

Life Long Learning and Education: Challenges for Latin America and the Caribbean

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to contribute to the reflection on education and lifelong learning. It is important to note that the concept is relatively recent and in discussion, and that the challenges entailed are different greatly between developed countries and those of the region of Latin America and the Caribbean.

This paper reviews the concept of lifelong learning and the contributions it has received from UNESCO, ILO and OECD. The progress being made by the European Community for the constitution of a system of lifelong learning is described below. Later, the paper reveals the situation of the Region of Latin America and the Caribbean and recognizes the diversity of results and challenges related to the studied concept. The last part proposes alternatives of policies and initiatives for our region with the aim of moving forward in generating education systems comprising the vision of lifelong learning.

2. Lifelong Learning Contents

This chapter reviews the contributions made on the subject by UNESCO, the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in the last decade, both from a lifelong learning conceptual perspective and from the proposal of policies to implement learning systems, which have undoubtedly influenced many countries and communities.

2.1. UNESCO's Contribution

UNESCO's contribution to developing the concept of lifelong learning has been central. Since the 60s, specifically the Montreal Conference (1960), it is proposed that the foundation of adult education is continuous learning throughout their lives, while the Tokyo Conference (1972) incorporates the expression "lifelong learning." The Nairobi Conference (1976) outlines and consolidates the concept of adult education as a subsystem of permanent education, with the mission of achieving integral development of

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people². The Hamburg Conference (1997) declares lifelong education as a right and broadens the concept of literacy, as “the Basic knowledge and skills needed by all in a rapidly changing World.” It is qualified as a “fundamental human right. In every society, literacy is a necessary skill in itself and one of the foundations of other life skills”³. Finally, the Belem Framework for Action (2009) contributes with specifications for agreements on literacy (as a continuum, the need to set targets and timelines, focus on women, program design, among others). It is also suggested to establish policies, provide governance and financing for adult education and for developing learning instruments (existence of guidance and information, and promoting a culture of quality learning that includes quality criteria, professionalization of educators, diversity of providers, assessment of the learning levels in adults)⁴

At least three general agreements must be added to the above. The World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien 1990) linked lifelong learning as a content of the Right to Education: to “ensure that the basic learning needs of all are satisfied,” which was later enriched by the Delors Commission (1996) proposing to “progress toward education structured on four pillars of learning: Learning to be, learning to learn, learning to do and learning to live with others.”

The Dakar Framework for Action (2002) reinforces the above including the specific commitment to address the learning needs of all young people and adults through equitable access to learning and to programs that prepare them for an active life.

Through UNESCO’s systematization of lessons learned from innovative second opportunities of education for people (2009)⁵, progress is made in policies and strategies to implement lifelong learning, including the need to move from rigid and linear Systems to flexible and diversified education Systems, with multiple and varied educational opportunities for all. This entails overcoming the logic of grades and ages, and considering one of lifelong learning, favoring the transition between types of schools, formation areas and types of teaching, and recognizing skills acquired in non conventional and informal education contexts.

It is noted that the above leads to two major tasks: First, the existence of systems that facilitate access, complete and continue studies at any level of education, including higher education, and second, to facilitate further training, updating skills and work related technical training, work conversion and career advancement.⁶

² References are from the article by Ríos, M.F. La Educación de Adultos, principal impulsora de la educación permanente, Revista Euphoros, 2004, N° 7, pp. 238 and 239. Consulted in June, 2014, at: <file:///C:/Users/Pap%C3%A1/Downloads/Dialnet-LaEducacionDeAdultos-1973658.pdf>

³ UNESCO (1997) Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning, Agreement 11. Revised in July, 2014, at: <http://www.unesco.org/education/uie/confintea/declasp.htm>

⁴ UNESCO (2009) Belem Framework for Action. Harnessing the power and potential of adult learning and education for a viable future. Revised in July, 2014, at: http://www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/INSTITUTES/UIIL/confintea/pdf/working_documents/Belem%20Framework_Final_es.pdf

⁵ UNESCO (2009): Experiencias educativas de segunda oportunidad. Lecciones desde la práctica innovadora en América Latina, p. 17. Revised in May, 2014, at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001864/186472s.pdf>

⁶ UNESCO (2009), op cit., pp. 18 and 19.

