Asia-Europe Meeting

LIFELONG LEARNING & THE NEW AGENDA

You must **learn to change your life!**

Change is the new moral imperative. Therefore, **the small, lightweight, learning state is the ideal**.

By Claus Holm
Chair of ASEM LLL Hub

The 2010s are a defining moment for the rationale of lifelong learning. In the 1970s a UNESCO Commission published the report *Learning To Be*. This report defined learning and presented a philosophical–political vision to build a democratic and emancipatory system of learning opportunities, independent of class, race, economic ability and learner age. The agenda changed in the 1990s. Not only was the approach to lifelong learning more economically oriented, but one could also say that the concept of learning changed from being about 'learning to be' to 'learning to be productive and employable' throughout one's professional life. But it is equally important to be aware of the fact that since the 1990s until the present day the term 'lifelong education' has been replaced by the term 'lifelong learning'. This means that the role of educational institutions has become a matter of facilitating learning opportunities that enable individuals to change their lives through learning.

For the individual, the demand that 'you must change your life', as the German philosopher Peter Slotjerdijk formulates it becomes the absolute moral imperative of contemporary life. As a result, an increasing number of states practise a management that promotes the individual's motivation for education. So the moral imperative can be more precisely defined by the phrase 'you must learn to change your life'. That is to say that you not only have to learn to change yourself throughout your life, but also that learning is about life and for life.

The reason for the exhortation to 'change your life' is the global crisis and threatening catastrophes. An example is that we regularly hear about the ecological crisis – and the threat of global catastrophe – which is trying to assert itself as an authoritative global voice. Another example comes from Professor and Vice President at the Open University of Hong Kong, Wing On Lee, who in his article 'Learning for the future: The emergence of lifelong learning and the internationalization of education as the fourth way' (published in the journal *Educational Research for Policy and Practice* in 2012) draws attention to the fact that the contemporary educational landscape is distinct from its historical predecessors because we are living in an increasingly globalised world. In an economic context this means that existing jobs are short-lived, and the necessity for new jobs with new skills to meet new requirements in the new economies. In an educational context it means a break with the traditional functions of schooling as socialisation and the impartation of existing knowledge to the younger generation. Instead, schools are expected to develop human resources for an uncertain future and uncertain demands. This makes us future- and change-oriented, and issues of 'schooling for tomorrow', 'learning for tomorrow' and 'sustainable competitiveness' become the concerns of policy-makers, school leaders and teachers.

The requirement to be prepared to change through learning is also characterising the ideals for which lifelong learning systems are pursued. In this issue of *ASEMagazine*, Denmark and Singapore are described as two small states that successfully have been – and are – able to change by continuing their historical traditions of investing in education. Expressed differently: Singapore is an economic miracle, but first and foremost a miracle of change. Denmark is being called the next supermodel for getting to become a prosperous society, but is maybe first and foremost a supermodel for change.

"The moral imperative can be more precisely defined by the phrase 'you must learn to change your life'."

So you could first ask yourself whether Singapore and Denmark primarily act as these ideals because they and their citizens can live up to the new imperative of the Zeitgeist 'you must learn to change your life'. Second, I think you have to realise that not all states in this world of small states want to downsize in order to be as adaptive and changeable as Denmark and Singapore. Nevertheless, it is a defining moment for the lightweight learning state that manages to formulate lifelong learning policies that make people capable of dealing with rapid changes. ■

ASEMagazine
No. 06
January 2015

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SUBSCRIPTION
www.asemlllhub.org/magazine

DESIGN: Hiske Jessen
COVER: Hiske Jessen
PRINT: Zeuner A/S

FRONT PAGE
Polfoto

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 published twice a year. The magazine is published by the Secretariat for ASEM LLL Hub, at the Department of Education, Aarhus University.

Read more at www.asemlllhub.org

GETTING TO BE DENMARK? GET THE RECIPE HERE!

By Claus Holm

Can a country choose to become like Denmark? Can you follow a recipe to become a small state and a culturally homogenous society? Perhaps, but no researchers recommend it.

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The popular view of Denmark is a country with good political and economic institutions: stable, democratic, peaceful, prosperous, inclusive, and with extremely low levels of political corruption. So every extremely poor and chaotic country would like to figure out how to transform itself to be like Denmark or one of the other Nordic countries. This is what the famous professor Francis Fukuyama tells us in his two recent books: *The Origins of Political Order* (2011) and *Political Order and Political Decay* (2014).

However, it does not seem very plausible that contemporary developing – or any other – countries could become like Denmark in a short time given how long it took Denmark's institutions to evolve. 'Getting to be Denmark' is therefore a very long-term goal. It is also quite unclear whether and how Denmark's political order could take root in very different cultural contexts. Francis Fukuyama expresses it like this: "Most people living in rich, stable developed countries have no idea how Denmark itself got to be Denmark – something that is true for many Danes as well." And at the end of the book *The Origins of Political Order* Fukuyama underlines that the rise of Danish democracy is full of historical accidents and contingent circumstances that cannot be duplicated elsewhere.

This article raises the question whether this is actually true. Is there not a recipe for how to become like Denmark that works in the year 2015?

A Swedish recipe

In the last couple of years you could easily have got the impression that if you want a happy and prosperous population you should just learn to become if not like Denmark then like the Nordic countries – like Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland.

You can read books that describe the Nordic countries as doing relatively or exceptionally well, and in 2013 the weekly publication *The Economist* issued a special report called 'The Nordic countries. The next supermodel'. On the cover of this report was a Viking. You almost get the impression that 'getting to be Denmark' is a matter of becoming a Nordic Viking, who will solve all the problems that nations around the world are currently facing. It is probably not that simple. But where can such a relatively simple recipe be found? The answer is in the 2012 book *Inequality and Instability* by the American economist, Professor James Galbraith.

Children playing in a Danish school

James Galbraith tells us that the recipe was actually written shortly after the Second World War by two Swedish trade union economists, Rudolph Meidner and Gösta Rehn. And the important thing to notice about this recipe is that the Meidner–Rehn argument is general; it is not restricted to the special conditions of Scandinavia.

