibility and the ability to adapt to and direct change. Creativity means taking risks and finding new connections between old ideas by adapting them to current ideas and preparing for the future. Being able to find new solutions to problems, being able to wonder, to speculate, also belong to creativity. Creative thinking and critical thinking are often contrasted. According to R.S. Nickerson ‘creative thinking is expansive, innovative, inventive, unconstrained thinking. It is associated with exploration and idea generation. It is daring, inhibited, fanciful, imaginative, free-spirited, unpredictable, and revolutionary. Critical thinking is focused, disciplined, logical, constrained thinking. It is down to earth, realistic, practical, staid, dependable, conservative’ (Nickerson 1999: 397). It is reasonable to assume that both competencies need to be developed simultaneously.
How to Develop Competencies for Lifelong Learning?

Key competencies for both individual and social performance have to be acquired, consolidated, renewed and transmitted in several educational institutions. This is the main purpose of lifelong learning and the key tool is the acquisition of ‘learning to learn’ skills. Learning to learn skills are the foundation for lifelong learning and imply the competency to assess how new tasks can be tackled, the capacity to transfer competencies to a new situation, and the readiness to engage in a task-oriented activity. Societies and nations have devised specific learning and training institutions to prepare their citizens and individuals for the development of these key competencies.

While the role of formal institutions in the transmission, use and mastery of key competencies is widely documented, there has been very little attention given to the complementary role of non-formal and informal institutions.

**Formal institutions**

School and higher education institutions have the task of educating present and future generations, transmitting values and norms and maintaining social harmony. The school is the place par excellence to forge the competencies, skills, attitudes for critical thinking, autonomous behaviour, curiosity and innovation but it often tends to be cut off from other sectors, such as the social sector.

School is endowed with the prime function to develop and transmit key competencies expected by society for today’s stability and tomorrow’s transformation. While this contribution is widely presented in the literature concerned, the role of other learning institutions particularly adult and non-formal education, and the contributions of learning spaces and informal settings such as the family, community and media, workplace and related competencies have not been adequately covered.

Although there is a high demand for key competencies such as communicating, critical thinking, being able to live together, creativity, as well as the ability to mobilize innovation and change, from graduates of higher education, these are the least in supply. It is essential therefore that programmes on key competencies should be developed that lay the foundations for lifelong learning. Society must motivate students to learn.

While the notion of learning is reminiscent of the classroom, teacher, books, tests, and scores, it is rarely acknowledged that learning takes place outdoors, at home, in the community, at the workplace, through the media, with peers, by doing, by reading, writing, observing, reflecting, discussing with others, through access to the computer and the Internet, in everyday life (Torres 2002). Lifelong learning embraces learning in any type of setting ranging from formal education systems of all kinds, through diverse sorts of non-formal educational provision to the limitless situations and contexts in which informal learning can occur. The following section looks at the specific role of alternatives such as non-formal and adult education institutions in mediating, transmitting, consolidating and
improving key competencies. A cursory reference will also be made to the role or acquisition of key competencies in the so-called informal economy, which is an important sector of work and survival when it comes to developing key competencies for lifelong learning outside the formal school system.

Non-formal and informal institutions
Researches have shown that key competencies can be systematically acquired and reinforced through non-formal and informal learning settings. Such contexts include families, communities, organisations and associations, the workplace and the media. They focus attention on people’s empowerment. There are several non-formal institutions, such as sport organisations, in which the values and attitudes such as promoting better understanding between individuals, active participation and the capacity to negotiate, to live together, and to develop critical thinking can be developed. Very often sport organisations are places where the value of fairness can be developed and groups comprising different ages and gender can be brought together. In many such institutions the underprivileged can also be helped and intergenerational assistance developed. ‘The purpose of education is to form social action for the development of a more humane, tolerant, just and egalitarian society comprising liberated and empowered individuals acting collegially for the cause of public good. Education needs to be seen as informing both social action as well as reflective and discursive evaluation of that action. It is an on-going process of action and reflection, together commonly labelled ‘praxis’’ (Freire 1972)

Lifelong learning implies that learning opportunities are available outside the formal school system, and that both employed and unemployed adults must learn in order to cope with rapidly changing demands of the workplace (Palepu 2001: 767-768).

