

Is lifelong learning the answer to the economic crisis?

By Claus Holm Chief editor and chair of the ASEM LLL Hub.

he interest in lifelong learning has hardly ever been greater than now. It is tempting to say that while the interest in lifelong learning in the

1980s was connected with the contemporary economic crisis, the current interest – and very high expectations – is linked with an even more profound economic crisis. But can lifelong learning live up to the expectations? Can lifelong learning take on the role of global crisis resolution strategy? Such questions form the theme of this first issue of the **ASEMagazine**.

The magazine has its sources in the research networks within the ASEM LLL Hub, and the ambition of the magazine is to disseminate research to a broad audience. Put differently, this magazine is for readers – politicians, citizens and practitioners – with an interest in lifelong learning. It will achieve this aim partly by proposing measures for politics and practice and partly by being informative and generating debate.

For this issue of the magazine, we have asked a number of researchers to give their take, in journalistic interviews, on visions and strategies for lifelong learning that can help solve the crisis as it manifests itself in certain countries and regions of the world. Yet, this first issue of the magazine also holds an implicit call for reflection, as the articles dem-

onstrate that different countries and regions have widely different historical backgrounds, possibilities and limitations for realising certain strategies for lifelong learning.

For instance, Professor SoongHee Han from Seoul National University, Korea, explains that Asia is in need of strategies to put humanistic learning on the agenda in order to form a new mindset for how Asian workers relate to their workplace. SoongHee Han also notes that lifelong learning still does not involve the vast majority of people in Asia. Professor and director of the UK think tank Longview Tom Schuller describes the need for a new model for lifelong learning in the UK. Moreover, he describes how the UK is also clearly faced with the problem that lifelong learning is currently not for everyone - and certainly not for the latest generation, who are finding it difficult to gain a foothold in society as such.

Traditionally, scholars have talked about two paradigms of lifelong learning: one is the humanistically inspired paradigm, and the other is an economistic paradigm. Historically speaking, the 1970s constituted the time of the humanistic paradigm and the 1990s – the time of the economistic paradigm.

Much suggests that the aim of a third paradigm is to make the two previous paradigms merge. At any rate, the articles in this magazine indicate that lifelong learning in the 2010s is a question of reconciling personal self-fulfilment with being profitable human capital in modern capitalism.

Previously, people would say that they worked to live. Today more and more live to work, and they hold jobs that require continuous development – both personally and as employees – through learning,

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throughout life. And this new learning way of life includes more and more people, regardless of whether they live in Asia or Europe. Therefore the great challenge also seems to be how to make lifelong learning an inclusive strategy.

So, which – if any – of the three paradigms will end the crisis? For whom? For how many? And how? These are the questions that this magazine will try to make the readers wiser about. Naturally, it is up to you to decide whether we have succeeded. In any case, the intention of the **ASEMagazine** is to make as great an effort as possible to communicate themes and topics in a manner that will help anyone interested benefit from recent research results within lifelong learning.





ASEMagazine No. 01 November 2011

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SUBSCRIPTION www.dpu.dk/asem/magazine

DESIGN: F31 COVER: F31 PRINT: P J Schmidt A/S

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ASEMagazine for lifelong learning

is a journalistic print and online magazine with articles on research in lifelong learning. The magazine was launched in November 2011 and is out two times a year. The magazine is published by the Secretariat for ASEM LLL Hub, at the Department of Education, Aarhus University.

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The United Kingdom is an ageing society and is in need of a new model for lifelong learning. This model must be able to remove barriers to adult learning and education and ensure an actual learning system that runs from cradle to grave.

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International organisations have authority as expert advisors, but the political—moral authority belongs to the state. Vietnam's policy for lifelong learning is a good example of the difference between policy-making power and expert advisory power.

Educational equality **creates** economic competitiveness

The world is in the midst of the greatest economic crisis since the 1930s. To weather this crisis we must devote our efforts to lifelong learning that **generates educational equality**, explains Professor *Andy Green* from the Institute of Education, University of London.

"Even the most individualistic British person can feel that society is letting him down."

Andy Green
PROFESSOR

Professor
Andy Green,
who has just
published and
co-authored
the book Regimes
of Social Cohesion:
Societies and the Crisis
of Globalization with colleague Associate Professor Jan

Germen Janmaat. In fact, Andy Green points out that different types of lifelong learning systems may help to explain how various countries perform relative to the economic crisis.

'My point is that lifelong learning plays a major role in mitigating the widespread tensions between policies for economic competitiveness and policies for social cohesion. Unlike economists, who stress the inevitability of trade-offs between cohesion and competitiveness, I emphasise that from the perspective of lifelong learning these are in many respects complementary,' explains Andy Green.

He continues: 'For instance, universal preschool education increases employment rates and boosts the educational achievements and skills of young people. Likewise, it has been shown that adult learning and active labour market policies enhance economic competitiveness, by boosting employment rates and labour productivity – and also mitigates income inequality.'

So, can lifelong learning simply end the crisis in all countries? No, unfortunately not. According to Andy Green, the global discourse about lifelong learning is frequently offering itself to be the key to both national economic competitiveness and social cohesion. Yet, quite different regimes and systems for lifelong learning exist in Europe, with highly diverse bases for contributing to a competitive knowledge economy that is also a knowledge society with high levels of social cohesion.

Three regimes

Before we try to understand David Cameron's gloomy remark about 'broken societies', let us present a brief outline of three different regimes with different models of lifelong learning, studied by Andy Green.

The first regime is the liberal, which is currently represented by the United States of America, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Ireland. The second is the social market regime, which is represented by countries such as Austria, Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands. The third model is the social democratic regime, which is being represented by the Nordic countries, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland.

In his article 'Lifelong learning, equality and social cohesion', Andy Green describes the outcome of lifelong learning in these systems.

Lifelong learning systems in the liberal countries produce rather unequal skills outcomes, which tend to reinforce income inequality and undermine social cohesion. However, high levels of participation in adult learning boost employment rates, which enhance economic competitiveness and thus contribute to social cohesion in the sense of inclusion in the labour market.

