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LIFELONG LEARNING POLICIES: EUROPE, AUSTRALIA AND THE PLACE OF EDUCATION IN THE POST- 2015 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Report of a Policy Briefing conducted by the
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Preface

The European Union Centre at RMIT was established in 2010 to support various academic, outreach and mobility initiatives. One such initiative is offering senior government, business and union leaders the opportunity to engage in discussions about key policy issues facing Australia, drawing on European Union experience.

The most recent of these Policy Briefings was conducted on the topic: 'Lifelong Learning Policies: Europe, Australia and the Place of Education in the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals'. The intention of the Policy Briefing was to bring together stakeholders with diverse perspectives with the aim of identifying a focus for innovative policy development. This Report presents a statement of the background to the topic, the lead presentations, and an overview of the discussion which occurred in the plenary session.

We are very grateful to the lead presenters, Professor Mike Osborne, University of Glasgow; Ms Susan Devereux, General Manager, Foundation Skills Branch Department of Industry; and Professor Barry Golding, President, Adult Learning Australia. Our final thanks are to all the participants in the Forum, representing a mix of international, national and local organisations. All made helpful contributions to the discussion.

The European Union Centre at RMIT is one of thirty five such centres funded by the European Commission to promote better understanding of the European Union, and to facilitate key partnerships. We are very grateful to the European Commission and the European Union Delegation in Canberra for their ongoing support.

Professor Bruce Wilson
Director

BACKGROUND PAPER

Purpose

This Policy Briefing provides an opportunity to compare policy approaches to lifelong learning in Europe and Australia, in the context of the global discussion about the importance of education and how it should be represented in the framing of the Sustainable Development Goals to be proclaimed from 2015 onwards.

The outcomes of the policy discussion will feed into a work activity to be implemented by the European Union Centre in its new Work Program. This activity will support Australian, EU and Asian adult learning associations to share experiences, particularly in building civic participation in Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) fora.

This activity will be implemented alongside the efforts to build a new global partnership to eradicate poverty and transform economies, following the period of implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. Education and lifelong learning are clearly a central part of the vision articulated by the High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

The EU and Lifelong Learning

On 1 January 2014, the EU entered a new seven-year budget period, to 2020. A key funding commitment is Erasmus+, for education, training, youth and sport. The Erasmus+ programme aims to boost skills and employability, as well as modernising Education, Training, and Youth work. The seven year programme will have a budget of €14.7 billion; a 40% increase compared to current spending levels, reflecting the EU's commitment to investing in these areas.

Erasmus+ will provide opportunities for over 4 million Europeans to study, train, gain work experience and volunteer abroad.

Erasmus+ will support transnational partnerships among Education, Training, and Youth institutions and organisations to foster cooperation and bridge the worlds of Education and work in order to tackle the skills gaps we are facing in Europe. It will also support national efforts to modernise Education, Training, and Youth systems. In the field of Sport, there will be support for grassroots projects and cross-border challenges such as combating match-fixing, doping, violence and racism.

Erasmus+ brings together seven existing EU programmes in the fields of Education, Training, and Youth; it will for the first time provide support for Sport. As an integrated programme, Erasmus+ offers more opportunities for cooperation across the Education, Training, Youth, and Sport sectors (see http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/index_en.htm).

Globally, the EU sees lifelong learning as an integral part of the change process, including reducing poverty levels around the world. It has the capacity to positively

affect many dimensions of poverty, peace and reconciliation, as well as conflict prevention.

Adult education creates change through enhancing employment prospects, improving health levels and financial literacy, as well as giving people better chances of acquiring the tools needed to run their own lives. However, these benefits are often not understood outside the educational discourse and there is a lack of recognition of the education sector when looking at development goals, in particular non-formal adult education.

Australia and Lifelong Learning

Responsibility for lifelong learning in Australia is shared across all three levels of government. At a national level, the vocational education and training system has been a key part of provision, especially as the economic issue of skills supply has become more significant. In trying to move from rhetoric to reality in providing lifelong learning opportunities for all, the Australian Government has seen its qualification system as a tool for promoting lifelong learning. The national qualification system can influence the volume, distribution and quality of accredited lifelong learning.

State and local governments play a key role as providers for individuals and for communities. Typically, these contributions are implemented in partnership with a variety of non-government and community organisations. This can make for a complex pattern of funding and provision.

