

A New Deal for Education: Lifelong learning for All

Orientation of lifelong learning development in South-East Asia

It would like to begin by saying that it is a very challenging task to stand before you as a European and talk to you about your own region, in front of ministers who know the system better than anybody else, certainly myself. Let me further say that I have a personal interest in this region, having visited almost all ASEAN countries. My personal observations from South-East Asia are built on my global perspective in the field of lifelong learning, in my work as Director of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, in my cooperation with Ms Katherine Muller, the Director of the UNESCO Office in Hanoi, and Mr Gwang-Jo Kim, the Director of UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok, and based on several visits as visiting professor at Vietnam National Institute of Educational Sciences, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, and Peking University.

When I founded the ASEM Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning in 2005, it was as an official initiative of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) process. It now links forty universities in Asia and Europe, in joint research on e-learning, workplace learning, qualifications of adult educators, national strategies for lifelong learning, and the concepts of skills and competences. Through ASEM I have met many thinkers, policy-makers, practitioners and researchers in this part of the world.

With my still limited knowledge, let me offer some perspectives. East and West meet at the mirror to reflect on their histories and traditions, to each discover a different understanding of themselves. There is a tradition of humanistic values and wisdom in Asia, which has been a vital motivational force towards learning. There is also a tradition of inter-generational learning. The Asian region has a unique demographic profile, with young societies and ageing societies side by side. In this context, lifelong learning should not only focus on old age, but also on youth and for the workforce. Asia is fortunate to be something of a pioneer in lifelong learning, with a stronger focus here than elsewhere in the world on developing the knowledge, skills, attitudes and competences to respond to new challenges. When we speak of challenges, we refer to demographic shifts, new socio-economic realities, information technologies, climate change, and social unrest. Workplace learning is a large part of lifelong learning. People often make meaning of their learning at the workplace. Asia has also long recognised the value of adult education, its attractive return on investment, to borrow the language of the market; when you invest in the education of children, you will reap the benefit in twenty years' time; but when you invest in adult education, you reap the benefit within a few years. The results of investing in adult education are thus more immediate.

I see great opportunities in the ASEAN countries for a collaborative new deal for education, with a focus on moving from Education for All to Lifelong Learning for All. Lifelong Learning for All would be based on an integrated and holistic approach to education and learning, from pre-school to university and beyond, building on concepts of inclusion and sustainability. ASEAN can play a role in establishing partnerships among all stakeholders, education institutions, teachers, learners, policy and research, and the private sector. What is more, I foresee ASEAN developing a regional qualifications framework, which would provide standardised entry and exit points to allow for workforce and student mobility. This would increase quality and equality. With a focus on Learning for Doing, a true empowerment for living and working in the 21st Century could take place.

Let us ask ourselves: What kind of education, which approaches are needed to address the many complex and interrelated challenges facing today's world? UNESCO's vision for learning is for every citizen to have access to high-quality and value-based education and effective learning, delivered through multiple pathways (formal, non-formal and informal) to meet each individual's learning needs throughout life, to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes for individual development, for social cohesion and inclusion, for employability and to enable them to participate

actively in society. Therefore its objective is to develop education systems fostering value-based quality lifelong learning opportunities for all.

An inclusive approach to sustainable development may help to draw the outlines of a collaborative New Deal for education. Lifelong Learning for All could become an important issue in the post-2015 development agenda. Every three years, UIL publishes the Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE). The 2010 edition documented the multiple contexts of adult education and lifelong learning in Asia: basic skills (literacy); vocational, technical, and income generating education; life skills; and knowledge generation. It also documented major trends: from a sectoral to a multi-sectoral approach, from centralisation to decentralisation, and from classical pedagogical modalities to open-source education through ICT.

Global socio-economic change has strengthened the need for non-cognitive skills and education for social cohesion, as well as for quality learning in a lifelong perspective. ICT-based learning is a new trend. The post-2015 development agenda should make lifelong learning for all a key principle. This should be a universal agenda, but with context specific implementation and targets.