Meidner and Rehn distinguished between two kinds of country. On the one hand, there are countries characterised by large inequalities in the structure of pay, which permit technologically backward firms to stay competitive, despite higher unit costs, by paying their workers less than progressive firms. Thus a high level of inequality in the wage structure would be associated with weak technological dynamism, a lower rate of investment in best-practice technique, and, over time, a lower average productivity and standard of living than would otherwise be the case. On the other hand, there are countries that deliberately adopt a policy of compressing wage differentials, which puts the technological laggards out of business. It therefore releases labour, especially since backward businesses tend to be labour-intensive. But with active labour market policies – that is, providing education and retraining for displaced workers, a large investment goods sector replacing the lost capacity, and a policy of strong aggregate demand that aims to assure market growth sufficient to absorb the greater production – the end result can be rapid expansion by the technologically progressive firms.

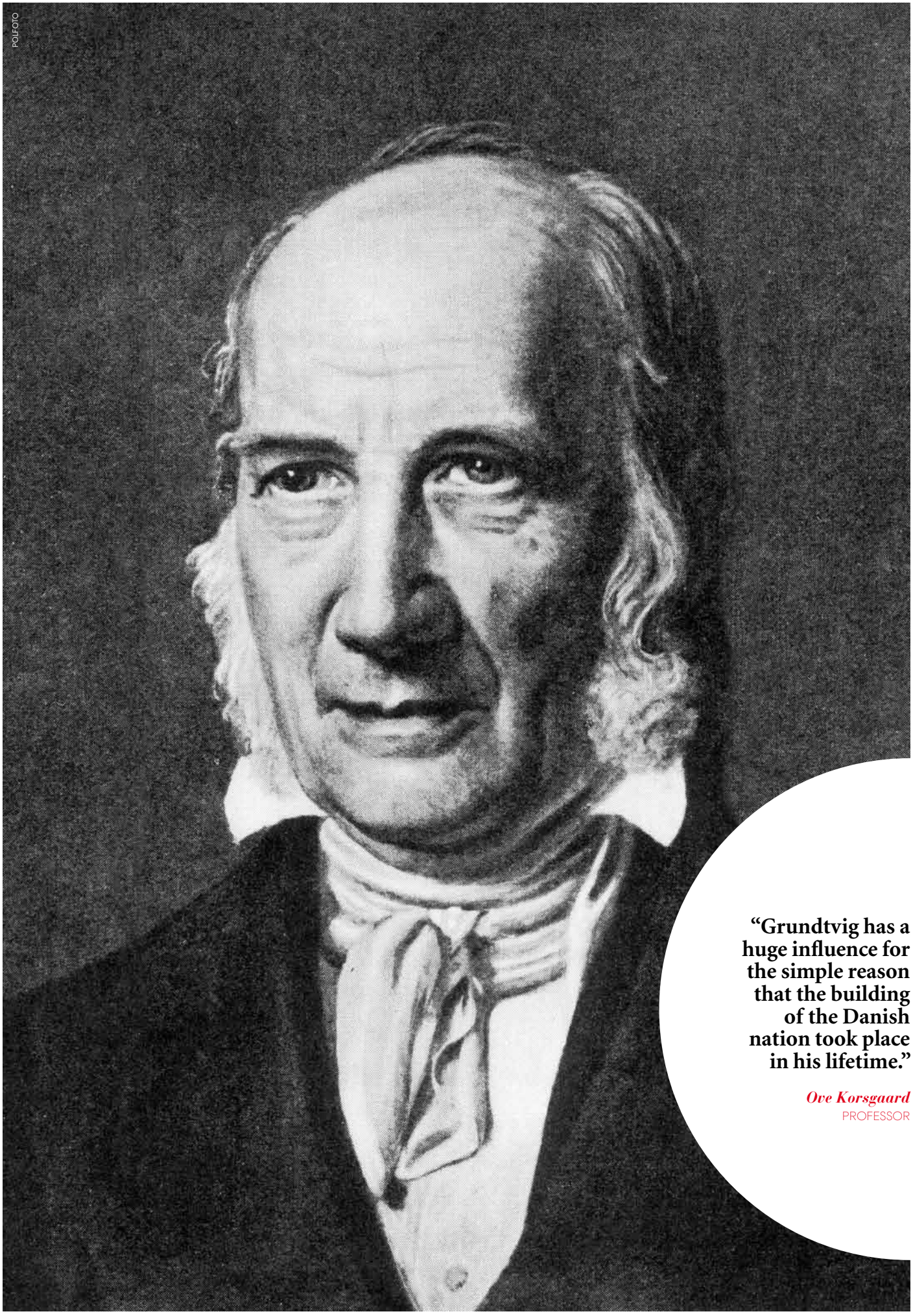
"Nation-building never ends, and Denmark's new challenge may be that of allowing for greater diversity"

Ove Kaj Pedersen
PROFESSOR

So James Galbraith's analysis probably fascinates many of us because it demystifies what it takes to become a Nordic country. Stated in another way, the Nordic countries followed a policy of social democratic wage compression, which increased average productivity and average living standards. And it only took 50 years, from the 1940s to the 1990s. So the first conclusion is that the only thing that made the Meidner–Rehn model 'Scandinavian' or 'Nordic' was that it was invented and applied in the Nordic countries and ignored everywhere else – until now. But is it really so simple? Is this recipe just waiting to be used? Not quite.

Learn to value equality

When the economist James Galbraith explains the Nordic countries' success in reducing unemployment, he, on the one hand, emphasises regional differences in the form of the structure of local economies and of their populations, and, on the other hand, he puts emphasis on European economic conditions as a whole. But what he does not emphasise is the role of national institutions and social values. This is probably why his recipe for 'getting to be Denmark' is not adequate. The inadequacy can be explained by comparing Denmark with Singapore. ›



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"Grundtvig has a huge influence for the simple reason that the building of the Danish nation took place in his lifetime."