2.2. The International Labor Organization ILO and Recommendation 195

Recommendation on Human Resources Development: Education, Training and Lifelong Learning (2005), establishes countries' needs of resources to make lifelong learning opportunities available to people. This includes "all learning activities undertaken throughout life to develop skills and qualifications."⁷ Both facilitate employability capacity building in people, enabling them to "seize education and training opportunities that are available in order to secure and retain decent work, to progress within the company or change jobs, and adapt to changing technology and labor market conditions."⁸

The recommendation urges governments to ensure access for all to lifelong learning, to promote employability policies and manage their education systems within the concept of lifelong learning because it helps to achieve full employment, eradicate poverty, improve social inclusion and economic growth in a globalized economy.

Specific instruments to further this include a set of components of a lifelong learning system, such as those relating to the existence of national education and permanent learning policies and instruments, national qualification frameworks, assessment systems, recognition and certification of peoples skills and learning,

developing the offer of non formal education and the existence of information systems, vocational counseling and job placement. On the other hand, quality assurance systems and instruments are also required for accrediting institutions and the quality of training programs.

This Recommendation was made as a guide for countries to review their training systems and employment policies.

2.3. OECD Vision

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) relates continuing education with a necessary condition for achieving individual success in the labor market and in social well being, and also as a basis for democracy and citizenship. The term covers learning activities people undertake throughout their lives to "improve knowledge, skills and competences within personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspectives. Thus the whole spectrum of learning – formal, non-formal and informal – is included, as are active citizenship, personal fulfillment, social inclusion and professional, vocational and employment related aspects."⁹

The commitments involved in this definition are very broad. *Formal learning* is that which is taught in educational systems at all levels and modalities. For people, they are the regular teaching programs

⁷ OIT, Recomendación sobre el desarrollo de los recursos humanos: Educación, Formación y Aprendizaje Permanente, Recomendación 195. First Edition, 2005, p. 8. Revised in May, 2014, at: <http://www.oei.es/pdfs/rec195.pdf>

⁸ OIT / CINTERFOR (2006): La nueva Recomendación 195 de OIT. Desarrollo de recursos humanos, educación, formación y aprendizaje permanente, p. 42. Revised in May, 2014, at: http://www.oitcinterfor.org/sites/default/files/file_publicacion/new_r195.pdf

⁹ OCDE (2007), Sistema de Cualificaciones. Puentes para el aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida, p. 30. Revised in May, 2014, at: http://www.educacion.gob.es/educa/incual/pdf/2/00_OCDE_COMPLETO_Internet.pdf

with the corresponding certification. Non *formal learning* is related to organized and systematic education activities carried out in education or work environments, outside the regular official framework, both in terms of recognition and certification. Finally, informal learning is what people learn in their everyday life, socially or within their families, at work or in leisure activities.¹⁰

Confidence in learning, as chief architect, to build and extend existing skills, integrate ones or recover those that were left behind, is central to improving the quality and expand the skills, and integrate populations that have been defined as priority. On the other hand, the current nature and structure of employment requires high level competencies. Their focus is on these training programs and the need to keep them up to date. In this regard, policy recommendations are made for countries to encourage people to pursue lifelong learning. Much of this progress in the European Community, as will be seen below, aims toward this direction.