In international discussions, lifelong learning is considered as an opportunity for critical socio-economic development. Many Southeast Asian countries have made efforts to develop lifelong learning policies. In Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam, and in Japan, the Republic of Korea, and China, lifelong learning has been promoted through legislation or through government policies that have implied major changes in education systems.

Current state of Viet Nam's development in lifelong learning

Viet Nam is one of the fastest developing countries in the world. It is on its way to building and sustaining a well-functioning society and economy. Its ten-year Strategy for socio-economic development (2011–2020) incorporates an important move towards lifelong learning. It mentions as a strategic breakthrough the acceleration of human resources development, especially qualified human resources, within a radical and comprehensive reform of education, to meet the demands of the labour market and to encourage greater participation by citizens in society as a whole. Lifelong learning was institutionalized in the Constitution of Viet Nam (1992), in the Education Law (1998, 2005) and in other important documents of the Viet Nam Government. From 2005 to 2010, Viet Nam implemented the first national scheme on building a learning society. In June 2011, the Government established a National Steering Committee on Building a Learning Society. Finally, the *National Framework on Building a Learning Society in Viet Nam (2011–2020)* was approved on 6 January 2013.

Building learning societies in South-East Asia

The very nature of learning and the spaces within which learning occurs are changing. There is a need to move beyond the classroom towards a more open approach to learning. Lifelong learning envisages the development of learning societies where community, school, family, work, formal, non-formal and informal settings collaborate to build a democratic and inclusive environment that fosters learning. A learning city, a learning society, a learning region recognise and understand the important role of learning in personal fulfilment, social stability, and economic development.

In 2009, a key recommendation of the World Conference on Adult Education was to create “multi-purpose community learning spaces and centres, as an important means of promoting greater participation in adult learning”. Community-based learning through Community Learning Centres (CLCs) outside the formal education systems have been essential to this process. The purpose of CLCs is to promote human development by providing opportunities for lifelong learning to all people in the local community. CLCs have had a visible impact on quality of life, mobilising support from local governments as well as external agencies. CLCs also build social relationships in the community and

improve learning environments. However, despite their quick expansion, which may lead to the development of a learning society, there are challenges such as difficulties in mobilising resources for their operation and management, shortage of learning materials, and shortage of facilitators.

The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) has recently taken the initiative to establish the UNESCO Global Learning City Network. The aim is to create a platform for cities and districts to exchange good practice on developing learning cities and districts, but also to develop a learning city index to support cities and districts in their development. The launch is scheduled for October 2013, to be co-hosted by Beijing Municipality, Ministry of Education of China, and UNESCO. I would like to invite all South-East Asian Nations to attend this event, if you have the opportunity to make it.

During the 33rd SEAMEO High Officials' Meeting in November 2010 in Bangkok, the *Proposal on the Establishment of the SEAMEO Regional Centre for Lifelong Learning in Viet Nam* was presented. The 46th SEAMEO Council Conference endorsed this proposal with some changes. The SEAMEO Regional Centre for Lifelong Learning takes a sub-regional approach in promoting lifelong learning and providing opportunities for cooperation in the field of lifelong learning among SEAMEO Member and Associate Member countries. It will contribute significantly to promoting lifelong learning in the Southeast Asia and Asia region. The Centre will help strengthen the relationship and increase mutual understanding between educational researchers, practitioners and policy-makers of the region, in a spirit of mutual respect and partnership.