Ove Korsgaard
PROFESSOR

Denmark is a small Nordic country among other relatively small Nordic countries. With its 5.4 million inhabitants, Denmark is the size of Singapore and less than half the size of New York City. Nevertheless – or maybe because of that – Denmark has been one of the world's most wealthy and prosperous countries for more than 40 years. The political economy of Denmark has attracted interest for quite some time, partly because of the country's welfare model and the inhabitants' quality of life, but also because of the Danish ability to adapt to international changes. The same goes for all the small Nordic countries. It is precisely this ability to adapt to the surrounding environment and make an impact that is often seen as crucial in the global order. But maybe the point is also that we are not talking about a mechanical adaptation, but about an adaptation informed by the social values that characterise the Nordic countries unlike, for example, the East Asian states.

In the Nordic countries the dominating social values are equality and solidarity. It takes time to build such a culture. So the conclusion is that if you want to 'get to be Denmark', then you have to develop a culture of equality. It takes time: more than 50 years, probably closer to 100 years. In any case, one can argue that it is a fact that Scandinavian social democracy, since its emergence as a dominant political force in the 1920s, has placed high value on social solidarity. This is demonstrated, firstly, in the emphasis on cross-class solidarity achieved through consensus-seeking alliance politics and it has also been strongly promoted through socially integrationalist education policies, which emphasise social class mixing and the importance of nurturing cooperative behaviour and community values. Secondly, it is – as Professor Andy Green from the University College London (UCL) Institute of Education, has pointed out in the book *Regimes of Social Cohesion* (2011) – demonstrated by the fact that the Nordic countries have an egalitarian school system that produces more equal educational outcomes and skills distribution, which contributes directly to income equality and indirectly to social cohesion. Likewise, adult learning contributes to high employment rates and social inclusion through employment, thereby also contributing to economic competitiveness.

"Most people living in rich, stable developed countries have no idea how Denmark itself got to be Denmark – something that is true for many Danes as well."

Francis Fukuyama
PROFESSOR

In brief, lifelong learning systems in the Nordic countries produce more equal skills outcomes from school and benefit from high rates of adult learning participation. You can condense this by using the expression 'equality through education', but such systems are not built overnight. The Scandinavian social democracies have developed – and used – these ideas about equality and education for all for about 100 years.

A moving target

A stationary target is easier to hit than a moving target. But the fact is that Denmark is a country that is moving and changing. So the question is not only whether there is a basis for maintaining the fairy-tale story that Denmark and the other Nordic countries incarnate in the period from 1950 to the early 1990s. The question is also, more generally, whether the necessary conditions are still present.

People singing in front of a statue of Grundtvig

POLFOTO

That is not quite the case, according to Danish Professor Ove Kaj Pedersen from Copenhagen Business School, whose book *Building the Nation: N.F.S. Grundtvig and Danish national identity* – edited in collaboration with Professor John A. Hall and Professor Ove Korsgaard from the Department of Education, Aarhus University – will be published in March 2015.

According to Ove Kaj Pedersen, the Nordic countries are at the moment moving from a so-called 'flexicurity' approach to a 'mobication' strategy. He explains: "The flexicurity strategy consists of flexible dismissal rules combined with relatively high support and training opportunities in the event of unemployment and active labour market policies. Such strategies and models for flexicurity exist in different forms in the Nordic countries and in other EU countries. But a new strategy is under way. You can name it 'mobication' – mobility through education – and it is based on the thought that the future employment policy must be able to create conditions that promote labour mobility and do this by using lifelong and systematic competence development for each and every individual."

In Ove Kaj Pedersen's words, the mobication strategy demands a change from a labour market policy to an employment policy that tries to conceive what should happen in the next five to ten years to make sure that the whole labour force continually has the ability to adjust to a dynamic development of the labour market. This again demands that there is good coordination between employment policy and educational policy, so that the Nordic countries create one of the most mobile workforces in the world that continually uses education to be qualified for new jobs, in new places and in new functions. The reason for this is that the Nordic labour markets are changing quite dramatically at the moment, with the Nordic countries experiencing a shift in the direction of knowledge-intensive production while many traditional industries are disappearing.

But Ove Kaj Pedersen warns against perceiving the new Nordic approach to flexicurity as a simple scheme that is ready to, or should, be exported. He says: "First of all, you have to be aware that Denmark is not only a political economy that has had advantages in the modern world. It is also a small state and a culturally homogenous nation state. I would not for a moment suggest that the rest of the world should move in this direction. It would be just the same as a call for downsizing and ethnic cleansing. Secondly, one cannot be sure that the Nordic model will be the winning strategy in the future. There are indications that the ability to adapt flexibly may no longer be the crucial ingredient to success in economic terms. Innovation may matter more, and that precious quality may benefit from, precisely, a rich and diverse pool of talent. Nation-building never ends, and Denmark's new challenge may be that of allowing for greater diversity."

The missing ingredient

So the recipe for 'getting to be Denmark' is as follows. Firstly, you should be or wish to be a small state and a culturally homogenous society. Secondly, you must currently use a strategy which creates both equality and mobility through education. And thirdly, a part of the recipe is a lot of patience, as it takes between 50 and 100 years to become like Denmark. Apart from this, the three steps of the recipe are relatively quite simple and easy to copy. And yet they are not. Maybe there is still an ingredient missing in the recipe, and perhaps you could call this ingredient 'Grundtvigianism'.

"the only thing that made the Meidner–Rehn model 'Scandinavian' or 'Nordic' was that it was invented and applied in the Nordic countries and ignored everywhere else"

James Galbraith
PROFESSOR

The Danish expert on Grundtvigianism is Professor Ove Korsgaard. In 2014 he published the book *N.F.S. Grundtvig as a Political Thinker*. This book is about the comprehensive impact of the Danish individual Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig (1783–1872), at once Lutheran priest, writer and philosopher.