Family
The family is a basic community institution in which the great majority of the above mentioned key competencies are learned, inculcated and practised. Tolerance and diversity as well as recognition and respect of others, and the promotion of self-confidence and self-criticism should start within the family.

Community
The term community is very comprehensive. It includes neighbourhood, peer groups, social, cultural and political groups, professional groups, trade unions and so forth. It also includes workplaces such as industries, commercial enterprises, public administration and all other places to work where the individual continues to learn in a planned or incidental manner. Similarly, religious institutions, and organisations of social welfare are included under the term ‘community’. ‘The community as a whole should feel responsibility for the education of its members, expressed either by means of constant dialogue with the school or, if there is no
school by taking partial charge of their education in a non-formal setting’ (Delors 1996: 106). Non governmental organisations play a key-role in assisting communities to assume their social responsibilities. They are instrumental in developing awareness and promoting participation of all members of the community by enhancing the above mentioned key competencies.

The media
The media is an integral part of the cultural environment in the broadest sense of the term. The media is also widely recognised as an effective means of providing non-formal education and adult education.

Thus a whole range of social structures is brought into play in providing a vast variety of learning systems for every member of the community to develop and participate creatively in the development of others.

The informal sector of work and economy
The question of how competencies are acquired for the world of work - in both formal and informal economies - has been the subject of intense and controversial discussion during the last decade. Recent research studies on the informal sector of work and economy (UIE 1999) have shown that key competencies in and for the informal economy cannot be reduced to vocational skills. Rather, they need to be related to social relations, personal and group development, cultural and human values. Job-specific technical and entrepreneurial skills, although a mandatory condition of survival in the informal economy, are not sufficient on their own. The five key competencies mentioned above (communicating, being able to live together, critical thinking, being able to change and creativity) are also needed for social and economic survival, which mostly takes place in the context of the family, community, work, physical location and social relationships. The ability to co-operate and communicate, and to represent collective interests is central to social, personal development as well as economic success in the informal sector. They are also important when it comes to organising co-operative forms of production, pooling know-how, co-operating in fixing the prices of products and searching new customers. Literacy and cognitive competencies facilitate the organisation of economic activities and are used to develop communicative skills such as giving advice, convincing and negotiating.

Of central importance is whether people in the informal sector possess social capital and are able to convert this capital into economic benefit and human capital. For example, an important factor for securing a livelihood is the significant role of working in clusters and self-help organisations. This factor is strongly related to the key competencies of living together and communicating. Persons acting through social networks generally do better than those operating individually. In this way there is access on information about new technologies or new markets, as well as social security services. Personality related competencies like curiosity, creativity, self-initiative and independence, the ability to learn, a sense of responsibility, frustration tolerance, ability to improvise, to compromise,
also the readiness to take risks are needed for successful living and working in the informal economy, in which the majority of the people in developing countries work and live.

Competencies for living and working in the informal economy are acquired outside the formal system of education, mainly through informal avenues of adult learning, which include: traditional forms of apprenticeships, non-formal programmes and informal learning processes. Learning takes place primarily by doing and through experience and active acquisition, rather than by receptive learning. It takes place in the family, the community and on the street or as a ‘helping member of the family’ in working processes.

The above description of key competencies and their acquisition shows that the development of informal institutions and organisations are crucial as they focus attention on people’s empowerment, that is, on the active participation of individuals in their communities, on the ability to make informed choices in daily life situations and to negotiate better conditions for themselves. These activities are often treated as having little relevance to productivity. However wider social relations have a positive value in terms of human capital. Strong families, strong communities and strong social institutions are crucial to many forms of effective activities for life and work (UIE 1999: 184).