UIL provides technical assistance and capacity building for promoting lifelong learning for all and for building learning societies. In 2010, the Institute organised a Pilot Workshop on Developing Capacity for Establishing Lifelong Learning Systems in UNESCO Member States. Ten senior policy-makers and researchers from five ASEAN countries (Cambodia, Malaysia, Laos, Thailand and Viet Nam) joined their counterparts from five African countries in this workshop, which was held at UIL in Hamburg. During the workshop, the country teams drafted proposals for a national lifelong learning policy framework in their respective countries. To ensure impact on policy and practice in the participating countries, a follow-up strategy was also developed during the workshop. This included national follow-up activities, regional forums and inter-regional exchanges. Since then, several initiatives have been pursued: the forming of a national task force on lifelong learning in Cambodia, the preparations for the review of Viet Nam's Framework 2005–2010 on Building a Learning Society and developing its 2012–2020 National Framework, and the planning for a dissemination seminar in Laos. Simultaneously, Cambodia and Laos are working on sector-wide approaches in the context of the Capacity Development for EFA Programme which creates opportunities to integrate lifelong learning perspectives. Furthermore, the UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok has finalised the UNESCO Education Sector Strategy (UNESS) for Thailand while the UNESCO Office in Viet Nam has been supporting access to and quality in lifelong learning.

To support these national and regional initiatives, to sustain the momentum in implementing the follow-up strategy and to promote peer learning in developing policy and strategies, UIL, the UNESCO Office in Hanoi, the Ministry of Education and Training of Viet Nam, and DVV International co-organised the Seminar on National Policy Frameworks for Lifelong Learning in the ASEAN Countries on 10 and 11 January 2013.

Recommendations

There have been recent developments towards policies for lifelong learning and the creation of learning societies in Southeast Asian countries. UNESCO and UIL are supporting Member States in this endeavour. The participants of the Seminar on National Policy Frameworks for Lifelong Learning in the ASEAN Countries, held in Hanoi in January 2013, proposed a set of recommendations to the Ministers of Education of the ASEAN Member States. These concern policy and legislation, finance,

provision of learning opportunities and enhancement of quality, awareness-raising and regional collaboration.

A main factor for the development of lifelong learning societies is the recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) of the outcomes of all kinds of learning, formal, non-formal and informal. A RVA system for non-formal and informal learning recognises qualifications, skills and competences developed at all levels, including workplace learning. UIL, on behalf of the UNESCO Education Sector, and following consultation with Member States, published the *UNESCO Guidelines on the Recognition, Validation and Accreditation of the outcomes of Non-formal and Informal Learning*, which were adopted by UNESCO in June 2012.

- ° There is often insufficient relevant training for educators: teachers, trainers etc. The teaching methodology could be more flexible and diverse. This could be achieved by engaging in cooperation between education institutions and the world of work to develop new curricula.
- ° New legislation on the concept and role of lifelong learning together with a strategy to promote lifelong learning and learning societies could be passed.
- ° Access to lifelong learning for all could be strengthened by supporting higher quality in guidance and counselling, developing more ICT-supported learning, and using also libraries and museums as lifelong learning arenas. Awareness raising measures like learning festivals, campaigns in the media, and inter-sectoral co-operation could be promoted.
- ° Targets for women's access to and participation in lifelong learning could be added to different national programmes.
- ° Learning from good practices, selecting some examples of learning cities, to see how they have been developed and collaborate with them in order to create new learning cities. What is needed is a strong partnership between public and private stakeholders.
- ° Reliable funding: cooperation between government, business, NGO sectors and other learning providers. Stronger support from also other sectors than education.
- ° Funding more research on lifelong learning, providing data and an evidence and knowledge-base for policy-making.
- ° Strengthening the capacities of policy-makers and researchers to develop and implement national policies and strategies that will contribute to developing lifelong learning systems.

Conclusion

One of the messages of President Ho Chi Minh was "Learning is endless. Lifelong learning helps us grow up; and the more we grow up, the more we need to learn".

Great efforts have been made towards achieving lifelong learning for all, and developing learning societies, in Southeast Asia. Looking forward, increased regional cooperation can help expand the lifelong learning process to include the private sector and civil society. Learning cities and districts, in addition to serving as models of good practice, can act as a lever to achieve broader learning societies.

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