The main recommendations refer to the need to link the world of academics with that of work, due to the need to develop “hard” skills (job specific) and “soft” skills (teamwork, communication, negotiation). In this sense, the best training spaces are those carried out in the workplace. It is insisted that there is a need to assure the quality of training services with assessment standards and systems, and internal

and external control. Finally, the need to uphold incentives policies for employers and workers to generate supporting environments for learning and equity policies to assure for those who are more vulnerable, access through scholarships and loans is stated.¹¹

2.4. In short, what is lifelong learning about?

The concept of lifelong learning is an improved vision of literacy and adult education. It integrates both, but assigns a meaning that differs from its traditional one by including the efforts of creation and development in a lifelong learning system for people. The current vision of literacy is more than reading and writing as basic skills for people and refers to “acquiring the more general capacity of communicating and being part of society in everyday communication as well as in work situations.”¹² Literacy collects social, cultural, technological and work changes which demand higher linguistic skills and continuous learning. On the other hand, adult education includes formal and non formal processes to develop capacities in people, to improve their knowledge, improve or redirect their technical or professional skills, based on the needs of people and society¹³.

This new perspective directs attention to the lifelong learning needs of people, integrating their needs for development and fulfillment

¹⁰. OECD (2007), op cit., pp. 31 and 32.

¹¹. OECD (2013), op cit., pp. 18 and 19.

¹². UNESCO (2013): Situación educativa de América Latina y El Caribe: hacia la educación de calidad para todos en 2015, pág. 167. Revised in June, 2014, at: <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Santiago/images/SITIED-espanol.pdf>

¹³. IUS N° 15 (2013), UNESCO: Nunca es tarde para volver a la escuela, p. 7. This text makes reference to the definition established in Nairobi in 1976. See at:

<http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/IP15-literacy-education-survey-lacES.pdf>

in all their dimensions. It is important to give relevance to skills and qualifications linked to employability (ILO), knowledge, personal, civic and/or work skills and competencies, across the spectrum of learning (formal, non formal and informal) (OECD). The above is done within the context of a learning system that, based on a reference framework of learning levels (or qualifications), it generates articulated, flexible and diversified programs, with multiple and varied education opportunities. This, favoring the transition between formal and non formal institutions, areas of training, types of learning, which enable people to progress in their training and so their acquired competencies are recognized and certified regardless of how they were attained.

3. European Community: A Regional Example for Action Efforts

The European Community has implemented concrete measures to transform the above definitions into policies and programs within the different Community countries. Formal adult education aims to achieve learning results that admit them into the common qualifications of the Community. This instrument “defines the relations between all the training and education qualifications¹⁴.

The European Qualifications Framework (EQF/MEC) was adopted in 2008. With this, a common reference is created for

national qualification networks formulated by each country. It establishes eight levels of reference, from basic (Level 1, for example, qualifications for the completion of primary education), to advanced (Level 8, for example, doctorate). It is defined as a tool for continuing education. Each level accounts for the learning results, i.e., “what a person in the learning process knows, understands, and is capable of doing upon completion of learning process.”¹⁵ This includes knowledge, skills and competencies.

The main effort in Community countries in implementing the above is the Lifelong Learning Program (LLP) designed and implemented between 2007 and 2013. Its general objective is to “foster exchange, cooperation and mobility between education systems and training between European countries for them to become a reference for quality.”¹⁶

It is interesting to refer to the permanent learning instruments mentioned by the programs encompassed by LLP¹⁷. Among these programs, “second opportunity” programs for lower secondary education or higher education stand out in all the countries and in a variety of centers. These have been adapted to the needs of adults, where the most outstanding efforts have been in Spain, Italy, Cyprus, Lithuania, Austria, Slovenia, Iceland, Belgium, Portugal and United Kingdom.