‘The engine of lifelong learning is the development of human potential at all levels, the focus of education is the satisfaction of the needs of every learner. Lifelong learning becomes what it says it is: ‘lifelong’ – from cradle to grave, from 0-90, as long as we have the blessed gift of brain that will accept learning ‘learning’-giving learners the tools to learn according to their own learning styles and needs-not teaching, not training, nor even education in its narrow didactic sense. An out and out focus on the needs and requirements of the learner ‘for all’ –excluding no one and pro-actively creates conditions in which learning develops one’s creativity, confidence and enjoyment at each stage of life (Longworth 2001: 592)

Embracing a lifelong learning philosophy can strengthen all institutions. The promotion of a lifelong learning ethic within organisations involves team building and a process of open collaboration, building trust through information sharing, encouraging change and preparing for it, identifying and examining underlying societal and individual assumptions concerning learning and education, clarifying misconceptions, identifying barriers to co-operation and change and making use of change management tools (Palepu 2001: 768).

Lifelong learning should provide the conditions and capacities for genuine inclusion and empowerment, particularly under conditions of diversity and inequality. This genuine empowerment and inclusion depends on the above-mentioned key competencies. The acquisition of key competencies depends on education in formal, non-formal and in-formal settings. There is a need of cooperation between the formal, non-formal sector, mutually reinforcing each other, as well as networking at national and international level.
Conclusions

Although it is desirable to assess the magnitude of key competencies by measuring them as far as possible, it is obvious that not everything and not all competencies can be easily submitted to measurement, particularly as methodologies and tools are not available nor adequately developed for the purpose.

In using the generic term of key competencies, it must be cautioned that these need to be adapted to the specific contexts of each country, each group or even each individual. The mastery of these competencies by a large number of people will, without any doubt, equip them to run and organise their life not only from the standpoint of economic and material wealth, but also from the viewpoint of the pursuit of happiness and exercise of the right for an even more equitable, democratic society and peaceful and better world.

Notes

1 UIE has been involved in research, training and capacity building in Lifelong Learning (LLL) for thirty years now and considerable knowledge and expertise have been gathered on different dimensions of the concept and its use as guiding and organising principle of educational reforms. The earlier studies in the 70s were concerned with the concept characteristics including the ‘educability’ (Dave, 1976, Dave and Cropley, 1978, Skager and Dave 1977), but also the curriculum characteristics in particular self-direction, the content and the evaluation. Recent work of the Institute deals with lifelong learning policies, learning strategies, legislative environments, innovations and indicators of system transformation towards LLL. In view of all this, UIE is well placed and equipped to offer a few reflections on the range of issues linked to these subjects and engage on further exploration on this topic jointly with partners concerned.

References


Improvement in Quality of Life Indices: Role of Women’s Literacy in Rural Punjab, Pakistan

In every society literacy is a necessary skill in itself and one of the foundations of other life skills. There are millions, the majority of whom are women, who lack opportunity to learn or who have insufficient skills to be able to assert this right. The challenge is to enable them to do so. (The Fifth International Conference on Adult Education, Hamburg)

Literacy is generally believed to have positive impact on development, especially for women, leading to improvement in development indices in areas such as health, fertility rates, children's education, economic progress, autonomy and empowerment. Illiteracy is considered a barrier to development of persons and nations (Wagner 2000). These beliefs form the basis of most literacy programmes initiated in developing countries by governments, NGOs, and international agencies.

Since the UNESCO declaration of Education for All, there has been considerable investment and initiative by the government, international development agencies, and national NGOs to improve access for women to basic education in Pakistan. While most of these efforts have been targeted at the primary level of education for young girls through formal and non-formal systems, a less consistent investment has been made in adult literacy programmes for females. Some NGOs have developed programmes for adult literacy and education, however very little documented information is available about these and even less is available about the consequences of participating in these programmes. An exploration of factors that explain the consequences
could help policy makers, funding agencies and programme developers learn from the experiences and use these lessons for more informed decision making and programme development. The study reported in this paper was done in order to obtain an idea of the effects of a literacy and awareness-raising programme for women. This paper briefly describes the Bunyad literacy programme as well as the research methodology used to do the impact assessment.\(^1\)

**The Bunyad Women’s Literacy Programme**

In 1999, Bunyad developed a programme in the Hafizabad district of Punjab to provide basic literacy skills and awareness in order to enhance women's access to information, their awareness of rights, and their capacity to engage in economic activities.