The great impact of this individual – and the Grundtvigians who followed him – is reflected by the fact that Grundtvig represents a fundamental and inescapable reference point whenever themes such as people, nation, democracy, freedom, church and education are discussed in Denmark. Ove Korsgaard's opinion is also that Grundtvig is rightly regarded as the single individual who has had the most influence on the formation of the Danish nation and the explanation is the following:

"Grundtvig's ideas relate to the question about building a strong national identity from the bottom. This national identity should build upon education of people by using institutions from the civil society, not state institutions. Actually, Grundtvig and Grundtvigians criticised the state educational system – the common school, the Latin school and the university. Grundtvig's own hope was to create an alternative, more 'popular', system with private schools for children and folk high schools for young adults. After the defeat by Germany in 1864, Grundtvig's impact on the highly homogenous state territory was very great indeed. Grundtvig's ideas about a 'popular' elite came to dominate the folk high school movement. From 1864 to 1872 more than 50 new folk high schools were set up, most of them by Grundtvigians. According to Grundtvigianism, the public school could not, due to its ties to the state, be regarded as truly 'popular'. Only the 'free' school could be popular."

But it is one thing to have an idea of the Danish people being well-educated people, and another thing to make sure that such an idea will have an impact. Ove Korsgaard notes that in his younger days Grundtvig almost promised not to become a nation-builder. But he failed to keep his promise. Indeed, he became a kind of spiritual guide for many of those who were leaving the old 'household body' in order to join the 'national body'. The reason hereto is noted in Grundtvig himself. Grundtvig has a huge influence for the simple reason that the building of the Danish nation took place in his lifetime.

This was a coincidence of events and people, Ove Korsgaard admits, and points out that Francis Fukyama is correct when he in his contribution to the book *Building the Nation: N.F.S. Grundtvig and Danish national identity* stresses that sometimes certain historical events are catalysed by individuals and cannot be explained without reference to their particular moral qualities. ■

Claus Holm
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THE UPGRADING NATION:

To stay successful Singapore needs a ***new culture*** *of lifelong learning*

By Søren Christensen

Singapore needs to develop students who can think critically and solve problems. **But are Singaporeans willing to leave the traditional exam-centred approach to learning?**

In 1997 Singapore's then prime minister Goh Chok Tong gave a speech on the theme of 'Thinking Schools, Learning Nation'. The main point of his speech was that in the future the capacity for learning would become the key to national competitiveness. "Their collective capacity to learn will determine the well-being of a nation", Goh claimed. He also made it clear that this would mean that learning would no longer be confined to specific institutions or phases of life: "The task of education must … be to provide the young with the core knowledge and core skills and the habits of learning, that enable them to learn continuously throughout their life. We have to equip them for a future that we cannot really predict."

In making these remarks Goh was in one sense pointing to a whole new agenda for education in Singapore (more on this below). In a different sense, however, he was also summing up the lessons of the past. For 30 years Singapore had been going through a process of extremely rapid economic growth and to a large extent this process of economic development had been sustained by the very kind of collective capacity for learning to which Goh called attention in his speech.

Leapfrog the region

As is the case with the other Asian Tigers (especially South Korea and Taiwan), nation-building in Singapore has been shaped by a profound geopolitical predicament. In Singapore's case this predicament was created by Singapore's expulsion in 1965 from the Malaysian Federation which Singapore had joined only two years earlier. With no natural resources of its own and in the context of political and ethnic tensions with its much larger Malay neighbours, the fledgling Chinese-majority city state decided instead to 'leapfrog the region' by undertaking a strategy of industrialisation through an alliance with Western capital in the shape of multinational corporations (MNCs).

The context of a national 'struggle for existence' also meant that Singapore became a 'developmental state' where state strategies for national survival came to dominate political, economic and cultural life. From the beginning education was a crucial part of these strategies. The pre-existing multilingual and multicultural patchwork of educational institutions was transformed into a uniform national education system that stressed basic numeracy and literacy as well as the use of English as the common 'business language'. Furthermore, independent unions were suppressed and replaced with a new 'National Trade Union Congress' controlled by the government and acting as a partner in a process of consensual policy-making in which it served both to provide continuous feedback on the training needs of workers and to introduce national strategies for skills development into the labour force.

Be adaptive and stay relevant

Thus, from the outset it was clear to the government that Singapore's economic survival would depend on a strategy of continuous skills improvement – and one that made demands not only on workers, but also on MNCs themselves. The state played an active, sometimes almost aggressive, role ›

"The context of a national 'struggle for existence' also meant that Singapore became a 'developmental state' where state strategies for national survival came to dominate political, economic and cultural life. From the beginning education was a crucial part of these strategies"

Søren Christensen
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

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here. Under the direction of the Ministry of Trade and Industry, future national goals for industrial development were worked out and while MNCs supportive of these goals were courted with great zeal, industries deemed 'obsolete' were squeezed out of Singapore by means of massive pay hikes. On the other hand, these strategic goals were fed back into the training and education system in order to ensure that the skills profile of Singapore's small population remained aligned with the economic objectives of the state.

In this way a national culture of 'upgrading' was created in Singapore. The nation itself was not understood as a fixed entity, but as being in a process of constant change – incessantly renewing and upgrading itself in order to convert itself 'from third-world to first-world', to quote the title of 'founding father' Lee Kuan Yew's memoirs. This culture of upgrading came to permeate almost all aspects of national life. It made itself felt not only at the moral level – as an injunction to Singaporeans to be adaptive and 'stay relevant', to continuously upgrade and improve themselves – but also at the material level, as a prominent feature of the urban landscape itself. Thus, over the years the high-rise buildings in which most Singaporeans live have at regular intervals undergone state-subsidised 'upgrades', serving both as a symbol of national economic progress and as a palpable reward by a benevolent paternalistic state to Singaporeans for their hard work, discipline and adaptability.

Success depends on a shift

Even if much of this culture of upgrading remains in place today, the challenges of economic development with which Singapore is faced have, however, changed significantly in the last 15 to 20 years – both as a result of Singapore's economic progress and as a result of structural changes to the global economy itself. In a complex global environment where economic competition is increasingly understood in terms of knowledge and innovation, there are reasons to believe that the highly centralised approach of the classic developmental state is becoming less effective.

This is where Goh's 1997 speech becomes relevant in a different sense. If this speech has become famous as a watershed in educational policy in Singapore, it is because it unambiguously takes stock of this change. Goh claims that in a complex and volatile global economy Singapore's success will depend on its ability to shift to a new culture of lifelong learning where learners no longer simply respond to 'extrinsic' requirements for specific skills, but are capable of taking responsibility and seizing opportunities for their own development as learners.