Lifelong learning systems in the social market countries produce somewhat less polarised skills distributions, with apprenticeship systems mitigating the effects of school segmentation in some of these countries; it may be equated with lower levels of inequality. Yet, less participation in adult learning reduces employment rates and increases exclusion from work.

Lifelong learning systems in the Nordic countries produce more equal skills outcomes from school and benefit from high rates of adult learning participation. Relatively egalitarian school systems contribute to more equal and socially cohesive societies, while adult learning and active labour market policies raise employment rates and increase economic competitiveness.

The UK is in a deep crisis

The main countries of the liberal regime, such as the UK, Ireland and the USA, have fared very poorly in the economic crisis.

'The UK is in a huge crisis' states Andy Green. However, he immediately stresses that it is not necessarily because the UK, by definition, is equipped with poorer social cohesion compared to other countries in other regimes. That is not the case. Each of the regimes has its own basis for social cohesion. He explains: 'Liberal regimes tend to rely on core beliefs in individual opportunity and merit to hold the society together. Social market states rely more on a wide set of shared values and identities as well as the role of the state in supporting the institutions' bases of social cohesion. In the social democratic regime, relative income equality and universalist welfare regimes are crucial to social cohesion.'

Then why does the UK experience the greatest crisis of all at the moment?

'The UK has the highest average level of inequality compared to any of the European countries. And right now this inequality is increasing. Yet, the greatest problem is that the social mobility is grinding to a halt. At the moment, an entire generation graduates from school or college, but without future prospects. They are not in line for a job, and the jobs they do get will be less secure.



e are in the midst of the greatest global economic crisis since the 1930s. That may be why the UK's Conservative Prime Minister, David Cameron, is saying that we are typically living in 'broken societies'. However, are some societies not struck less severely and cope better with the crisis than, for instance, the UK? 'Yes' is the answer from

They will work longer for lower pensions. Moreover, they cannot afford to buy a house, and even those who can are unlikely to ever pay off their mortgages. For those without parental support, the average age for buying their first home is now 37. Previous generations typically left home in their early twenties, now many young people find it too expensive to buy or rent to move out. As a consequence, people lose faith in individual opportunities, and even the most individualistic British person can feel that society is letting him down.'

But couldn't the UK 'simply' get out of the crisis by investing in lifelong learning?

'Well, in principle the right thing for the UK is to continue its investments – and in fact invest more – in lifelong learning. When there are no jobs, we must continue to improve our skills through higher education, vocational training or continuing education. But that is not happening. The problem is that the government is cutting back on educational opportunities, while job opportunities are decreasing.'

Nordic exceptionalism

While the UK is doing badly, the Nordic countries are doing well – exceptionally well. Andy Green explains why:

'The most convincing explanation to the Nordic exceptionalism relates to the fundamental characteristics of social democracy. Nordic countries are substantially more egalitarian than most developed countries. Despite small rises in household income inequality in the past two decades, Nordic countries remain the most income-equal in the developed world. The Nordic countries are also the group of countries with generally low levels of educational inequality. There is a connection between the lifelong learning model and the models of the knowledge economy. Moreover, the Nordic countries, which produce more equal skills outcomes, tend to benefit socially from greater income equality, higher rates of mobility, better health and more social cohesion.'

So, do the Nordic countries not feel the economic crisis?

'Of course they do. The mounting global competition puts pressure on all states to constrain public spending, so that taxation does not rise to levels that would deter foreign investors and undermine market confidence. Therefore, the social democratic states are also currently vulnerable. Generous welfare provision is a key part of the social contract between the state and its citizens in the Nordic countries. People are willing to pay taxes for this. However, an ageing society and global economic forces make the contract ever harder to sustain.'

Nevertheless, you maintain that the Nordic countries are largely in a better position than all other countries. Why is that?

'Government debt is not too high, unemployment moderate in most cases, and these countries are very cohesive. It is hard not to applaud the achievement of Nordic states in promoting social solidarity and to deny that this is "a good thing" – especially during an economic crisis. Consider the alternative. Particularly in Britain and the United States, the historical model of social cohesion appears to be running aground. What held society together, at least to a degree, in the past seems to be less capable of doing so now. To argue for more social cohesion as things are in these countries seems like whistling in the wind; it would be a nice thing, but it hardly seems likely to happen.'

Educational equality matters

Lifelong learning has an impact, but lifelong learning that creates educational equality has, according to Andy Green, an even greater impact: 'My principal message is that educational equality matters. It probably matters more for economic competitiveness than is generally acknowledged. It most certainly matters for social cohesion. In fact, it seems likely that the educational impact on social cohesion has much more to do with how education is distributed than with how much a nation has overall. And my message is also that educational equality is - very substantially - amenable to policy interventions. Countries that achieve more equal education and, on our evidence, benefit thereof in terms of social cohesion are countries which believe in the virtues of equality and design their education systems to enhance it.'

In your opinion, what should politicians do to turn societies at the brink of collapse around in this crisis?

'Policy makers have generally focused too much on raising the average national levels of achievement of their school leavers and adults than on questions of distribution and equality. This is a trend that has gathered pace over the past 25 years, encouraged by the international and national cultures of targets, league tables and country rankings and by the national obsessions with raising skills levels for economic competitiveness. By contrast, questions of equality have been dropping down the agenda in many countries, not least because of completely unsubstantiated, but widely held, claims that excellence and equality are incompatible. Now there is a reason to change that perception.' ■

By Claus Holm





Andy Green

Andy Green is Professor of Comparative Social Science at the Institute of Education, University of London. His main field of research is the comparative (historical and sociological) study of education

and training systems, their origins and social and economic consequences. He has a long-standing interest in education and state formation and has directed major cross-country comparative research projects, among others about education, inequality and social cohesion. Together with colleague Jan Germen Janmaat he has recently published the book *Regimes of Social Cohesion: Societies and the Crisis of Globalization*. His article 'Lifelong learning, equality and social cohesion' was published in the *European Journal of Education*, Vol. 46, No. 2, 2011, Part I.