To implement its programmes in the district, Bunyad encouraged a group of local active young men and women to organise themselves to form a Basic Education Resource Training Initiative at the level of the *Markaz* or the district centre. This group established several Community Literacy Centres at the village level and associated sub centres called the *Sanjh* Learning Centres at the *mohalla* or sub village level. An initial survey of several villages was carried out to collect information about the socio-economic and educational status of the population, mobility patterns, women's activities and daily schedules, and facilities available. Centres were opened in villages where there are a large number of illiterate women between the ages of 15 to 45 years interested in becoming literate. Local young women with secondary school education (10 years of schooling) were selected as teachers for the *Sanjh* Centres and given a short (four days) initial training. This training introduced the concept and structure of the literacy centres, the basics of adult teaching methodology, and the teaching learning materials. Basic information on specific income generation activities was also introduced.

Women were invited to come to the *Sanjh* centres for two to three hours. However in the villages visited, teachers said that they would often go to women's home to teach.

*The teaching learning materials*

A primer is used to introduce the Urdu alphabet and roman numbers from 1 to 100. Students are expected to identify the sound symbol/letter relationships and decode and encode words. The primer is called the *Qurani Qaida* (*Qurani* primer) with the view that this will be more readily acceptable to the community.

This belief seems to be justified, since teachers of the programme report that women were keen to join the programme when told that it would help them learn the Quran and religious material.
Through the reader called *Roshan Rahain: Practical Education for Sisters* women were able to read and write and also become informed about the themes of awareness and confidence. Each lesson provides a short text followed by tasks related to comprehension, writing, vocabulary and solving numerical problems. Most lessons deal with topics such as income generation skills, community organisation, environment and health. The lessons includes a story usually about a woman who was poor and abused and who is advised and helped by a more knowledgeable woman to take things in her own hands, and engage in an economically productive activity. The stories are followed by information about the income generation activity, be it information on raising goats, diseases of farm animals, poultry keeping, healthy diet, and the curse of dowry. The learners are also taught the *namaz* (prayers said in Arabic) and its meaning.

The objectives of the reader are to develop basic literacy and numeracy skills relevant to rural women's needs, raise awareness about women's rights, and provide information on Islamic laws and values regarding women. The programme also raises awareness about the significance of economic independence, raising the status of women in the family and society and selected income generation activities relevant to the rural setting.

**Research Methodology**

The objective of this study was to find out if any changes have come about at an individual or village level as a result of the literacy programme. To meet this objective two villages were compared: one, where a literacy programme had been conducted; the other, where no literacy programme had been conducted. The two villages were similar to each other in terms of a number of socio-economic indicators. No other intervention had been made in either of the two villages.

A third village was also included in the comparison. This village had a female literacy programme two years ago, conducted by the same organisation, and a micro credit scheme had been introduced for the participants of the programme. It was expected that women who participated in the programme would differ from those from the village where no programme had been conducted. A second expectation was that there would be differences in the impact of the programme that included a provision of micro credit, from that which did not have it.

Some of the specific questions posed in the study included: What are the objectives and content of the literacy programme? How different are women's knowledge, attitude, behaviour and activities regarding family and society, culture, economy, education, in the village where women have become literate through the literacy programme compared with the village where there has been no programme? To what extent does literacy status and participation in the
programme explain these differences? What are the effects of this on their life and relationships?

Selection of villages
Demographic, social and economic indicators were collected for the villages where female adult literacy programmes were conducted, as well for a control village where women were not exposed to any literacy programmes.

The three villages are similar in terms of distance from the closest town or large village, as well as in religious and linguistic profiles. They also share similarities with regard to the population engaged in farming, the ratio of landowners to tenant farmers, agricultural produce, and the facilities available (both have electricity but no telephone or health facilities).