Adult Learning Australia (ALA) is the key organisation promoting lifelong and lifewide learning in Australia. Its policy platform addresses issues related to: literacy, non-formal learning, Indigenous adult education, young people, ageing population, civic participation, regional and rural Australia, and the need for a strong community education sector.

ALA is the original founder and current member of the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE), a regional association of more than 200 organisations and individuals working to promote formal and non-formal basic and adult education. ASPBAE's members include NGOs, community organisations, government agencies, universities, trade unions, Indigenous peoples, women's organisations, the media and other institutions of civil society across the Asia-Pacific region. ASPBAE's major program areas are: Adult Literacy for Social Justice and Empowerment; Education for Women's Empowerment; Education for Peace and Conflict Prevention; Citizenship Education; HIV/AIDS Education; Indigenous Education; Education for Displaced Peoples (see www.aspbae.org).

Professor Bruce Wilson
EU Centre at RMIT

28 April 2014

PRESENTATIONS

Professor Mike Osborne

Education and Training – the Challenges for Europe

Michael Osborne
University of Glasgow

Two primary challenges in last decade

- Globalisation - Europe must set the pace in all the sectors where competition is intensifying.
- Information and communication technologies (ICT) in professional and private life – need for a radical overhaul of the education system in Europe and guaranteed lifelong learning opportunities

The Economic Challenge – weaknesses in labour market

- the insufficient number of jobs being created in the services sector, even though this is by far the most important in terms of employment;
- significant regional imbalances, particularly since enlargement in 2004;
- a high rate of long-term unemployment;
- labour supply does not match demand, which is quite often the case in periods of economic recovery;
- a shortage of women participating in the labour market;
- European demographic trends, in particular an ageing population.

Social Challenge

- European Social Model
 - include resources to support the transition to a knowledge economy.
- Social integration
 - promoted by encouraging work, guaranteeing viable pension schemes – at a time when the European population is ageing - and guaranteeing social stability
- Promoting social inclusion,
 - by combating racism and xenophobia, supporting equality of opportunity between men and women and measures to help the disabled.

Implications

- To compete
 - Greater investment in education and training especially in private sector.
- Public sector funding in US and EU on education and training is around 5% of GDP

Some comparisons

- Major discrepancies between the EU and Japan/USA in the level of private funding of education and training, and these are increasing
 - EU since 1995 (from 0.55% to 0.66% of GDP)
 - Japan - 1.2% USA - 1.6%
- Particularly evident in key areas for the knowledge economy, such as higher education, adult education and continuing vocational training.
- USA spends more than twice as much as the EU per HE student. In terms of GDP, the EU average is only 1.1% compared to 2.3% in the USA.
- Need for more private investment in continuing vocational education and training and adult education - great differences from one country to another.
- Only 40% of European employees participate in continuing vocational training courses (23% in small and medium-sized enterprises, SMEs) and only 62% of all employers provide any type of training for their staff (56% of SMEs).

Inefficiency and Focus

- tackle areas of inefficient spending
 - high failure, dropout and graduate unemployment rates, excessive duration of studies and low attainment levels.
- Focus on the training of education staff, new basic skills, lifelong learning, ICT, active citizenship and information

Communication from the Commission of 10 January 2003 - *Investing efficiently in education and training: an imperative for Europe*

See also EC (2001) *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality* www.bologna-berlin2003.de/pdf/MitteltenglEng.pdf

Nations – the challenge for 2000-2010

- Allow education and training to play a full role in European Employment Strategy and Lisbon Strategy
 - provide the level of public investment called for by the European social model;
 - put in place partnerships and incentives for greater and sustained investment from enterprises and individuals;
 - focus funding on the areas where it is most likely to produce results;
 - undertake reforms concerning curricula, quality and recognition with a view to maximising their efficiency in the European context.

How it all fits together

- EDUCATION AND TRAINING WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE LISBON STRATEGY
- Modernising education and training: a vital contribution to prosperity and social cohesion in Europe
- Education and training - new impetus for the Lisbon Strategy
- Success of Lisbon strategy hinges on urgent reforms (joint interim report for 2004 from the Council and the Commission)

Reference documents

- Investing efficiently in education and training
- European benchmarks in education and training
- Work programme on the follow-up of the objectives of education and training systems in Europe
- Concrete future objectives of education systems
- The Bologna Process: make higher education systems in Europe converge
- The Lisbon Special European Council (March 2000): Towards a Europe of Innovation and Knowledge