Lifelong learning in Asia is not simply a matter of the workforce acquiring new skills, but a fundamentally new way of perceiving oneself and the surrounding world. 'That takes humanistic learning,' says Professor SoongHee Han from Seoul National University in Korea.

Asia needs humanistic learning

hen a person in Asia is fired, they seek humanistic learning instead of acquir-

ing new job skills. Part of the reason is that losing one's job hurts that person's self-respect, and they begin to reconsider who they are and what to live for. This is what happened in the late 1990s; hundreds of thousands of Asians from Korea, Thailand, Japan, Singapore, the Philippines, China and Hong Kong were fired overnight. All of a sudden it became critical to acquire a new identity. This story about the crisis – both the economic and the existential crisis – is told by SoongHee Han from Seoul National University in Korea.

The story is SoongHee Han's answer to whether certain Asian values motivate the focused efforts on lifelong learning in Asia. They do, but the effort is as much about changing traditional values so they fit a competitive Asia in the global knowledge economy. SoongHee Han explains:

'Asian countries are almost too diverse to be talked about as one regime of values. That said, Asia has been a collective society where individuality was less important than collective identity. This shows, for instance, when Asians treasure family names over first names or print the institution name and title in larger fonts than their own name on business cards. One example is the workers at Samsung. They took pride in being a member of the company, and the identity of the company was convergent with the workers' identity. But the economic and financial crisis since 1997 has caused a separation that has released numerous workers from the company, which was their life, identity and reason to live.'

How did it affect the employees' self-perception? 'Organisations have failed to protect the employees, their collective identity. At that point, the employees' existential questions became "Who are we?", "Why have we been working so hard?" and "For what purpose?". The emergence of a more individual and reflective self made them look to the realm of humanistic knowledge and questions. It led them to philosophy classes, art lessons and literature courses.

Knowledge economy is an illusion

Asian countries are experiencing changes in the understanding of what 'jobs' are, and more frequent hire-and-fire procedures make the question of a person's educational background and learning history a crucial topic. According to SoongHee Han, the emphasis on lifelong learning may not be directly related to the emergence of a knowledge economy, but rather directly related to the instability and work conditions of frequent hire-and-fire conventions. In that connection learning, which has a market value, comes to have a greater impact on people's everyday lives. The trend towards learning as a capitalist business concept can be found in Asia, but SoongHee Han points out that it is still not the dominant conception of learning.

'One reason is that lifelong learning is still regarded as something of humanistic, moral-based and self-righteous value in an Asian learning context. People think that learning is by nature humanistic. Another reason is that a knowledge economy is far from part of all Asian people's present everyday life,' says SoongHee Han and adds 'The idea of a knowledge economy in most Asian countries is illusory. Still, the dominant part of the economy belongs to pre-modern or, at best, modern industrial economy.'

SoongHee Han explains that the correct way of putting it is that the Asian economy is divided. One part belongs to global knowledge capitalism, such as companies like Samsung and Toyota. The other part still consists of a local industrial or agricultural economy. Consequently, in Asia lifelong learning is only relevant to those who are part of the competition between global

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SoongHee Han PROFESSOR

companies. Yet, the majority of people in Asia are exposed to the vulnerable work conditions of the manufacturing industry, with no connection to the global knowledge economy. SoongHee Han's point is that Asian lifelong learning should also be seen from the perspective of this majority.

Knowledge economy will be a reality

But what are the future prospects for lifelong learning in Asia? Regardless of whether the knowledge economy currently involves only a minority, it is, according to SoongHee Han, a fact that Asian countries are experiencing a transition from the industrial to a postindustrial stage. That entails two changes. Firstly, the combination of reduced working time and better working conditions gives people the opportunity to consider their values and the time to pursue them. The second – and tough – change following this transition is - structurally speaking - that more people are 'kicked out' of manual working-class jobs and forced to seek new jobs, typically in the service sector. Both changes demand more learning in Asia.

What types of new skills are required in a knowledge economy in Asia?

'People in Asia do not only have to acquire specific skills. They also need a new way of perceiving the world. You could say that they need a new way of understanding the business ecosystem and of launching business. These new mindsets demand "perspectives" and "paradigms" rather than skills and knowledge. Humanities and arts education meets this learning need the best,' says SoongHee Han and elaborates:

'The Asian countries are more or less in the same situation. They are all changing from seeing themselves as collectively oriented to thinking of themselves as individualists. It shows when the collective working class is gradually dissolving and new jobs related to the knowledge economy emerge. And it shows when the financial crisis disintegrates the previous social security system, which was most of all dependent on family support and a one-company, lifetime employment tradition. This system is disappearing now. Meanwhile, a new paradigm is still under construction. So, a period of "social learning" is imperative.'

The meaning of life in a global market

If you think learning in Asia is solely designed to qualify all Asians to become a global and competitive workforce, you are, according to SoongHee Han, mistaken, though one can speak of a tendency to make learning market-oriented; a tendency that shows itself in differences between generations.

Younger generations with a good educational background seek further education that relates to job opportunities. But they still do not dominate the picture in Asia, particularly in east Asia, where people want humanities in learning. A good example is that the dominant type of adult learning in Asia still concerns personal development, leisure and sports as well as humanities and liberal arts. Community-based learning centres and learning centres for elderly people, in particular, provide more than 80 per cent of this type of education. The reason may be that lifelong learning is still managed by the state and local authorities as part of the public service for people with little chance of entering the labour market. The focus of these courses is therefore not work skill competencies.

Yet, according to SoongHee Han, it is simply a matter of time before we see a real shift. One specific reason is that global companies, such as Samsung or LG, already use many resources to retrain their workers. A more general reason is that private education entrepreneurism is taking over the leading role of the state as provider of education in Asia. SoongHee Han explains that in Korea, for instance, the number of registered adult education providers under the Lifelong Education Law is rapidly increasing. And these private education and consulting companies are far above the average growth in this area.

By Claus Holm



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adult education and learning ecology. He is the co-ordinator of Network 5 on Core Competencies within the ASEM Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning.