¹⁴ Comisión Europea, Eurydice (2011): La Educación formal de adultos en Europa: políticas y prácticas. P. 19. Revised in May, 2014, at: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/128Es.pdf

¹⁵ Comunidad Europea (2009): El Marco Europeo de Cualificaciones para el Aprendizaje Permanente (EQF-MEC), pág. 3. Consulted in May, 2014, at: [file:///C:/Users/Pap%C3%A1/Downloads/broch_es%20\(2\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Pap%C3%A1/Downloads/broch_es%20(2).pdf)

¹⁶ PAP, Guía 2013, visited in May, 2014, at: <http://www.oapee.es/dctm/weboapee/servicios/documentos/2013/parte-1-disposiciones-generales.pdf?documentId=0901e72b8175a5ab>

¹⁷ This is the Comenius Program for infant, primary and secondary level, the Erasmus Program, for higher education, the Leonardo Da Vinci Program for non higher education professional training and the Grundtvig Program, for adult education.

Programs include flexible and modular training schedules. Modular arrangement enables accumulating and certifying qualifications given in diverse modalities (night classes, distance learning or using ICTs), that are flexible in time, place, pace and study, and evaluations that differ from those used traditionally (portfolios, demonstration, simulation, observation, certification by topic). Programs also include services for accrediting learning acquired in non formal and informal contexts.

Permanent teacher and instructor training is a constant concern, as is cooperation between education centers and businesses and the support for the development of content, services, innovative and ICT based permanent learning teaching and practice. All the countries also have job information, counseling and placement programs.¹⁸

In spite of the above, there still is extensive diversity of national progress and tasks to improve coherence between national systems and the results proposed by the European Community. The main needs are related to improving the relationships between the European Qualification Framework and national frameworks, strengthening the guarantee of quality assurance for national frameworks and monitoring and maintaining information about how countries progress in relating their qualifications frameworks with those of the Community.¹⁹

4. Progress and Challenges in the Region of Latin America

In this Region, in general, the vision of lifelong learning is behind with regard to declarations and commitment made by the States in several International meetings. It is still limited to the “old paradigm of adult education, the alternative of remedial “non-formal” education of the deficits of the formal education Systems.”²⁰

A revision of lifelong learning policies and strategies shows more declarations than progress. The Global Report on Adult Education (2010) recognizes a series of difficulties for specifying the criteria for lifelong education and learning in country or territorial policies or strategies, which is visible in Latin America and the Caribbean²¹. Among these, it is important to note the lack of agreement on what is understood by lifelong learning, its scope, how it translates into rights, policies and programs. On the other hand, the close relationship between adult education, literacy and acquiring basic skills has contributed to lower the level of contents and performance in many countries. In third place, it is recognized that adult education certification has a low social and market value. Insufficient allocation of financial resources has the effect of low professional quality level of teachers and instructors, and their very precarious labor and professional development conditions.

¹⁸ Comisión Europea, Eurydice (2011), op cit., Ch. 3.

¹⁹ Comunidad Europea (2013): Evaluación del Marco Europeo de Cualificaciones (MEC), pp. 10 to 12. Revised in May, 2014, at: http://www.madrimasd.org/empleo/documentos/doc/juridica_aue_ENE14_35364.pdf

²⁰ UNESCO (2013): op cit., p. 174. Revised in June, 2014, at: <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Santiago/images/SITIED-espanol.pdf>

²¹ UNESCO (2010), Informe Mundial sobre el Aprendizaje y la Educación de Adultos. Introducción, pp. 24 and 25. Revised in May, 2014, at: http://www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/INSTITUTES/UII/confintea/pdf/GRALE/grale_sp.pdf

Finally, there has been no capacity to engage civil society and private sectors for collaboration in adult learning and education.

Follow up on the commitments of the Belem Framework for Action (2009), carried out by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (IUS), and through a regional statistical survey of Adult Education in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2011, confirms the aforementioned difficulties. Results were systematized in 2013²² and account for some progress in the Region in the last few years and for many challenges.