PREVIOUS PROGRAMMES AND INITIATIVES

- Eurydice, Education Information Network
- Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013
- Erasmus Mundus
- Socrates
 - Comenius, Erasmus, Grundtvig, Lingua, Minerva
- eLearning
- Leonardo da Vinci (Phase II)
- Tempus III (2000-2006)
- Programme to promote bodies active at European level and support specific activities
- Executive Agency
- Netd@ys Europe

Integrated LLL Programme 2007-2113

- to contribute to the development of quality lifelong learning;
- to help improve the quality, attractiveness and accessibility of the opportunities for lifelong learning available within Member States;
- to reinforce the contribution of lifelong learning to personal fulfilment, social cohesion, active citizenship, gender equality and the participation of people with special needs;
- to help promote creativity, competitiveness, employability and the growth of an entrepreneurial spirit;
- to contribute to increased participation in lifelong learning by people of all ages;
- to promote language learning and linguistic diversity;
- to reinforce the role of lifelong learning in creating a sense of European citizenship;
- to promote co-operation in quality assurance in all sectors of education and training in Europe;
- to exploit results, innovative products and processes and to exchange good practice in the fields covered by the Integrated Programme.

Comenius

- The programme concerned pre-school and school education up to the level of the end of upper secondary education, and the institutions and organisations providing such education
- Specific aims
 - to develop understanding among young people and educational staff of the diversity of European cultures and its value;
 - to help young people acquire the basic life-skills and competences necessary for their personal development, for future employment and for active European citizenship;
 - Comenius may support mobility and partnership actions, multilateral cooperation projects and networks, as well as accompanying measures.

Erasmus

- The programme concerned the teaching and learning needs of all those in formal higher education and vocational education and training at tertiary level. This applies whatever the length of their course or qualification may be, including doctoral studies, and the institutions and organisations providing such education and training.
- Specific aims
 - to support the realisation of a European Higher Education Area;
 - to reinforce the contribution of higher education and advanced vocational education to the process of innovation;
 - Erasmus may also support actions concerning the mobility of individuals, joint projects focusing inter alia on innovation and experimentation, the "Erasmus thematic frameworks" and accompanying measures.

Leonardo da Vinci

- The programme addressed the teaching and learning needs of all those in vocational education and training other than advanced vocational education and training at tertiary level, as well as the institutions and organisations providing or facilitating such education and training.
- Specific objectives were to facilitate adaptation to labour market changes and to the evolution of skills needs.
- Following actions were supported
 - mobility
 - partnerships focusing on themes of mutual interest to the participating organisations;
 - multilateral projects, in particular those aimed at improving training systems through the transfer of innovation and adaptation to national needs;
 - multilateral projects aimed at improving training systems through the development and transfer of innovation and good practice;
 - thematic networks of experts and organisations;
 - accompanying measures.

Grundtvig

- The Grundtvig programme addressed the teaching and learning needs of those in all forms of adult education, as well as the institutions and organisations providing or facilitating such education.
- The Programme aimed to:
 - respond to the educational challenge of an ageing population in Europe;
 - help provide adults with alternative pathways to improving their knowledge and competences;
- The following actions were supported by the Grundtvig programme:
 - mobility of individuals;
 - 'Grundtvig learning partnerships', focusing on themes of mutual interest to the participating organisations;
 - multilateral projects aimed at improving adult education systems through the development and transfer of innovation and good practice;
 - thematic networks of experts and organisations, known as 'Grundtvig networks';
 - accompanying measures.

Budget

- €13.620 billion for the 7 years of the programme. The minimum amounts to be allocated to sectoral programmes were as follows:
 - Comenius 10%
 - Erasmus 40%
 - Leonardo da Vinci 25%
 - Grundtvig 3%
- Compare with Structural Funding – €308 billion
- Increase of 21 per cent compared with 2000-2006. It represented over a third of the overall EU budget for 2007-2013 of €664.3 billion

The transversal programme

- The transversal programme comprised the following four key activities:
 - policy cooperation
 - promotion of language learning;
 - development of innovative ICT-based content, services, pedagogies and practice for lifelong learning;
 - dissemination and exploitation of results of actions and exchange of good practice.
- The specific aims were:
 - to promote European cooperation in fields covering two or more sectoral programmes;
 - to promote the convergence of Member States' education and training systems;