"In recent years 'holistic education' has become a keyword among policy-makers, and Singaporeans are frequently exhorted to broaden their definitions of success beyond mere academic excellence."

Søren Christensen
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

Thus, Goh's speech sketches an agenda for lifelong learning that is in some respects at odds with both the political culture and the learning culture dominant in Singapore at the time. While the political environment in Singapore still remains centralised and tightly controlled, more significant changes have been made to the education system.

Stop exam-driven education

Singapore is usually included in the group of so-called 'Confucian Heritage Cultures' (CHCs). Even if it is questionable to what extent Singapore's multiracial, English-speaking migrant society can be characterised as 'Confucian', it is still true that Singapore's education system shares a number of important features with the other CHCs – not least the role of competitive examinations as the crucial driver of a high-intensity 'pressure-cooker' education system.

However, since the late 1990s policy-makers in Singapore have become convinced that in some respects exam-driven education constitutes an obstacle to developing a culture of lifelong learning and the state has therefore sought to address these weaknesses through a series of reform initiatives that collectively seek to promote a new kind of learner, one who is not simply 'extrinsically motivated' (by grades, examination scores and scholarships), but who is above all 'intrinsically motivated' – a 'self-directed' learner capable of reflectively pursuing learning goals for him- or herself.

This is closely bound up with an effort to move education in Singapore away from its exclusive focus on academic knowledge. In recent years 'holistic education' has become a keyword among policy-makers, and Singaporeans are frequently exhorted to broaden their definitions of success beyond mere academic excellence. In place of the traditional teacher-centred approach where students are drilled to absorb and regurgitate textbook material, policies of education now emphasise the ability of students to think critically and solve problems – that is, to develop the application skills in which Singaporeans are commonly viewed as weak, but which are crucial to a culture of lifelong learning. Through this new focus on holistic education (and, more recently, on character education) a new kind of 'learner subject' is targeted – not the traditional Asian 'mugger', but an inquisitive, independent-minded, resilient and risk-minded lifelong learner.

If it ain't broken why fix it?

As is the case with other East Asian systems where similar reforms have been pursued (e.g. Hong Kong's 'Learning For Life, Learning Through Life' or China's 'Education For Quality') it remains, however, disputed to what extent this change in learning culture has actually been achieved. In spite of a number of significant policy changes, exam-driven education remains firmly in place – supported by the general population who view public examinations as the guarantee of educational fairness and to some extent underwritten by the government itself which, while aiming to reduce 'over-emphasis' on examinations, still seems to consider the examination system and the competitive pressure unleashed by it as a precondition for upholding the intensity and high standards of education in Singapore.

Here the influence of international league tables like PISA, PIRLS and TIMSS may also make themselves felt. They consistently show Singapore to be performing at the very top internationally and this makes the project of radical education reform vulnerable to the 'if it ain't broken why fix it?' argument. Instead there are indications that crucial aspects of the new learning paradigm are being incorporated into the prevailing exam-driven and academically focused educational culture. Examinations themselves increasingly test problem-solving and application skills, and performance in sports and performing arts as well as leadership qualities are increasingly viewed as alternative routes into the 'best, – that is, academically highest-performing – schools. In this sense one may hypothesise that a peculiar local 'compromise formation' is under creation in which new qualities are rewarded in learners, but in ways that are adapted to and not in breach of the basic logic of the examination system. ■

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Asia-Europe Meeting

News from

ASEM education and research hub for lifelong learning

It is our pleasure to invite you to participate in the ASEM Forum on Lifelong Learning 2015 – RENEWING THE AGENDA FOR LIFELONG LEARNING – on 9–12 March 2015 at Grand Nikko, Nusa Dua, Bali, Indonesia. The forum is highly relevant because there is an urgent need to discuss this topic. In the contemporary economic crisis we need new visions and effective models for lifelong learning.

The forum seeks to engage representatives from all 32 EU member states and 19 Asian countries under the auspices of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) to discuss and construct concepts and practices for lifelong learning. At the forum researchers, policy-makers and practitioners will discuss the need to renew the agenda for lifelong learning, key concepts for policies and practices in Asia and Europe, and what role researchers and policy-makers should play in creating lifelong learning opportunities for all in Asia and Europe.

We hope you – together with other stakeholders in the field of lifelong learning – will participate in the forum. You can find more information about the programme and register for the forum at: *http://asemforum2015.au.dk*.
The deadline for registration is 10 February.

Read more

WWW.ASEMLLLHUB.ORG

About ASEM LLL HUB

The ASEM LLL Hub is the world's largest research network within lifelong learning. The ASEM LLL Hub brings together over 100 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.

Three GOALS

THE **ASEM LLL HUB** SEEKS TO:

1. stimulate the production and dissemination of new research-based knowledge in the field of lifelong learning.
2. facilitate the exchange of students and academic staff, in the interests of strengthening mutual understanding and higher education collaboration between Asia and Europe.
3. 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
- WORKPLACE LEARNING
- PROFESSIONALISATION OF ADULT TEACHERS AND EDUCATORS
- NATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR LIFELONG LEARNING
- CORE COMPETENCES

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Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

RE-PURPOSING LIFELONG LEARNING

By Annette Haugaard

Learning does not always lead to earning, so education must build up people's assets as labour markets transition, says Dr Allie Clemans from Monash University, Australia.

The educational numbers speak of success. About 20 per cent of Australians in the labour force between 15 and 64 years of age are enrolled in learning activities despite the fact that the country does not have a formal policy on lifelong learning. But, at the same time, in October 2014 Australia faced the highest rate of unemployment in ten years, at 6.2 per cent, and there might be a link between these two areas.

According to Dr Allie Clemans from Monash University, the prevailing discourse on lifelong learning assumes that learning leads directly to earning. She calls, therefore, not just for a specific strategy on lifelong learning in Australia, but for one with a wider perspective.