4.1. Progress and Challenges in Literacy

Most of our countries have focused their efforts on groups with most social and educational disadvantages for literacy and the acquisition of basic skills.²³ In this sense, *the Report on the situation of education in Latin America and the Caribbean* (2013) recognizes the progress of the Region in adult literacy with regard to the goal set in Dakar in 2000, especially within the younger groups (15 to 24 years of age). The total literacy rate of the population aged 15 and over for 2011 in the region reached 91.5%; in the population aged between 15 and 24, it rose to 97.1%. This implies that there are 3.1 million illiterate young people

in Latin America and the Caribbean. However, seven countries still have rates of illiteracy above 10% (Haiti, Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guyana, Honduras and Jamaica)²⁴.

The above implies that 35.9 million people aged over 15 in the region are still illiterate; 55% of them are women. This is directly related to employment: The higher the education level, the higher the proportion of employed population, with better quality jobs (contracts, less precarious work, more stability and higher income).²⁵ Moreover, at the current rate of progress, the Region will not reach the goal of reducing the illiterate population by 50% by 2015. To reach it, its literate population would have to reach 95% and, according to the information available, it is 92.9%.²⁶

4.2. Adult Population Education Left Behind

The access of boys, girls and youth to primary and secondary education has steadily improved in the Region. In primary education, the net rate of enrollment reached 95% of the population

²² UNESCO (2011) Matriz Regional para la implementación y el monitoreo del Marco de Acción de Belém en América Latina y El Caribe. Revised in July, 2014, at: http://uil.unesco.org/fileadmin/keydocuments/AdultEducation/es/confinteavi_fu_matrix_lac_sp.pdf

²³ Although the concept of literacy now relates to reading and writing, in the context of lifelong learning, in practice, official statistical instruments still assign the condition of literate or illiterate to a “yes” or “no” answer to the question of whether they can read or not (IUS Document No. 15, p. 8).

²⁴ IUS N° 15 (2013), UNESCO: Nunca es tarde para volver a la escuela, p. 12. Consulted in June, 2014, at: <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/IP15-literacy-education-survey-lacES.pdf>

²⁵ The study Impacto social y económico del analfabetismo, an analysis model and pilot study conducted in 2009 by the ECLAC Social Development Division, indicates that the gap between those without schooling and those with six years of school ranged between US\$ 440 and 1100 in values of 2006. The cost of illiteracy for countries and regions was also estimated. For example, Ecuador ceased to generate US\$ 104 million, Dominican Republic, with its 460,000 illiterates, lost US\$ 135 million. Revised in July, 2014, at: http://www.oei.es/pdf2/impacto_social_economico_analfabetismo.pdf

²⁶ UNESCO (2013), op cit., pp. 168.

and the net rate in secondary education reached 76%.²⁷ However, the lag of the population over 25 is still remarkable. Addressing the educational lagging of the populations is definitely a priority for our countries. The review of national progress reports demonstrates that most of the programs are intended for adult leveling and completing secondary education (73% of those enrolled). The only exceptions are Guatemala and El Salvador, who only offer remedial programs for primary education.²⁸

Nevertheless, the proportion of population served, compared to adults without primary or secondary education is irrelevant, and represents only 5.3% of secondary education and 2.8% of primary education. It is evident that these magnitudes, by default, result in the gradual increase of formal schooling of younger generations. Greater proportions of adult population (incomplete schooling) in secondary education are found in Bolivia (13%), Ecuador (9%), Colombia (7.9%) and Dominican Republic (6.9%)²⁹. It is noteworthy that in almost all the countries, participants in the remedial secondary programs are mostly aged under 24. In fact, in 11 of the 15 countries providing information, they represent figures over 60%.³⁰ This reflects a substantial change in the modality of adult education. It is serving much younger populations who, for different reasons, have deserted regular secondary education than adults who combine remedial education with their work.

4.3. Policy and Institutionalization

It is satisfactory to have countries that have recently incorporated issues of literacy and adult education into their legislation, in the perspective of lifelong learning. For example, Uruguay (2010) created a Non Formal Education Council, Chile (2009), in its General Law of Education, recognized formal and non formal educational processes and the existence of flexible modalities of remedial education; Ecuador (2010), in its Constitution, recognized lifelong learning as a right; Bolivia (2009) in its Constitution, established that the State has the duty of ensuring and promoting lifelong learning.