Selection of women in each village
In each of the villages 20 percent of the women representing a variation in terms of age and marital status were selected. Women who had participated in the literacy programme were selected. In the village without a literacy programme, 20 percent of the total population of illiterate women between 16-40 years of age were selected. The majority of the women were from families where fathers could not read or write and none of the mothers were literate. However, a majority of the siblings and children were literate.

Impact Assessment

Women were compared on the basis of the effect literacy had on aspects such as their personal development, social and family life, attitude towards children's education, health knowledge, political participation, use of literacy and the perceptions about the programme they attended.

Personal development
The programme seems to have succeeded in teaching literacy skills to most participants. Each interviewee was asked if she could read and write and was requested to read a simple paragraph and write a short sentence. All interviewees from the two villages with literacy programmes said they could read, and 47 percent claimed that they could write however when tested, ability to do so varied considerably. While some women could read a few sentences, others could read the entire paragraph. Some women wrote a sentence quite quickly while others struggled with it and some could only write their name.
The ability and skills with which they entered the programme were also different. While some women were school dropouts, others had never been to school. The difference in the prior experience of learning along with other unexplored factors such as motivation to participate, duration of attendance in the programme and regularity of use literacy could explain the variation in the ability.

On the other hand, 31 percent of women from the village with no exposure to a literacy programme claimed that they could read in Urdu, while only 18 percent also claimed that they could write in Urdu. Some women had learned to read as a result of reading the Quran; others had been to school for a year or two and had dropped out. A large number of women from all three villages said that they could read the Quran.

The most significant difference between women, in the villages that received literacy programmes and the village without any exposure to a literacy programme was in terms of their self-image. All women from the former group who had attended the programme regardless of literacy level and frequency of use, considered themselves different from illiterate women in that they were more confident, more able to interact with outsiders, could differentiate between good and bad, and were wiser. All women interviewed in the latter village thought that literate women are better than illiterate women. The interviewers reported a clear difference in the style of responding to interview questions. The former spoke more confidently and fluently. However, those women who attended the programmes for only a month or two appeared less confident and did not consider themselves very different from literate women.

Participation in the programme does seem to have had a positive influence on women's confidence. However, it is not necessarily the literacy skill, but probably the opportunity to interact with others socially in the literacy group as well as the messages given in the programme about a literate woman being confident (all stories give this message) that has contributed to how they think of themselves.

Health awareness and practice
Women who participated in the literacy programme seemed to pay more attention to their personal appearance, children's cleanliness, and home environment. However, other factors such as poverty and number of children also appeared to be compelling explanations for the disorder in the surroundings and the neglect of personal appearance in all villages.

Within each village, there were some variations in terms of personal appearances; however, there was no significant difference between the health status of children between the two groups of villages. The acquisition of literacy and participation in the programme per se does not seem to affect the health of the children.
Literacy does not necessarily lead to better health knowledge. Other sources of information are available and may be a more powerful source than literacy programmes. Women from all three villages identified many ways in which they could help prevent their children from becoming sick. While women in villages with literacy programmes may have picked up these health messages from the programme, there are certainly other sources of information available, as demonstrated in the village with no literacy programme.

**Family and social life**

Literacy does not bring about any change in the nature of women's activities or to the restrictions to their mobility. There may be some changes in the way they conduct their daily activities but this study was unable to explore them. A majority of the women in all three villages report spending most of their time in household chores such as cooking and cleaning. Women from all three villages also engaged in non-household related labour, either working on farms or in family business. A higher number of women in the village without a literacy programme reports that they work for the family business of *ban* or dry grass plating. Women may also get their daily exposure to written text from television since they do not report regularly engaging in any tasks requiring literacy. Women from all three villages reported spending time offering prayers and reading the Quran, however only 2 out of 96 women mentioned occasionally attending religious gatherings such as the *milad*.

A majority of the women in all three villages spend most of their time at home and do not go unaccompanied to another village or town. There seems to be no difference between the mobility pattern of women from villages where the programme was conducted and the village where it was not. Other in-depth studies of literacy in rural areas have shown that women's mobility is determined by factors such as age, marital status and social class rather than literacy status (Farah 1992 and Zubair 2001).