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COPENHAGEN - MAY 2012

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expectant European & the humble Asian

Are Europeans narcissistic and Asians authoritarian?

A unique comparative survey of motivation for workplace learning challenges the prejudices of Europeans and Asians. **Could it be that Europeans are not narcissists**, **but individualists**, **and Asians not authoritarian**, **but humble**?

hy does
a European react
negatively
when you
describe
lifelong
learning as

a meaningful commitment to society, while an Asian would not criticise such a demand from society? This is one of the questions that arises from a comparative survey of workplace learning in Europe and Asia.

The survey is unique as it is the first time that Asian and European researchers have collaborated on a study of this kind (see the survey fact box). The survey covers ten countries: Austria, China, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Latvia, Lithuania, Japan, the Netherlands, Thailand and the United Kingdom. But the survey is not simply unique. 'It is also difficult and challenging,' explains the co-ordinator of the research team, Professor Lynne Chisholm from the University of Innsbruck:

'We constantly and carefully have to consider the terms we, as European researchers, use to describe Asians and vice versa. Are Europeans self-centred narcissists and Asians authoritarian and obedient people? No, only if you are prejudiced. Europeans prefer to refer to themselves as individuals with respect for each other's free will. Asians prefer to think that they show community spirit and modesty. In this survey

"I think that we must consider whether Europeans in fact have high expectations of almost everything – i.e. also high expectations of recognition for precisely their individual work and learning effort."

Lynne Chisholm
PROFESSOR

it is important for us to identify descriptive terms that respect self-perceptions and autonomous social and cultural traditions of individual countries,' explains Lynne Chisholm.

What is the understanding of the terms 'compulsory' and 'voluntary' among European and Asian people? Is it really the case that Asians are not at all critical of coercion, while Europeans are?

'We do not know yet,' states Lynne Chisholm and continues: 'We have three possible explanations for the differences at play. Our first thesis is that an Asian person tends to express criticism in a very careful, subtle and positive way, which means that Europeans cannot hear it. Europeans tend only to hear their own way of giving criticism, which is typically more open, direct and negative. The other possibility is that Asians are more collectively oriented, while Europeans are more individualistic. Asians do not assume that they must necessarily express *their* point of view – and certainly not to a superior, who is normally more respected in Asia

A COMPARATIVE SURVEY OF WORKPLACE LEARNING

THE ASEM LLL RESEARCH NETWORK
ON COMPETENCE
DEVELOPMENT AND
WORKPLACE LEARNING IS CONDUCTING
A COMPARATIVE
SURVEY OF WORKPLACE LEARNING IN
ASIA AND EUROPE.
SOME OF THE MAIN
QUESTIONS IN THE
SURVEY ARE:

What do people interpret as 'voluntary' and 'compulsory' with respect to workplace learning?

[2]

What does their company/organisation offer in terms of formal and non-formal work-related learning?

Which of these are 'voluntary' and which

are 'compulsory'?

How do objective opportunities and subjective perceptions influence the employees' motivation to learn at work and their satisfaction with

the learning they have undertaken?

CONFERENCE

LEARNING UNLIMITED

The results from the survey will be presented at the ASEM LLL Hub Conference in Copenhagen, May 2012.

than in Europe. A third possibility is that to Asians, lifelong learning is simply a selfevident commitment that does not need to be called into question.'

High expectations

The comparative survey confirms that adults in both regions of the world, by and large, regard learning at least as much as a personal issue than as a socio-economic or career issue. Their motivations do not concern the interests of their employers, nor are they propelled by a sense of their responsibilities towards the wider society - although this latter factor is more visible for respondents in the Asian countries than for those in Europe. They much rather consider the benefits that they themselves value – which typically include the satisfaction of doing a good job, but may also relate to reducing unemployment risks or widening their professional opportunities. The significance of workrelated learning as a channel for personal development is highly pronounced among the Austrian survey respondents, most of whom were studying part-time for a vocational higher education degree alongside their employment. They fiercely defend the right to free choice in continuing education and

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training matters – their employers should not have much of a say, if at all.

The survey specifically asked employees in Asia and Europe if they find that their employer is good at expressing recognition for their employees, so that they are positively motivated for learning and do so of their own volition.

'The first results from the survey show a difference between Asia and Europe. In Asia, employees respond that they experience more recognition for their learning, while employees in Europe tend to be more critical regarding employers' commitment to learning provision and recognition,' says Lynne Chisholm.

And how do you explain this difference?

'I think we must consider whether Europeans in fact have high expectations of almost everything – i.e. also high expectations of recognition for precisely their individual work and learning effort. The consequence is that it can be hard to satisfy their need for recognition. On the other hand, I think the individualistic expectations of recognition are much lower and fewer in Asian countries. Having said that, the research results do confirm that, wherever you live and work in the world, you can expect to get more out of your learning if you are positively motivated to learn.'

The Asian improvement culture

Punishment is not the solution when you try to motivate for learning. Nevertheless, the first survey results indicate a difference in the degree to which European and Asian employees accept the legitimacy of sanctions from employers if they do not take up learning opportunities that are available and that employers would like them to pursue.

Lynne Chisholm suggests that this difference may be linked with the fact that in at least some Asian countries, it is more common to have a more intervening government, a more intervening head of family and a more intervening employer.

'In some cases, employees in Asian countries are obliged to take courses to get a promotion. They can actually be ordered by their employer to do so. But my experience is also that the very issue of punishment and sanctions against people who do not keep up their learning is an issue that Asian colleagues may prefer to avoid discussing in depth, perhaps especially with cultural outsiders who may be seen as unable to understand and appreciate the underlying issues and values involved.'

It may also be a question of the terms we use to describe the relationship between employer and employee. To many Asian people it may not be a question of sanction but a matter of humbly working to improve. Professor Lee Sing Kong, Head of the National Institute of Education in Singapore, puts it like this:

'No system should be criticised for its good or bad results without considering its context. A system should never make employees feel ashamed. A system should not punish by means of shame. A system should be humble and accept that it makes mistakes or has weaknesses, and it should be prepared to take the necessary steps to improve. Only then can we achieve and maintain a culture that promotes positive development and improvement. If we begin to punish employees and be ashamed of our results, discouragement may creep in, and this may adversely impact the development of a culture of wanting to improve.'