Nevertheless, lifelong learning as an institution is still weak. In policies “there is scarce explicit reference to adult education under the perspective of lifelong learning.”³¹ In general, the processes of lifelong education and learning are still reduced to schooling, mainly in literacy and primary education. Literacy is not linked to continuing education, but to the classic distinction of illiteracy-literacy and the program offer is still very limited.

The creation of systems for assessing and recognizing previous learning that enable the construction of educational paths and training for work have been developed incipiently. There have been experiences in Mexico (el Sistema Automatizado de Seguimiento y Acreditación, SASA) del Instituto Nacional para la Educación

²⁷ IUS N° 15 (2013), op cit., pp. 18.

²⁸ IUS N° 15 (2013), op. cit., pp. 20

²⁹ For primary education, the calculation considers the population aged over 25 and for secondary, aged over 20 who do not attend educational institutions. IUS N° 15 (2013), op. cit., p. 24.

³⁰ IUS N° 15 (2013), op. cit., pp. 26 and 27.

³¹ UNESCO, SEP, INEA (2011): Reunión Regional de Seguimiento de la CONFITEA de América Latina y el Caribe, pág. 5. Revised in July, 2014, at: http://covevyt.org.mx/colaboracion/pdfs/Agenda_de_la_reunion.pdf

de Adultos (INEA); in Chile, there are examination bodies in charge of applying tests elaborated by the Ministry of Education and to certify participants in flexible remedial education programs; and in El Salvador, there is also assessment and certification of Studies in flexible modalities.

Eliminating barriers hindering access and participation of youth and adults in education and training programs, the existence of information systems, creation of community spaces for learning, and developing the offer to the needs of the learners, are challenges that states should have furthered after the Belem agreements. It is noted that many population sectors in Latin America and the Caribbean are still excluded and do not have access to programs and opportunities. This is especially serious in the case of those aged over 25 without secondary education, and for primary education in indigenous, and rural populations, women and culturally different groups.

Some diversifications of the offer prevail, as in Argentina, a plan for completing primary and secondary education (FINES) for youth aged between 18 and 25. Mexico and Brazil have designed follow-up programs for the progress of their youth and adult program participants. Guatemala, Mexico and Bolivia are developing bilingual initiatives that favor their indigenous populations.

The concern for the quality of the offer and for learning includes challenges regarding the curriculum, teaching material and learning environments. In all cases it is required to establish quality criteria. These should include providers. It should also ensure the quality of teachers, improving

their training, developing their capacities and improving their work conditions, and lastly, fixing criteria for assessing learning results of youth and adults at different levels of training and education.

This topic arouses great concern because the weaknesses in these aspects are remarkable and progress experience is still scarce and partial. Progress in curriculum updating is recognized in Paraguay, Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Chile and Mexico, and in professional development in educators in Jamaica, El Salvador, Dominican Republic and Guatemala. In learning assessment, Mexico is progressing in the description of learning levels and Brazil, in assessment framework research for literacy in language and mathematics.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Progress and Challenges in Lifelong Learning

A first observation is the important conceptual progress made in recent decades in youth and adult education. The concept of literacy and of lifelong learning has been notably improved. The former includes the continuous character of basic skills for people to perform in today's world. The vision of education and lifelong learning, for its part, broadens the educational horizon for people, and promotes it as a guiding principle of policies. In this regard, major contributions have been provided by UNESCO. This vision is enriched by ILO, that emphasizes lifelong learning in the perspective of the development of skills and qualifications relates to progress in peoples' capacity building and employability.

OECD made its contribution in relating personal, citizen and labor development with human capital qualification and productive development of countries.