Allie Clemans says: "What becomes important in times of transition in industry, within organisations and occupations, is not just that people participate in learning but that we pay attention to what we need people to learn."

"What becomes important in times of transition in industry, within organisations and occupations, is not just that people participate in learning but that we pay attention to what we need people to learn."

Allie Clemans
PROFESSOR

The missing link

Although Australia has never formulated an official lifelong learning policy, in the late 1980s the government at that time launched strategies to support learning in all sectors of education. According to Allie Clemans, the Labour government recognised that the lack of economic competitiveness at the time was due to what it saw as a tired education system which was unresponsive to industry needs. The solution lay in the very same thing it blamed, and that was education. So began the reform of education and training in Australia. This gave a stronger voice to industry and created a particular focus on the way in which education and training could pave the way for citizens' economic participation.

Allie Clemans is critical of such a narrow discourse about learning as a direct way to earning both for society and individuals. She says that there is not always a direct link between learning and earning. That said, such a discourse in Australia has resulted in positive outcomes for learning such as providing a range of learning options, diversification of courses and providers, and different funding opportunities.

Broken promises

According to Allie Clemans, the discourse linking learning and earning prevails amidst harsh economic and social realities and broken promises. For example, many young people with qualifications struggle to get into the labour market. Two-thirds of graduates from lower-paid occupations undertaking training in Australia do not move into a different occupation level or gain higher pay on completion of their training.

What is the broken promise then?

"The basis of the Australian policy reforms from the 1980s was a system which adopted a perspective in which work and employment was its primary reference point. We have tended to perpetuate the promise that learning will yield earning but this is not one that is easy to uphold. Yet we continue to make it," explains Allie Clemans.

In Australia, the Core Skills for Work Developmental framework (CSfW) describes skills for work as a set of non-technical skills, knowledge and understandings that will underpin successful participation in work. In contrast, the International Labour Organization describes employability skills by creating space for contingencies. It recognises competences and qualifications that can be used "to progress between jobs, and to cope with changing technology and labour market conditions".

Allie Clemans says: "Our take on skills for employability is that if an individual successfully learns these skills, they will become more employable. Yet we know that there are many other reasons that circumvent employment such as supply, demand, gender and ethnicity for example. Our points of reference stay narrow instead of asking what is the work that learning should do now to address the realities of contemporary life and livelihood and to sustain us in these conditions."

Re-purposing lifelong learning

In July 2014, an industry report recognised that Australia needs to view its global competitiveness not just by sector but also by types of job. Jobs involving less routine and more complex interactions and judgement are the source of future employment growth. This context has led Allie Clemans to ask questions about the role and function of lifelong learning:

Should we consider how lifelong learning can and should respond so that individuals might thrive and survive in these times?

Should we be expanding our concept of foundational learning to include the skills needed to survive adversity, when labour market opportunities shrink or are not forthcoming?

Allie Clemans answers her own questions by drawing on the research of her colleague, Associate Professor Lucas Walsh from Monash University: "He has started to talk about not only building human capital and general capital but also about building adversity capital. Is this the job that lifelong learning should be doing?"

What should then be done?

Allie Clemans continues: "If a direct link between education and employment is unattainable, it does not make our acts of striving for it necessarily fruitless. We should keep trying to imagine that we can close the gap but, at the same time, let us also be critical of solutions that too easily put learning and learners at fault for not achieving the promise of employment. This might spark a more imaginative pursuit about what a solid educational foundation for lifelong learning is, what it comprises, what it holds up and what may be built upon it." ■


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"We have tended to perpetuate the promise that learning will yield earning but this is not one that is easy to uphold. Yet we continue to make it."

Allie Clemans
PROFESSOR

Allie Clemans
Allie Clemans is a Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Education at Monash University in Australia. She teaches and researches in the area of adult education and lifelong learning. This work spans diverse learning contexts – workplace education, vocational education and training (VET), adult community education and higher education. She has published in the areas of professional learning of educators and on lifelong learning and its capacity to enhance participation and transform livelihoods.

Trajectories of lifelong learning reforms in Latvia

By Que Anh Dang

Lifelong learning is, by definition, a complex and cross-sectoral area of policy development that transcends conventional boundaries because learning takes place in a variety of settings and in different contexts for economic, social, personal and societal purposes. Two experts in the field of lifelong learning identifies ten challenges facing ASEM countries now and in the next decade. **Lifelong learning research ought to offer new knowledge for devising solutions suited to different contexts**.

In the early 1990s Latvia looked to the Nordic countries as 'reference societies' for democratic ideas and welfare models. From the mid-1990s the influence of the European Union (EU) became stronger and Latvia turned to Brussels. These processes of political transition from authoritarian rule to democratic government have sparked different periods of educational transition. *ASEMagazine* asked the former Minister of Education and Science of Latvia, Professor Tatjana Koke, how such external references were made and how they influenced the lifelong learning policies of Latvia.