By Claus Holm



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ASEM education and research hub for lifelong learning

The 21st century needs more and better knowledge on strategies for **lifelong learning**. ASEM LLL Hub's job is to contribute to fulfilling this need.

he ASEM Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning – ASEM LLL Hub – is a university network for collaboration between Asian

and European countries with regard to the intersection between evidence-based research, research-based policy making and research-informed practice.

The ASEM LLL Hub brings together 70 researchers in its five research networks, senior representatives of 36 universities in its University Council, and senior officials from 22 ministries of education and five flagship international organisations.

The ASEM LLL Hub was established as the result of preparatory work for the ASEM IV

Heads of State Summit in Copenhagen in 2002. The work underscored that lifelong learning enables governments to respond constructively not only to the changing demands of the knowledge economy but equally to strengthening social cohesion by engaging with the most vulnerable groups of society through raising participation in education and training, regardless of age and social and economic circumstances. Therefore the work of the ASEM LLL Hub is focusing on a better and a common understanding of lifelong learning concepts and on making relevant research-based policy recommendations.

'Hardly ever before has the demand for educational solutions been so big. At the beginning of the 21st century there is a global demand for research-based recommendations for lifelong learning strategies. The expectations are high, if not enormous. The strategies are expected to contribute to a win-win-situation, i.e. they should solve both humanistic and economic problems for all and at the same time. This is a challenge, which we have to work together to solve,' says Claus Holm, Chair of the ASEM LLL Hub.

Read more

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Three GOALS

THE **ASEM LLL HUB** SEEKS TO:

Stimulate the production and dissemination of new research-based knowledge in the field of lifelong learning

Facilitate the exchange of students and academic staff, in the interests of strengthening mutual understanding and higher education collaboration between Asia and Europe

Be an advisory mechanism between researchers and policy makers, thus casting the Hub as an important source for sustainable human resource development and policy recommendations concerning competence development and effective lifelong learning strategies.

The FIVE RESEARCH NETWORKS

- DEVELOPMENT OF ICT SKILLS,
 E-LEARNING AND THE CULTURE OF
 E-LEARNING IN LIFELONG LEARNING
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n her book Payback, the author Margaret Atwood tells the story of the Canadian writer Ernest Thompson Seton, whose father presented him with an odd bill on his 21st birthday. It was a record kept of all the expenses connected to young Ernest's childhood and youth, including the fee charged by the doctor for delivering him. Ernest is said to have paid the bill. 'I used to think that Mr Seton Senior was a jerk,' says Atwood, 'but now I'm wondering.' This is also what Professor Tom Schuller and Sir David Watson do in their report Learning Through Life: Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning. And their conclusion is a need to rebalance the resources for learning. Tom Schuller explains:

'The current distribution of resources for learning in the UK is heavily weighted towards initial education. The system inevitably concentrates on primarily equipping young people with the values, competencies and attitudes needed to give them the best foundation for adult life. However, the weighting is too strong.'

The authors' work was motivated precisely by this concern that adults are neither given, nor take sufficiently part in, the resources for learning. The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education decided to initiate an inquiry into the future of lifelong learning in the UK. The result is the abovementioned report. The primary focus of the report is that adult learning and education is not at the expense of learning and education for children and young people. Tom Schuller stresses that the point of this report is precisely the fundamental rejection of the opposition that has sometimes been made between investing in the early years, from 0 till 5, and investing in adult learning:

'We entirely endorse the need for sustained commitment to, and investment in, early years learning. There is a strong symbiotic relationship between successful early years learning and adult learning, as our references to family learning make clear. We argue for the notion of an intergenerational contract. Investment in learning for people in their old age demonstrates to younger people that they too will accede to these benefits in the future. Moreover, it will reduce the costs of dependency as older people maintain their independence longer and learn to manage their own health and use of health services,' says Tom Schuller.

The right to learn is a human right

The right to learn throughout life is a human right. That is the premise when Tom Schuller and David Watson frame a vision for a society in which learning plays its full role in personal growth and emancipation, prosperity, solidarity and global responsibility. But the report offers much more than impressive visions. It is very specific and consistent in its presentation of a lifelong learning policy that more realistically reflects the age profile of the UK. The UK is an ageing society. The report therefore suggests four stages: up to 25 years, 25–50 years, 50–75 years and 75+. So, the right to learn is literally a right that runs from cradle to grave.

But do people really want to learn throughout their entire life? 'Yes' is the answer from Tom Schuller, who explains that we are all natural learners, if we are given the chance:

'This means that people learn best when they are motivated; when they want to learn. It also means that entitlement to learn is potentially a hugely important and crucial mechanism for removing barriers and increasing choice. Our starting point is therefore to remove the barriers which inhibit motivation for learning, and reinforce the incentives and opportunities for this human desire to learn to flourish.'

Youth ends at 25

The essence of lifelong learning is that a modern individual must acquire new knowl-

"If a system achieves the immediate objective of improving people's qualifications, but leaves them without appetite to carry on learning, it has failed."

Tom SchullerPROFESSOR AND DIRECTOR
OF LONGVIEW

edge throughout their life. This means that people should not simply acquire knowledge, but acquire knowledge about how to acquire knowledge. To do so, it is important that people maintain their curiosity – the cognitive openness – to learn ever more and something new. That is not often enough the case in the UK.

'In the UK there are two main problems at the stage of life from 0–25 years. One problem is that too many young people leave school or college without a desire to carry on learning. This is a very serious situation. If a system achieves the immediate objective of improving people's qualifications, but leaves them without appetite to carry on learning, it has failed. The other problem is that, generally, too many leave school without the basic skills or qualifications and therefore without the appropriate foundation for further learning in adult life,' says Tom Schuller.