The Jean Monnet programme

- The Jean Monnet programme supported institutions and activities in the field of European integration. It covered three areas:
 - the Jean Monnet Action;
 - operating grants to support specified institutions dealing with issues relating to European integration;
 - operating grants to support other European institutions and associations in the fields of education and training.
- The specific objectives were
 - to stimulate teaching, research and reflection activities in the field of European integration studies;
 - to support the existence of an appropriate range of institutions and associations focusing on issues relating to European integration and on education and training in a European perspective

Erasmus+

- Education
- Youth
- Sport

Europe 2020

- Meeting Europe 2020 Strategy
- **Headline targets** in 5 areas: employment; research and development; climate/energy; education; social inclusion and poverty reduction.
- Education
 - Reducing the rates of early school leaving below 10%
 - at least 40% of 30-34-year-olds completing third level education
- Translated into specific national targets
- Areas are inter-related in 7 **flagship initiatives**: Smart Growth (3 initiatives); Sustainable Growth (2); Inclusive Growth (2 (including An Agenda for skills and jobs))

Specific Education Challenges

- Fighting rising levels of unemployment - particularly among young people
- The same risk threatens the high number of adult workers with low skills
- Providing citizens with the skills required by the labour market and a competitive economy
- The development of social capital among young people
 - encourage the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe (Lisbon Treaty)
 - non-formal learning activities, which aim at enhancing the skills and competences of young people as well as their active citizenship.

3 Key Actions in Education

- Key Action 1: Learning Mobility of Individuals is all about providing opportunities for individuals to improve their skills, enhance their employability and gain cultural awareness.
- Key Action 2: Co-operation for Innovation and Exchange of Good Practices is all about enabling organisations to work together in order to improve their provision for learners and share innovative practices.
- Key Action 3: Support for Policy Reform covers any type of activity aimed at supporting and facilitating the modernisation of education and training systems.

Education

- Mobility projects for Higher Education Students and Staff
- Mobility projects for Vocational Education and Training Learners and Staff
- Mobility projects for School Staff
- Mobility projects for Adult Education
- Joint Master Degrees
- Strategic Partnerships
- Knowledge Alliances
- Sector Skills Alliances
- Jean Monnet Activities

Mobility opportunities

- Student mobility between Programme and Partner countries
- Joint Master's Degrees
- Joint Doctoral programmes and other opportunities for researchers
- Staff mobility between Programme and Partner countries

Strategic Partnerships and Knowledge Alliances

- Non-EU partner countries can participate in these actions mainly targeted at programme country institutions, under the condition of bringing a specific added value to the project

Strategic Partnerships

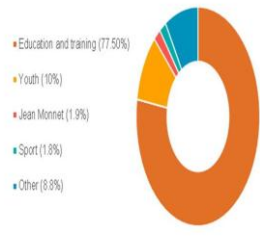
- Opportunity for organisations active in the fields of education, training and youth, as well as enterprises, public authorities, civil society organisations to cooperate in order to implement innovative practices leading to:
 - high quality teaching,
 - training,
 - learning,
 - youth work,
 - institutional modernisation,
 - societal innovation.
- Transnational and involve a minimum of 3 organisations from three different Programme Countries.

Knowledge Alliances

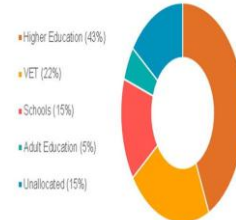
- to strengthen Europe's innovation capacity by fostering innovation in higher education via balanced, two-way knowledge exchange with enterprises and across the broader socio-economic environment.

Budget – 2014-2020

Erasmus+ Budget 14.7 billion euro



Education & Training Budget



Adult Education

- Opportunities for staff
- Cooperation between institutions & organisations
- Cooperation with business
- Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE)

Professional development mobilities

- Participation in **structured courses or training**;
- **Teaching and Training assignments** in an adult education or other relevant organisation;
- **Job-shadowing or observation periods** in any relevant organisations active in the field of adult education;
- Participation in **teaching or training assignments**;
- These activities can last from **two days to two months**, and in some cases up to a year.

Cooperation between institutions or organisations

- **Basic skills and active citizenship**
- Skills that facilitate **employment and social inclusion**.
- Working with partners in different countries to help **modernise adult education**
- **teaching assignments or joint staff training events**
- development and testing of **new curricula, teaching methods and educational approaches**

Cooperation with business (part of Strategic Partnerships)

- To develop the entrepreneurial skills and boost the employability of adult learners.
- To improve the management, leadership, and relevance of adult education programmes.
- **Job-shadowing**;
- Collaboration on **curricula**;
- **Training courses and seminars**.

Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe

- Online space to exchange, showcase, and promote methods of good practice in adult education
- To make **lifelong learning** and exchange of experience a reality;
- To improve the **quality and efficiency** of adult learning;
- To promote **equality, social cohesion and active citizenship** through adult learning.

Horizon 2020

- **Sub calls of: H2020-YOUNG-2014-2015**
- **Sub calls of Energy Efficiency**
 - Construction Skills
- **Sub calls of Mobility for Growth**
 - Aviation Skills
- **Sub calls for Low Carbon Energy**
 - Human Factor in Energy
- **Blue Growth**
 - Ocean Literacy

EuropeAid

- Annual Work Programme
 - Investing in People
 - HRD in Turkey
 - LLL II
 - Social Inclusion of Disadvantaged People

Ms Susan Devereux

Australian Government
Department of Industry

Lifelong learning: Vocational education and training in Australia

Susan Devereux
Foundation Skills Branch, Department of Industry
April 2014

Australian Government
Department of Industry

Strategy overview

- The Strategy is a framework for all Australian governments to lift the foundation skills of working age Australians (15 – 64 years).
- Includes an aspirational target that by 2022, two thirds of working age Australians will have skills at Level 3 or above.
- Effective from 2012 – 2022.

Australian Government
Department of Industry

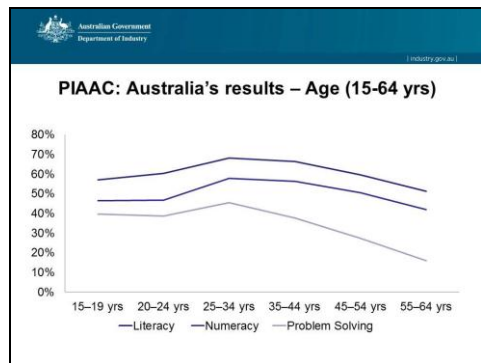
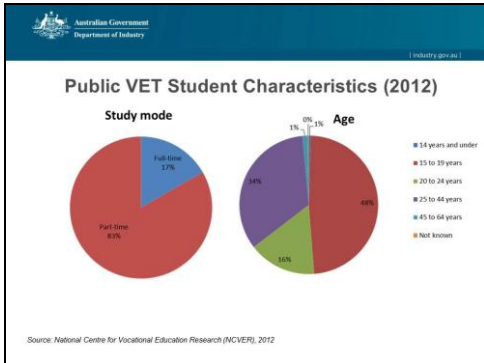
National Priority Areas

1. Raising awareness and commitment to action
2. Ensuring that adult learners have high quality learning opportunities & outcomes
3. Strengthening foundation skills in the workplace
4. Building the capacity of the education & training workforces to deliver foundation skills

Australian Government
Department of Industry

NFSS current activity

- Foundation Skills Assessment Tool
- Professional Development Workshops
- LLN Practitioner Scholarships
- Foundation Skills Champions
- Professional Standards Framework



- Australian Government
Department of Industry
| industry.gov.au |
- ### Resources
- Foundation Skills Workforce Development Projects, including e-newsletter www.dfeest.sa.gov.au
 - Foundation Skills Assessment Tool consultation schedule www.acer.edu.au/tests/fsat
 - Professional Development Workshops. Coming soon. innovation.gov.au/skills

Lifelong learning: the ALA perspective

Professor Barry Golding, President, Adult Learning Australia
(for Sally Thompson, CEO, ALA)

Preamble:

Parts A to C below are based on *Learning work and livelihood in Australia* (A. Clemans, A. Newton, R. Guevara & S. Thompson, 2013). The added *italicised text* provides an update, extra data and elaboration by Barry Golding representing ALA. The 'Additional Points' at the end are separate and additional ALA perspectives that Barry Golding offered.