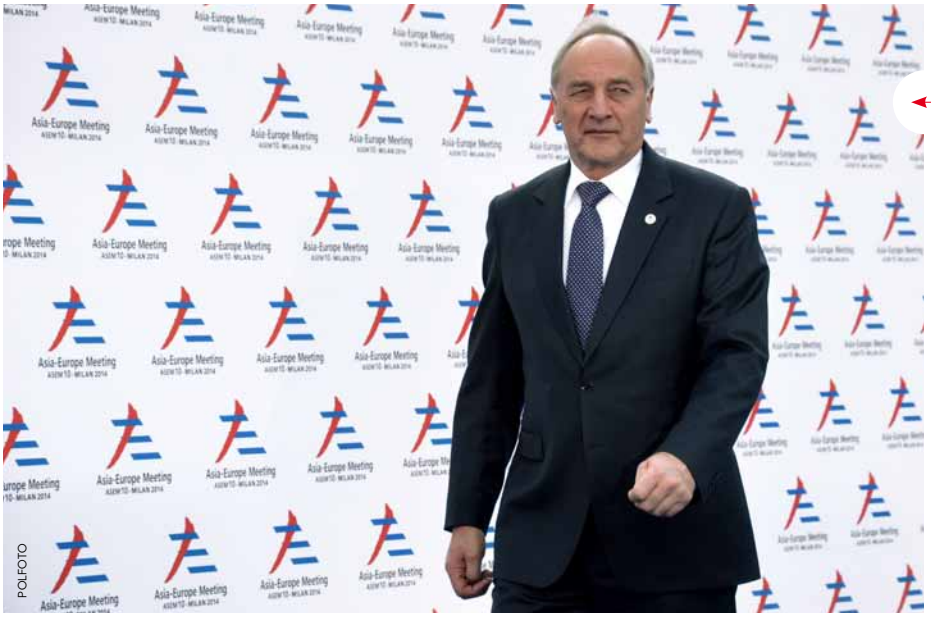
Affiliated with the Nordic region

After liberation, Latvia looked for an alternative approach to education that could distance the country from the former Soviet educational traditions. Western European ideology appeared as the only alternative for the transformation of the country. Unlike the former Soviet Central Asian countries which intended to hold on to the Russian structures and practices while restoring their own pre-Soviet traditions, the Baltic countries' main impetus for reforms was to 'return to Europe'. This was clearly reflected in their efforts to replace Soviet educational policies and practices with Western ones as quickly as possible in order to meet the needs of the market economy. It was also a political choice for the Baltic states to look to the Nordic countries as an example of how small states navigate the European political scene. The concepts of democracy and adult education were a policy stream that linked the Nordic countries with the newly independent Baltic states. The Singing Revolutions in the Baltic States in 1990–91 were a profoundly hegemonic moment that triggered a process of forming new alliances with other interested groups to share world-views and discourses. The hegemonic discourses in the Baltics then were around democracy and anti-communism. Decentralisation and democratisation were the key words in their political debates. Fairness also emerged in Latvia as a principal value, which helped corruption abatement, recovery of national pride and building trust. Thus the Nordic–Baltic cooperation was a potent combination of ideology and financial assistance which contributed to naturalising and privileging these particular discourses.

"The compliance requirements and level of financial support from the EU shaped the choice of Latvia to build its adult education strategies and adopt other discourses in the European educational space."

Tatjana Koke
PROFESSOR

Tatjana Koke explains: "We forged contacts with the Nordic countries because we felt quite close to the Nordic countries and in the 1990s they were very open to share their knowledge and experience. Not only scholars, but also Baltic practitioners, benefited from the Nordic extensive multilateral and bilateral grant schemes. A group of adult educators and NGO leaders from the Baltic countries were, for example, invited to the Nordic Folk Academy in Sweden for a summer course in 1992 to explore the Nordic concepts and traditions of *folkeoplysning* (people enlightenment). Subsequently, the Latvian Association of Adult Education was set up in 1993."



Andris Berzis, President of the Republic of Latvia, during the ASEM Summit of Heads of State and Government, Milano, Italy.

Undoubtedly, says Tatjana Koke, the Baltic states, especially Latvia, have achieved a great deal in building institutional foundations for lifelong learning. The first Latvian education law adopted in 1991 allowed establishment of private education providers at all levels, but it did not have any provision on adult education. However, during the course of the 1990s Latvia introduced a range of laws, such as the laws on craftsmanship (1993), higher education (1995), a new education law (1998) and vocational education (1999), which were subsequently amended several times in the 2000s. Latvia's Lifelong Learning Policy for 2007–2013 was also introduced and subsequently amended in 2009.

EU as a windfall of benefits

While the inspiration and support from the Nordic countries were significant in the early 1990s, joining the EU provided a windfall of benefits for Latvia: including funding and access to new knowledge for its stagnating education system, and opening up new co-operation with other world regions. The EU enlargement process is linked with rational cost-benefit calculations. Seen from this perspective the membership of Latvia is about both material and security gains. Latvia clearly moved from East to West through its membership of the EU and NATO in 2004, and of the Eurozone in 2014. As one of the most impoverished members, Latvia badly needed the EU's cohesion and structural funding to supplement the domestic unreliable and inadequate funding. This economic stream was the most powerful incentive for cooperation within the Latvian government and with the agencies of the EU. During the accession period, Latvia benefited from various EU education programmes such as Tempus and Socrates projects funded by the EU aimed at restructuring curricula, upgrading facilities and building institutions with a special focus on governance, democracy and legislative framework. These projects had the common feature of relating to vocational training, employment and the labour market policies that is the EU approach to adult education. The compliance requirements and level of financial support from the EU shaped the choice of Latvia to build its adult education strategies and adopt other discourses in the European educational space.

Looking east

Latvia's EU membership has opened a window of opportunity for Latvia's cooperation with other world regions. Latvia joined the ASEM political process in 2004 and Tatjana Koke herself participated in the second meeting of ASEM education ministers in Hanoi in 2009 in her capacity as Latvia's Minister of Education and Science. Tatjana Koke says: "My strong ambition as a minister was to use the opportunity to introduce my country. So before going to the ASEM education meeting in Hanoi I had a discussion with our prime minister and he agreed that I could propose that Riga would host the ASEM Ministerial Meeting in 2015, especially because it coincides with Latvia's presidency of the Council of the European Union. This is the first presidency of Latvia after 10 years of membership. This is a real opportunity for Latvia to be visible not only in Europe or the EU but also in a much wider context."

For Tatjana Koke the international activities are a means; the real goal is to build high-quality education in Latvia. She is keen to bring international students to Latvia as she believes that when there are international students in Latvia, more local students will want to study in Latvian universities because they will get additional multicultural experiences without leaving home.

In the pursuit of this endeavour, Latvia signed a memorandum of mutual recognition of diplomas with China during the state visit to Latvia in 2010. Tatjana Koke says: "We have worked really hard with the Chinese Embassy here for the memorandum of mutual recognition of higher education qualifications which I signed in Beijing. This definitely helped to establish the partnership between small Latvia and huge China in exchanging students."

In 2010 Latvia University established a doctoral school focusing on lifelong learning research and working in partnership with various universities in the ASEM countries. With this initiative Latvia aims to create home-grown solutions for home problems by adapting experience drawn from outside.