A crucial mechanism for changing the situation could be a legal entitlement for all who need to learn how to acquire the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and language. It may be called an entitlement to a qualification, which could function as the foundation for future competencies. According to Tom Schuller, the UK is in great need of such an entitlement:

'Though the UK has made some progress in recent years, I still think the picture is quite depressing. On the one hand, the UK has one of the poorest records on early school leaving within the EU. Actually, many young people disappear from sight, being neither in education nor in employment. Alarmingly large numbers go to prison, where they disappear physically from public sight, or become homeless. On the other hand, we see young people who take "the royal road" of progression from successful schooling to full-time higher education and later employment. In the report we argue for two things. The first is to recognise the prolonged nature of being young, and the second is that this recognition could help the UK to support young people more effectively and more fairly in accomplishing the transition from childhood to adulthood, with a maintained desire to learn and with the basic skills to acquire further competencies.'

No more rush

It is one thing to gain an appropriate basis for lifelong learning; another is to constantly make time to learn after the age of 25. In the 1970s, we saw some support for the notion of paid educational leave. Optimists saw this as a logical further step from paid holidays. They hoped it would soon become as normal a part of working conditions as paid holidays. That did not happen. And certainly

not in the last two decades when people have been too busy working and organisations too fixated on ever-increasing growth rates to incur the costs of giving time off. Nevertheless, Tom Schuller and David Watson now try to revitalise the ideal of learning leave as a 'good practice' entitlement.

But why should this idea suddenly stand a chance in 2011?

'Ironically, the current recession may open up new space for the idea. The prospect of large-scale unemployment is forcing us to rethink old assumptions about work and income, and how these are distributed,' explains Tom Schuller.

Yet, there is also another reason why Tom Schuller and David Watson recommend learning leave as an entitlement for people in the UK: they would like to put an end to the 'time squeeze' many people experience. Tom Schuller explains:

'The big barrier to learning at this stage in life is that the great majority of people feel an acute time squeeze when they are making careers and raising families. The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions has labelled this stage "the rush hour". This is especially true in the UK, with its culture of long working hours. Therefore it is no surprise that EU data on barriers to learning show UK respondents citing "work" more often than most others. 44 per cent of UK respondents said training conflicted with their work schedule, and 42 per cent said they did not have enough time to learn because of family responsibilities.'

So how would Tom Schuller recommend that the UK solves this problem?

'The aim must be to spread things out more evenly over the extended life and come to a conception of working life as generally running from age 25 to 75. This will not only put us in a better position to meet the pension challenge. It will also enable a smoother distribution of working time and allow us to have more time for learning.'

The second youth begins at 50

Suddenly the Latin expression *otium est* pulvinar diaboli (idleness is the devil's pillow) makes sense again, when reading Tom Schuller and David Watson's report. It breaks with the conception that people educate themselves between the ages of 25 and 30, work for 30 years and enjoy their retirement for 30 years. That no longer works. In fact, the authors' main reason for describing a third stage, from age 50 to 75, is to banish the artificial and outdated barriers of 60 and 65, which they think block creative thought and action on good practice. Instead, Tom Schuller and David Watson would like these

"So the issue is not whether people deserve a break from learning when they get old. What we lack is a conception of the good death as an equivalent to the good childhood. Learning to die well is unarguably a fundamental right."

Tom SchullerPROFESSOR AND DIRECTOR
OF LONGVIEW

dividing lines to fade away, improving health and other trends, which they foresee will happen with the pension changes.

'The very notion of retirement as a brief respite between work and death is quite obsolete when most people will actually live for at least 20 years after leaving paid work, and many for 30 or 40 years. We would do ourselves a big favour if we abolished the concept of retirement,' says Tom Schuller.

Tom Schuller would like to abolish the concept of retirement for two reasons. One is a broad consensus in the UK about the need to enable people to carry on working longer. The pension burden will become unsustainable if this does not happen. The other reason is a question of well-being. Most elderly people in the UK want to carry on working, if the right job is there and in the right form. However, many will have to work whether they like it or not.

The consequence of making UK citizens from age 50 to 75 part of the regular workforce does require a new view on turning 50. It is no longer enough to only prepare for not working. Instead, it should be seen as a time for doing two seemingly conflicting things: to encourage the extension of working life and to begin, at an earlier stage, to prepare for later life. The extension of working life requires a new perception of the senior workforce – not least among the employers in the UK. Moreover, it requires a dose of learning for people in this age group.

'As a crude but fair generalisation, you could say about people in their early 50s that their learning needs begin to splay out. Also the sheer numerical symbolism of the "big five-0" has its own power. So, I cannot think of a better number to remind people that they still have a lot of learning potential, and

the system is there to help them fulfil it,' says Tom Schuller.

Learning to die well

Memento mori: is there room for death in lifelong learning? This question is not unreasonable to ask Tom Schuller, who also sees the last phase of life, from age 75 and up, as a learning phase.

But do we never get enough of learning? Are we not allowed to stop learning when we turn 75?

'Of course the age of 75, as a generalisation and on average, tends to be an age of withdrawal and greater physical dependence. But in ten years time, millions more will be in this stage of life. And what is the learning agenda for them? The fact is that many of them will wish to carry on learning. Some will want practical skills, for instance in using new technologies to keep contact with their far-flung families. Without the demands of work or other activities to distract them, many will have much more time to ponder about their future. So the issue is not whether people deserve a break from learning when they get old. What we lack is a conception of the good death as an equivalent to the good childhood. Learning to die well is unarguably a fundamental right.'■

By Claus Holm



Tom Schuller
Professor and Director of
Longview, a think tank
promoting the value of
longitudinal and life course
research in the UK. He was
formerly Head of the Centre
for Educational Research and

Innovation (CERI) at the OECD and Director of the Inquiry into the Future of Lifelong Learning at the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education in the UK. Together with Sir David Watson, he is the author behind the report Learning *Through Life: Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning* (2009). This is the main report of the Inquiry, which was sponsored by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, and ran from 2008 to 2010. See www.lifelonglearninginquiry.org.uk

Visions for lifelong learning

Lifelong learning was a humanistic project in the 1970s and an economic project in the 1990s. What are the visions for lifelong learning in the 2010s? Four representatives from four international organisations explain their vision here.