Participation in the literacy programme also does not seem to affect participation in decision making in the family, such as marriages, children's education and income generation activities. Though there is some indication that participation in income generation activities enhances women's role in the family. At the same time, however, the low participation of women in major decision making in the village with the literacy programme suggests that becoming literate does not necessarily change one's status in the family.

**Attitudes towards children's education**

There is some difference between women from villages with literacy programmes and those from the village with no exposure to literacy in terms of
attitudes towards children's education. More women from the former have higher expectations for their children's education and no one expected their sons to stop schooling at the primary level. The differences were not however uniform in terms of expectations for attainment of higher education. The expectation of women for their daughters' basic and secondary education is also higher amongst women from villages with literacy programmes.

The above suggests that participation in the programme leading to becoming literate may have had an impact on the higher expectations for children's education.

**Attitude towards marriage and family**

There is some indication that women who have attended the literacy programme wanted later marriages for both boys and girls. The majority of women from all three villages thought that the appropriate marriageable age for boys was between 20 and 25 years.

The most significant difference between the villages is the attitude towards the age for girls' marriage. Most women from villages with literacy programmes (50 and 68 percent respectively) as compared with the village with no literacy programme (38 percent) thought that girls should marry between the ages of 20 and 25 years. Over half of the women from the village with no exposure to literacy believed girls should be married before the age of 18.

Women from all three villages gave a variety of reasons for their preferred age for marriage ranging from 'Islam advised early marriage' to 'early marriage would lead to more children' and 'mature girls can look after their family'.

A large majority of the women from all three villages thought that women should have fewer children (between 2-4). Thus participation in the programme does not seem to necessarily be the reason for the attitude towards family size. Additional evidence of this is that only two women from the entire sample had used or intended to use family planning facilities. It must be noted, though, that only half of those interviewed were married. In addition there were no significant difference between the number of children for each women across the three villages, with few deviations.

**Participation in income generation**

A larger number of women from the village with micro-credit facilities (78 percent) engage in income generation activities as compared to the other two villages where no micro-credit facilities exist. This is not surprising since almost all families in the village with micro-credit facilities have a family business of *baan* grass planting, and most women there contribute to the family work and do not have separate earnings. However, five women in the sample initiated their
own business after participating in the literacy programme and obtaining credit from the programme or from family.

It is interesting to note that while the programme seems to have encouraged these women to initiate a business, they do not seem to use literacy skills in their work. Only one woman reports keeping written records, while the others mostly keep oral record of expenses. Also only one woman reports using literacy and numeracy skills in her business.

Participation in the literacy programme when accompanied by micro credit seems to encourage women to initiate independent business. However, women do not necessarily see the need for literacy in their income generation, or use it.

Use of literacy in everyday life
Women who had acquired literacy reported using it in every day life. They indicated reading letters, bills, medicine bottles, magazine, newspaper, storybooks, religious books and television commercials. However, fewer women write in daily life. Some women indicate that they maintain a written account of household expenses, others mention that they write letters, yet others only write their names when needed. Literacy also helps them to help their younger primary school siblings and children with reading and writing. Most women cited the example of helping their children in writing Urdu letters.

It is evident that a majority of the women do use some literacy skills for their own personal needs and to help others. However, very few use it regularly or as part of income generation activities.

Women's own perceptions
Women from both groups of villages joined the programme for different reasons. Some of the women joined because they had the desire to learn to read and write, and others did so when they saw other women joining or were mobilised by the teachers. When asked what they liked in the programme most women mentioned the stories in the books. All except 2 women said that they learned a number of things from the programme including reading and writing, various skills and namaz.

Conclusions

Literacy seems to have a positive effect on some, but not all aspects of women's life. It has a positive effect on personal development and on aspects such as self-image, confidence, personal appearance, home environment, and expectations for children's education; however it does not significantly affect
other indicators such as health status of children, health knowledge, income generation, decision-making and political attitude.