Part A: Broad social, economic and demographic context in Australia

- There is a view that education and training will enhance employment prospects (therefore, most emphasis is on direct work relatedness). *However the main reason around one half of adults are not in work is because they are not well or they are caring for others).*
- The population is ageing; aside from slow natural increase, targeted migration is important (*almost half of adults are not in paid work*).
- Agricultural and manufacturing employment is declining; service sector employment is growing underpinned by a mining boon in some states (*but his is waning as many project come on stream and as China's growth slows*).
- There is a relatively low employment participation rate, under utilisation of skills and lack of increase in worker productivity (*but this is an area where women are bucking the trend*).
- Language, literacy and numeracy are low for workers, on average (*one third of adults are functionally illiterate*).
- Indigenous education and employment levels are concerning (*and not improving*).
- There are growing skills shortages and a need for a more highly skilled workforce (*but VET and ACE in a parlous state in 2014, with increases since 2012 in privatisation and a 'race to the bottom' in the poorly regulated training market, and government withdrawal from comprehensive TAFE and adult education provision*). *Many VET and ACE providers are now in crisis.*
- *The concentration (and drift) of most of Australia's population in/to large cities leads to inequities in regional, rural and remote Australia, where community and informal learning (including through ACE become increasingly important and cost effective, as the thin training 'market' becomes problematic: see The role of ACE in regional and rural Australia 2013, ALA).*

Part B: The education and training system in Australia

- Vocational education and training sectors include schools, HE and ACE providers and well as 'pure' VET providers.
- VET is increasingly closely tied to workplace skills.
- VET is widely seen as 'second chance' (*but returns from lower level VET programs are, on average, zero or negative, and many socially disadvantaged VET learners do not achieve the social mobility they anticipated*).
- Industry has concerns that graduate learners are not 'employment ready'.
- Graduate learners in VET have low course completion rates, and often do not enter occupations for which they have trained.

Part C: Policy around lifelong learning in Australia

- Lifelong learning is not specifically addressed in government policy (*but with lifewide learning is a cornerstone ALA policy*).
- There is a move from supply-side to demand-side funding arrangements (*oriented almost entirely to work based skills*).
- Individuals are increasingly expected to pay for their training.
- Government support is oriented to training aimed at getting people back into paid work.
- Underutilisation of skills is being addressed through the support of industries working through RTOs (Registered Training Organisations).
- Foundation skills training is focused on migrants, adults of working age with low language and literacy, as well as those unemployed (*though this provision is being severely eroded in most states*).
- Greater support being given to apprentices to increase completion rates.
- There is greater competition between private and public VET providers and more stringent reporting obligations.
- Articulation between sectors is being encouraged.
- The emphasis on education for employment is being made at the expense of education for a just and humane society.

Additional Points

- VET and ACE are in a parlous state in most places in Australia in 2014. Withdrawal of State funding since 2012 has greatly reduced options for learning in public and public providers, in both VET and ACE, particularly for adults with multiple and intersecting disadvantage (age, location, SES, disability, Indigenous, low literacy, poor health, in caring roles, gender).
- The duration and extent of unemployment, particularly among young people and in some regions has significantly increased in the past 2 years, see today's ABC News.
- The national government might take the lead from EU initiatives which include a focus on learning through sport, a huge and relatively untapped and unacknowledged learning frontier, with spin offs for health and wellbeing. The interconnections of sport with rurality, migrants and refugees, Indigenous Australians, gender, age (including youth) and health and wellbeing make it the biggest untapped learning frontier in Australia.
- Other, similar, joined up learning initiatives with preventative community health and safety-related organisations are likely to be cost efficient, produce cost savings for both sectors and also enhance employment and the economy as well as Foundation Skills and literacies. Learning through emergency and fire services, community men's sheds, neighbourhood houses and sporting organisations are good examples of the sorts of approaches that might be creatively considered in Australia.
- There is a desperate need for more research to document what is happening from an adult learner perspective in Australia, see ALA *Lifelong and lifewide* (Tampke, 2013).
- A critical and comprehensive study of learning by adults in Australia is well overdue. The last 'Cinderella' studies in 1991 and 1997 are now 17 years old and hopelessly outdated. The process of the *Learning through life* UK study might be used as a template.
- A carefully adapted Australian folk high school approach prior to HE, VET and work is worth piloting in Australia to find ways to address wastage due to huge levels of non-completion of programs by young people straight from school in both HE and VET.

Overview of Plenary Discussion

Professor Osborne's, Ms Devereux's and Professor Golding's presentations provided a very stimulating basis for a discussion about policy options. Professor Osborne indicated the continuing priority on lifelong learning as part of Erasmus+, which builds on experience with previous lifelong learning programs across Europe, and illustrated the opportunities for Australian participation. Other European initiatives can be found in Horizon 2020, and Europeaid. All these initiatives welcome Australian participation where Australians have good partnerships and can add significant value to the projects.