By Claus Holm



oon lifelong learning will celebrate its 40th birthday. In 2012 it will be 40 years since a

UNESCO Commission chaired by the then Minister of Education in France, Edgar Faure, published the report *Learning to Be*. The report defined lifelong learning as a philosophical–political vision to build a democratic and emancipatory system of learning possibilities independent of class, race, economic ability and learner age. The report was also an example of a very typical approach to lifelong learning in the 1970s. Another and more economic understanding of the expression gained footing in 1990. Keeping to the level of headlines, one may

say that the concept of lifelong learning changed from being about 'learning to be' to 'learning to be productive and employable'. But that only takes us to the 1990s. What is happening today – in the 2010s? Are there new visions for lifelong learning?

This question is easier to answer if you know a little about the history of the concept. We will therefore take a closer look at some of the international organisations that have formulated visions for lifelong learning. We will look at the following four organisations: (1) the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), (2) the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), (3) the World Bank and (4) two European regional organisations - first the Council of Europe and secondly the European Union (EU). In the article 'International concepts and agendas of lifelong learning', Professor Hans G. Schuetze from the University of British Columbia, Canada, has described the contributions of these organisations to the concept in the 1970s and 1990s. The following summarises what he has told us.

In the 1970s, the four organisations described lifelong learning as a vision, with the UNESCO Commission taking the lead in 1972 by presenting lifelong learning as a humanistic, democratic and emancipatory vision. In 1973, OECD followed up on that idea and suggested recurrent education as a strategy and encouraged the idea of educational leave. Likewise, the Council of Europe introduced the concept *éducation permanente*, which shared many of the main features of the UNESCO and OECD models. Lastly, the World Bank sponsored a study of lifelong learning with important elements from the UNESCO report.

The agenda changed during the 1990s and became more economically oriented. UNESCO's persistent notion of lifelong learning receded into the background as a utopian idea and moral project. Put differently, the then President of the European Commission, Jacques Delors, did not set the agenda with the report Learning: The treasure within. On the contrary, the more economically oriented interpretation of lifelong learning, expressed by OECD in particular, dominated the picture. OECD published the report Lifelong Learning for All in 1996. It emphasised knowledge, information and ideas as elements in the economies of developed countries that were in the process of changing from the old industrial order to an emerging model of a learning economy. The European Commission followed the same track. In 1995 the Commission presented a White Paper that focused relatively narrowly on the needs of the labour markets and skills training for workers in the light of the global economy, scientific and technical progress. And if we jump to 2003, the World Bank presented the report Lifelong Learning in the Global Knowledge Economy with a crystal clear rationale: lifelong learning is education for the knowledge economy.

The conclusion is that the visions of the 1990s proved to be less utopian, but more pragmatic and useful for making concrete reforms in the organisations' member countries. But what is the balance between a humanistic and an economic vision for lifelong learning today – in the 2010s? On the following page you can read how four representatives from UNESCO, OECD, the EU and the World Bank, respectively, briefly describe their vision for lifelong learning in the 2010s.



What is your vision for lifelong learning?

Arne Carlsen

Director and Professor (Hon.), Dr.mult.h.c.

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, Hamburg, Germany

What is your vision for lifelong learning?

My vision is that lifelong learning shall be globally recognised and given its rightful place in the learning society: in sector-wide policies and sector cross-cutting strategies for the benefit of social, individual and economic development. Moreover, it should be based on humanistic values. Lifelong learning is learning for active citizenship, for social inclusion, personal fulfilment and employability. The humanistic values as a basis for learning comprise the right to learn, peace, democracy, sustainability, gender equity, tolerance, respect for others and intercultural understanding. Lifelong learning is also life-wide. It includes formal, non-formal and informal learning. It includes continuing education, training within vocational education and workplace learning. Adult literacy, adult basic education, continuing education and training as well as human resource development in a lifelong learning perspective are prerequisites for living and working in 21st century society. Together they constitute the main road to empowerment of people and resilience to adapt to, but also to intervene in, changing conditions of life. I personally believe that learning is a source of individual and collective fulfilment and a source of joy.

Elizabeth King

Director of Education

Sector for Education in the Human Development Network of the World Bank, Washington, USA

What is your vision for lifelong learning?

'Learning for all' is the key message of the World Bank's education strategy for the next ten years. Our overarching goal is not just schooling, but learning. Getting millions more children into school has been a great achievement of countries around the world. But the driver of development is ultimately what young people learn, both in and out of school: from preschool through adulthood and entry into the labour market. While a diploma may open doors to employment, it is a worker's skills that determine his or her productivity and ability to adapt to new technologies and opportunities. Knowledge and skills also contribute to an individual's ability to have a healthy and educated family and engage in civic life. Our strategy calls for foundational skills acquired throughout the education cycle that make possible a lifetime of learning. And learning for all means ensuring that all students, not just the most privileged or gifted, acquire the knowledge and skills that they need. This goal will require lowering the barriers that keep girls, youths with disabilities and ethnolinguistic minorities from attaining as much education as other population groups.

Androulla Vassiliou

European Commissioner for Education, Culture
Multilingualism Youth and Spo

Multilingualism, Youth and Sport EUROPEAN COMMISSION

What is your vision for lifelong learning?

In times of increasing economic and social uncertainties, making lifelong learning a reality is both an imperative political necessity to ensure growth and welfare in ageing societies, and a moral duty to grant each individual a fair chance of employment and social inclusion.