A second observation is that in Latin America and the Caribbean, the above contributions have conceptually improved literacy and adult education, and have managed to draft a perspective of intentions and commitments that have been established in numerous declarations. In the assessment of progress and achievement, it is important to consider that the perspective of criteria and strategy outlined by OECD and the actions promoted by the European Community, respond to how these countries and international organisms interpret their needs. Although the programs and actions they promote are not necessarily the direction for our Region, these experiences must be studied and eventually adapted to our context.

On the other hand, it must be recognized that it has not been easy to harmonize the vision, commitments and actions on adult education and lifelong learning in our Region. There is still a distance between what is declared urgent and necessary, and the priorities that different States give to these policies. For example, in relation to the commitments of the Belem Framework for Action (2009), the region advanced in literacy goals, but will not be able to reduce it by 50% in 2015, regarding the situation of 2000. In this case, the concept of literacy is still behind in how it is presented in official statistics. These do not refer to the levels of mastery of the skills in the context of the demands of the society of knowledge, but if a person can read and write at an elementary level.

In terms of commitment to policy and institutionalization, financing, participation and quality of adult education, the Region has progressed in its incorporation into normative documents, but is still far from considering the right to lifelong learning enforceable. Regarding the rest of the commitments, there is a wide diversity in the progress reached among the countries. Our Region is far from progressing toward the conformation of lifelong learning systems. Financial resources are certainly inadequate, the most vulnerable sectors of the population, women, and rural sectors are still excluded, and the criteria of the quality of the curriculum, learning and the institutions that offer services and teachers and instructors are weakly developed, and only in a few countries.

5.2. Priorities and Tasks to Advance toward Lifelong Learning Systems

What requirements should be considered under the concept of lifelong learning in education systems in our Region? It is especially important to adequately articulate the needs, social and cultural contexts with the real political priorities of this issue. It seems to be clear that the experience in the State's declarations and commitments is useful to determine paths, but this does not translate them into priorities, strategies, programs and resources. How to evade the circle? Below, some criteria are proposed, organized as specific proposals in a table, exemplifying the type of challenges faced by the states to systematically address lifelong learning.

It is clear that the starting point is heterogeneous between countries, and it

is even possible to recognize cultural and territorial diversity, as well as differences in resources and capacities within each country. It may be useful to determine different levels and indicators related to each of them, and based on these, draft clear and consistent, but differentiated paths. Based on them, countries should identify their priorities, timings, achievement indicators, adequate financing, and strategies, gradualism and deadlines for implementing the announced measures and the instruments that will be used in each case, including monitoring and assessment.

A second criterion is related to the need for establishing an itinerary to characterize the different levels of a lifelong learning system and the indicators associated to each one. This should facilitate the routes of the countries or their different groups or territories, so there are norms to establish the itineraries, for coherence in decisions and priorities, and to monitor and assess their results.

A third criterion is to assign a lifelong learning perspective to current literacy and adult education initiatives in our countries, i.e. to review literacy and remedial primary and secondary education programs, training for work and updating programs, and from these, to develop instruments to create diverse and flexible education opportunities for people. These would enable them to develop different, formal, non formal and informal itineraries, that may be recognized homologated and to certify competencies based on demonstrating knowledge of them.

Different international cooperation and financing entities should support the

definition and execution of national development plans of lifelong learning systems. Their contents should adjust to the needs of each territory, based on the levels or indicators of the system and good information systems.

The advances and experience of the European Community enable identifying the basic components of a lifelong learning system. The above description is for the communitarian system; national systems tribute to them. Beyond the different levels of development between the Member States, it is important to review how each of them has adjusted to the demands agreed upon as community. The main organizing instrument of the formation system is the Qualifications Framework, which delivers references (criteria and indicators) of associated learning. National systems have been organized based on this Framework.