One of the objectives of the programme was to empower women to become economically independent and improve quality of life. However, even though literacy is combined with information on income generation it does not make the majority of the women economically independent. Lack of resources for initiating income generation activities is cited as the most important reason by the programme facilitators; yet even where credit was available only a few women start their own businesses. In fact women have been engaged in traditional and family income generation activities such as brick making, embroidery work, and grass plating even prior to acquiring literacy. They do not necessarily see a close relationship between income generation and literacy. The relationship therefore needs to be made more explicit if literacy programmes are to be used to promote income generation. It may be more appropriate to provide literacy programmes as part of an income generation programme, rather than income generation as part of a literacy programme.

Notes

1 Bunyad is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) established in early 1990s to undertake initiatives for community development in the province of Punjab. It acts as an umbrella organisation to support local NGOs and CBOs desirous of working in the areas of education, health, income generation, and physical disabilities in rural villages and urban slums. Bunyad has made significant and sustained efforts in female education by supporting local communities to open and manage non-formal schools for girls as well as adult literacy and awareness programmes for women.

References

The Hyderabad Statement
The Hyderabad Statement on Adult and Lifelong Learning

We, the participants at the “Policy Dialogue on Adult and Lifelong Learning” held in Hyderabad India, from eighteen countries in the Asian Region, between 8 and 10 April 2002, recognize the priority accorded to adult and lifelong learning in the Hamburg Declaration of CONFINTEA V. The Dakar World Education Forum made a similar commitment with a renewed framework that expanded the understanding of basic education as aimed at meeting basic learning needs of all, both within and outside the school system and throughout life.

Lifelong learning, leading to the creation of the learning society and learning community, offering all the opportunities to participate in and contribute to learning according to the needs and potential of the learners, provides an overarching vision of education for all. This comprehensive vision of lifelong learning is necessary to empower people, expand their capacities and choices in life, and enable individuals and societies to cope with the new challenges of the 21st century.

The context of the changing global economy, the new information revolution, imperatives of human development including fighting poverty and the importance of promoting values and the practice of democracy, justice and tolerance define the purpose and content of lifelong learning including formal, non-formal and informal modes of learning. Learning at all levels should aim to achieve the goals of equity, equality, human dignity and gender justice.

Literacy is a critical input and foundation of lifelong learning. The countries in the Asian region have different long-term, medium-term and short-term programme priorities of adult learning, relevant to the specific context and needs in each country. These range from basic life skills and literacy to post literacy and continuing education.

Therefore we jointly agree and recommend:

- To adopt lifelong learning for all countries as a horizon and as an active principle for shaping education and learning policies and programmes even in the smallest and poorest countries.
- Countries in the region, while planning their educational system, must give utmost priority to co-existence, tolerance, living together, peace and democratic participation.
• It is necessary to develop a vision for lifelong learning, based on extensive consultation, information sharing, dialogue and participation, as the basis of the development of a multi-sectoral policy framework specifying priorities, strategies and institutional support.

• The existing policies on literacy, non-formal adult education and basic education need to be reviewed and recast in the context of lifelong learning.

• Lifelong learning perspective should be incorporated in the National EFA action plans as a part of the Dakar Framework of Action.

• Countries must include both basic, childhood and adult literacy as a priority policy issue in tune with United Nations Literacy Decade planned for 2003-2012.

• Adequate support structures and institutional capacity building should be given priority for creating nation-wide, lifelong learning networks and arrangements which should be participatory, decentralized and adapted to local conditions and learner circumstances.

• It is necessary to build a culture of quality reflected in the learning outcomes and the impact on peoples’ lives and well being. This requires periodical outcome and impact assessment with the use of credible and holistic indicators related to the Dakar goals.

• Since ICTs can play a facilitative role in building learning communities, technology-based community learning centers could become an important forum for promoting lifelong learning.

• The State has an important role to play in involving civil society and NGOs in adult and lifelong learning, as critical partners in the development process.

• The international development partners including UNESCO, international financial institutions, bilateral agencies and non-governmental organizations should reassess and redirect their cooperation in the perspective of building capacities and institutional support for lifelong learning and creating learning societies.

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