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and to contribute to its further development. Learning changes by age, but is not confined to any age. Learning is best supported in certain places - learning environments - but is not limited to these places. Learning is life itself, life-long and life-wide. Our contemporary societies and formalised learning arrangements still do not value lifelong learning enough as a rich resource and opportunity. It is of crucial importance to invest in learning as early in the life course as possible, but it is equally important to create the conditions to compensate for the missed opportunities. This defines lifelong learning as also a critical and transformative concept. Lifelong learners become active workers, responsible citizens and critical cultural participants. Lifelong learning enables people to overcome and change the ways in which society and education shape their life chances. But the policies and practices needed to realise this potential are often lacking. In many countries the institutional arrangements for lifelong learning provide too few opportunities for disadvantaged communities to reap its benefits. Lifelong learning is a concept that deserves to be at the very heart of educational

come to accept and respect it

Dirk Van Damme

Head of OECD (CERI) and Professor OECD Centre for Educational

Research and Innovation (CERI) in Paris, France

What is your vision for lifelong learning?

Learning – maybe next to loving – is one of the most important human activities. By learning we engage with the natural, social and cultural world around us: we acquire mastery of that world in order to change it, but we also

policy and practice.

MAKE YORSELF USEFUL!

International organisations have authority as expert advisors, but the political-moral authority belongs to the state. Vietnam's policy for lifelong learning is a good example of the difference between policy-making power and expert advisory power.

By Que Ann Dang

n 1986 the Communist Party of Vietnam took the historic decision to replace central planning in the Soviet tradition with a regulated market economy. Its goal was to end the country's international isolation and overcome its critical economic problems. This profound socio-economic reform, known as 'Doi Moi' ('Renovation' in English), brought changes in every aspect of Vietnamese people's lives, including education and training needs and learning opportunities for adults. Vietnam is joining or re-entering the international arena and reshaping its education policies in order to respond to new challenges in the country's development and globalisation.

Many international organisations, such as the World Bank, UNESCO, the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation (SEAMEO) and the ASEM Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning (ASEM LLL Hub), saw the transitional Vietnam as a laboratory for the introduction of different sets of ideas and practices in education at all levels, and increasingly in lifelong learning. But you would make a serious mistake if you think that Vietnam leaves the control to these organisations. Vietnam acts exactly as any other sovereign state. Even though Vietnam has stepped out of the shadow of the former Soviet Union and engaged with a much wider range of societies, Vietnam's leadership has often hesitated to make concessions that could amount to a surrender of state control, especially in the areas that are deemed important for social justice, such as education.

Let me give you two examples. The first is about the role and usefulness of SEAMEO. It was established in 1965 as a chartered international organisation whose purpose is to promote co-operation in education, science and culture in the Southeast Asian region. There are 11 member countries, namely Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Vietnam.

After the war and isolation period, Vietnam was readmitted as a SEAMEO member state on 10 February 1992 by the SEAMEO Council. Soon after that, in 1996, a SEAMEO regional training centre (RETRAC) was established in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, as one of the 19 centres belonging to the SEAMEO family. This centre was designed specifically for Vietnam and its neighbouring countries. Its mandate was approved by the SEAMEO Council, consisting of Education Ministers, to focus on education management through training programmes, consultancy projects, and the dissemination of information and knowledge. The centre targets its services at educators, administrators and practitioners who represent various levels and fields within the system of education, particularly post-secondary education within Vietnam and the region.

At the time of writing, the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training is in the process of establishing another SEAMEO regional centre, for lifelong learning. In this particular case, the government of Vietnam "The power of international organisations lies in their ability to perform as skilled expert advisors. But the role of providing useful advice to politicians should not be confused with the role of the politician."

would like this centre to be attached to the SEAMEO family in order to enjoy the prestige of this international organisation and previous experience of operating a regional centre. This could also be seen as a short cut to obtaining endorsement from member countries and access to financial support. In the case of SEAMEO, the international organisation is an instrument created to serve state interests or to reflect state preferences. In other words, it performs the function for which it was designed: to solve problems for states – and in this case, the interests of the Vietnamese state and other SEAMEO member states.

My second example is about the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). The European Union (EU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) created an interregional forum for policy development, ASEM, in 1996. And the ASEM LLL Hub, originating from the ASEM Head of States Summit IV in 2002, is one of the initiatives to form educational partnerships between the two regions. The ASEM LLL Hub, established in 2005, is nowadays an official network of Asian and European higher education institutions, working and learning together to conduct comparative research on lifelong learning, to offer research-based education policy recommendations, and to develop mutual understanding between Asia and Europe.

The Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training engaged in the work of the ASEM LLL Hub in 2008, and since then has become an active member country in the ASEM education process. Noticeably, the Ministry

hosted the second Asia-Europe Meeting of Ministers for Education in May 2009, the ASEM Conference on 'Increasing Opportunities and Removing Obstacles for Lifelong Learning' in October 2009, a seminar on 'Professionalisation of Adult Teachers and Trainers' in October 2010, and the Vietnam Forum on 'Lifelong Learning - Building a Learning Society' in December 2010 in collaboration with the ASEM LLL Hub. Additionally, two publications on lifelong learning were published by the Ministry, and a consultancy report The Situation Analysis of Lifelong Learning in Vietnam 2010 was conducted by one of the leading figures in the ASEM LLL Hub.

You could say that the ASEM LLL Hub is used as a partner to provide the expert knowledge that the Vietnamese state needs. The ASEM LLL Hub arrives in Vietnam at the right time when the government is planning the first national strategy for lifelong learning and building a learning society. The ASEM LLL Hub therefore is invited to exercise its expert authority.

The government of Vietnam – like other governments in Asia – plays an active role in partnerships and collaborative projects with international organisations for enhancing lifelong learning, especially literacy and learning opportunities for adults. As a member state of SEAMEO and ASEM, Vietnam chooses voluntarily to create and join their projects. In this regard, Vietnam has also contributed to the design of the governing structures of these international organisations. This may lead to the active in-

corporation of ideologies and practices with region-wide and worldwide connotations. The voluntary character, whereby member states voluntarily enter into agreements for self-betterment, is a powerful legitimating device allowing these international organisations to flourish. But make no mistake, it only happens as long as the relationship is useful for a sovereign state. The power of international organisations lies in their ability to perform as skilled expert advisors. But the role of providing useful advice to politicians should not be confused with the role of the politician.



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