Both the European Union and the Australian Government share a priority on the importance of a system for constant training and retraining, especially one that supports labour market access for young people. The participants in the Policy Briefing voiced a range of perspectives on lifelong learning in Europe and Australia, and its relevance to a wider national and international policy agenda.

In the Australian context, there appears to be bipartisan support for a reform agenda that sees investment in training as a means to an end; there is little reference to lifelong learning for its own sake. Insofar as a broader framework of learning is supported, its intent is to support adaptability. The importance of transfer from one occupation to another is seen to be critical to effective skilling for high-end manufacturing, which is integral to the competitiveness of Australian manufacturing, and likely to become much more important as the mining boom diminishes.

Some features of the Australian system are seen very positively in international comparisons. The National Qualifications Framework does provide consistency across skill areas, and between its various levels. Young people from disadvantaged background can identify clear pathways through the Framework. The Industry Skills Councils play a key role in linking curriculum development with industry developments and requirements. The emphasis on the workplace as the key location for learning and on flexible delivery means that training is very practical and applied.

With respect to the social and cultural aspects of lifelong learning, on which Australia is much less articulate than the United Kingdom, however, the lack of clear responsibility across levels of government, and areas within government, means that there is no clear strategy, diminishing public funding and cost-

shifting, including to learners. An important exception to this is the National Foundation Skills Strategy for Adults that has bipartisan support from all Governments. It offers a 10-year program for enabling 'at least two thirds of working age Australians' to achieve literacy and numeracy sufficient to take account of new opportunities.

However, participants felt that the program on Foundation Skills was insufficient by itself to deliver on the attributes necessary for adaptability in the emerging economy. In line with the perspective offered by the ALA, there was concern that 'adaptability' involves much more than specific skills. A particular mind-set, or 'state of mind', is integral to enabling people to confidently manage transitions between different kinds of employment, encompassing location, employer, occupation, industry, types of technology, trade union and workmates. Transitions might well become the norm, but people will need much broader support than that offered through formal qualifications. There was mention that greater emphasis on entrepreneurship would have the effect of enhancing specific skills, and developing 'wider' skill sets. A current study being conducted by RMIT and ALA for the Department of Industry on Green Skills for a Green Economy supports these observations.

This is demonstrated through the international debate about Sustainable Development Goals that will be adopted in 2015. The quality of education has been identified as a key area of Goals, but continues to imply formal education whereas the learning integral to the future needs to recognise the importance of non-formal learning. The regional peak body for adult education, ASPBAE (Asian and South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education), of which Adult Learning Australia is a member, has advocated strongly for a comprehensive approach to education and learning, reflected in a clear commitment to education as a right; in the context of the SDGs, it is an enabling right which addresses economic, cultural and political issues.

This led to discussion of four areas which are critical to further development of lifelong learning in Australia (and perhaps more generally). These were:

- a) the economic and industrial orientation which underpins Australia's policies for adult education and lifelong learning is premised on the provision of support for displaced and disadvantaged workers to gain the skills necessary to seek new employment in occupations which are typically related to the knowledge economy. Two questions arise: does the current policy framework support skill development adequately; and is there sufficient recognition and support for the more generic learning related to the scale of adaptability which might be necessary?

- b) European and international debate continues to recognise the importance of ongoing learning in enabling people to participate effectively as citizens, in an increasingly complex political environment. How can this issue gain further prominence in Australian policy-making? How can all levels of Australian Government develop a more coherent approach to policy for adults to acquire not only the foundation skills necessary for the workplace, but also active lives as citizens?
- c) how to identify relevant measures which demonstrate the value, economically and socially, of programs which provide broad support for lifelong learning for worker citizens? Comprehensive measures of benefits to governments and to individuals, and of costs avoided, demonstrate that programs even with apparently poor rates of success produce very positive outcomes for individuals, communities and Government.
- d) how can Australia contribute constructively to the debate on the Sustainable Development Goals? Apart from promotion of a more comprehensive view of lifelong learning, it will be important to identify 'topline' indicators which both highlight longer term priorities, and allow for effective measurement of their achievements in enabling people to participate more deeply in economic and political processes.

The European experience provides a useful counterpoint to much of the current experience in Australia. While there is a strong tradition of recognising the importance of 'lifelong' and 'lifewide' learning, the current crisis has increased the priority placed on economic outcomes. However, there continues to be ongoing debate about the wider agenda, not only in Europe but also other parts of the world.

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