According to the above, for example, literacy and remedial primary and secondary education should clearly define each competency to be achieved at each level (know, be, do), integrate the elements of cultural and linguistic context, promote formal, non formal, in classroom, distance, online or mixed modalities, with time systems, attendance, rhythm and duration of flexible programs. Progress should be made in the construction of learning modules, with the support of texts and other resources for the participants and systems for assessing and recognizing prior learning, to facilitate developing itineraries and certification for people, including the relations with higher education and continuing education opportunities.

This is articulated with job training in skills for employability and different levels of technical or vocational training, coordinated with systems to certify job skills and companies, as well as information and labor market mediation.

Initial and ongoing training of teachers and instructors, as well as adequate conditions for their performance and retribution, forming professional communities and networks and other training institutions and companies, should be of permanent concern for States. Initiative promotion, public and private offers should also be considered. The existence of assurance systems for participant learning and for quality educations should be a priority.

Systemic proposal of levels, performance criteria and tasks on lifelong learning

Priority levels	Performance	Tasks
1. Literacy and remedial primary education programs	The State, through its institutions or through others, develops and promotes programs to ensure acquisition, development, maintenance and use of basic skills related to reading, writing and arithmetic for all.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural and linguistic contextualization • Formal and non-formal modalities • Learning resources: texts, workbooks, ICT resources • Integration between literacy and primary education • Prioritized attention for extremely poor urban, rural and indigenous populations, functional illiterates, women and working aged populations
2. Remedial secondary education programs	The State, through its institutions or through others, develops and promotes programs to ensure access and compliance with compulsory education.	<p>In addition to the above:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal, face-to-face, distance, online modalities. • Learning organization based on competences for personal citizenship and productive or employability-related development • Flexible modality in timing, context and capabilities of the population. • Systems of recognition and certification of prior learning. • Articulation with professional training. • Assessment systems that ensure learning outcomes of the participants. • Vocational orientation services and job placement.
3. Youth and adult education system	The State, through its institutions or by others, maintains, coordinates and develops literacy, remedial primary education in a system of lifelong learning.	<p>In addition to the above:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization of different levels and types of formal and non-formal youth and adult education around common framework and articulated learning (skills) • System for evaluating and recognition of prior learning, regardless of how they were acquired.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vertical articulation with continuity in higher education to facilitate itineraries in training and work experience. • Articulation with the productive and employment sectors. • Learning standards authorized and operated by institutions offering professional education and training. • Quality assurance systems of the learning of the participants, the performance and operation by the institutions and their staff (self-assessments and external assessments).
<p>4. Lifelong learning system</p>	<p>The State maintains, articulates and develops a system that includes opportunities for all (formal, informal and non-formal) lifelong learning for people</p>	<p>In addition to the above:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualifications framework, which associates criteria and levels of learning that integrates and coordinates performance of people in a common system. • Qualifications systems, including definitions of learning (knowledge, skills and abilities), and their recognition and their relation to education (formal, non-formal and informal) and the labor market. • Educational and professional formal and informal education offers, arranged based on the framework and the qualifications system.

OWG Proposal on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) July 19, 2014

The universal goal in the agenda of Sustainable Development Goals relates to ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all. In this context, and from 9 other specific objectives, it is stated that: for 2030, to ensure that all young people and at least x% of adults, both men and women achieve literacy and knowledge of arithmetic; and by 2030, increase by x% the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and professional and job related skills, for decent jobs and entrepreneurial spirits.

Final Declaration, EFA Global Meeting 2014 Agreement Muscat (Oman) May 14, 2014

For its part, the Declaration of Oman notes that the agenda of education must adopt a comprehensive, lifelong learning approach and provide multiple learning pathways through innovative methods and information and communication technologies. At the same time, objectives were agreed upon, including: for 2030, all youth and at least x% of adults will be able to read, write and calculate at the necessary level to fully participate fully in society; special attention shall be placed on girls and women and marginalized populations; and by 2030, at least x% of y% youth and adults will have the knowledge and skills required for a job and a decent life through education and technical and vocational training, upper secondary education and higher education; particular attention to gender equality and marginalized populations will be provided