In the same year Tatjana Koke launched the first Chinese–Latvian dictionary, which was created by Professor Peteris Pildegovics, University of Latvia. After eight years of work, the successful publication of the dictionary was a historical event and an outstanding contribution to the educational exchange between Latvia and China. Recently three Latvian universities and three secondary schools have introduced a Chinese language curriculum. Besides the cooperation with China, Latvia has established cooperation with other Asian countries, such as Japan, Malaysia and Indonesia.

The trajectories of Latvia's lifelong learning reforms over the past two decades have shaped the position of Latvia in the Nordic–Baltic region, the EU and with its Asian partners. ■

Tatjana Koke
Professor Dr. habil. Tatjana Koke is Vice Rector of Riga Stradins University, former Minister of Education and Science of Latvia between 2007 and 2010, and a member of ASEM LLL Hub's Research Network for Core Competences.

THREE COUNTRIES, THREE APPROACHES TO LIFELONG LEARNING

By Anders Martinsen

The following article provides an overview of three Asian countries' **challenges and their success stories with lifelong learning.**

1

VIETNAM

From ***continuing education*** *to lifelong learning*

Continuing education has given more Vietnamese people access to the higher education system and raised the quality of education. **The next step is to motivate people in lifelong learning**.

The lifelong learning notion was presented in the Constitution of Vietnam in 1992, and in subsequent Education Laws. More details were provided in the Action Plan 2003–2015, in which lifelong learning accounted for two out of five strategic goals: to provide lifelong learning opportunities and to mobilise full community participation. In 2012, the Education Development Strategy 2011–2020 was introduced, which led to the National Framework on Building a Learning Society for 2012–2020.

Continuing education ensures equity

Before lifelong learning became a formal reality, the government promoted the learning society via the development of continuing education in order to make available study opportunities for everyone for their lifelong study needs. This work, which is considered to have been decisive in providing lifelong learning activities for Vietnamese people, has been growing in stature and size and hence successfully met the target of ensuring equity of access to education. In 2013, students following continuing education accounted for 25.5 per cent of the total number of students, with the areas of study developed to include almost all the areas covered by formal education, and with a learner-oriented and updated curriculum. Continuing education makes education available to individuals, assures equity of access to education and contributes significantly to the development of human resources for the country. While the formal education system cannot meet the growing demand for education, continuing education helps develop human resources locally and nation-wide by increasing the number of workers with a high level of education, and enhancing and updating the skills of the workforce.

Self-learning of individuals

Infrastructure to provide lifelong learning opportunities for all people in the community has also been expanded rapidly since 1997. Community learning centres have been highly appreciated in Vietnam as they are not only an effective delivery mechanism for providing education for all in the community, but are also seen as an effective model for promoting education for all.

All in all, continuing education can grow qualitatively as well as quantitatively. It has fulfilled responsibilities in developing a learning society where more people have access to the higher education system and in promoting and developing the strong commitment to the self-learning of individuals – the lifelong learning of individuals. Continuing education has likewise asserted to some extent that it is no longer poor-quality education for those not accepted in the formal education system. It is seen as a type of training more appropriate for a complex, fast-changing Vietnamese society in which individuals have numerous educational purposes and need to enhance their knowledge and skills.

The reality of lifelong learning

Therefore, continuing education provides a good starting point for the aforementioned Framework. The Framework's strategic goals are to build a learning society based on the development of the two components of the national education system – formal and continuing education – which need to be synchronous, connected and equivalent; and to build a learning society primarily focused on promoting lifelong learning activities for disadvantaged groups. With the approval of the Framework, Vietnam has totally formalised its commitment to this system of learning activities and lifelong learning becoming a reality in the whole of society. The government is to invest in the development of the institutions and pursue policies to encourage and motivate people in lifelong learning. ›

Source: 'Lifelong learning and continuing education in Vietnam, and the participation of distance higher education institutions', Le Thi Thanh Thu in *At the Sunset of MDG and EFA: Lifelong learning, national development and the future*

2

PHILIPPINES

High expectations for higher education institutions

A new system gives higher education institutions a fundamental role in the immediate community. However, **a total realisation of lifelong learning demands a rethink**.

The current Aquino administration has embarked on major education reforms and strategic initiatives to improve efficiency, upgrade quality and expand access to higher education in the country. The Road Map for Higher Education Reform 2011–2016 identified strengthening the management and faculty of the state universities and colleges as a key driver for realising the reforms. This strengthening includes evaluation of the extension work of universities as well as providing research and recommendations on scaling up and innovations in community extension.

Fundamental role of higher education

With respect to this, the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, which expands the basic education cycle of the Philippines from 10 to 12 years, has also recently been passed. This system gives higher education a more fundamental role – not only in training teachers and carrying out research, but also in formal education provision – as basic education aims to prepare students for the "world of work" as well as global citizenship. Non-formal education is not specifically included as part of the education ladder in the enhanced basic education programme. But it is recognised as one way of providing education as the Law states that the enhanced basic education programme can be delivered through alternative learning systems to ensure inclusiveness in education.

This recognition connects with the function of extension for universities and colleges in the Philippines. An extension, or community extension, is expected to deliver most on education that targets learners from the immediate community – out-of-school youth, farmers, women, people with disabilities and other marginalised sectors that often the formal education system cannot reach.

Empowerment to act

Following this, a mapping exercise has shown that literacy and education campaigns have become a major programme for many higher education institutions alongside parenting, community organising, livelihood seminars and small-scale business, and healthcare. It can be said that the emerging trend is for programmes that empower communities to act on the challenges they face in their lives and community. Moreover, universities also link these programmes to national and global development initiatives. For example, the literacy and education programmes implemented in partnership with local governments have contributed towards the eradication of illiteracy, one of the national endeavours of the Department of Education and a commitment linked to the Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All.

Realisation of lifelong learning demands a rethink

Where lifelong learning opportunities are embedded, the framework for lifelong learning within the Department of Education has not been amended or upgraded. In the same way, the community extension programmes are being measured in terms of their contributions to economic, social and political well-being. The assessment of action and learning at the individual level is not included in the assessment of outcomes. It is therefore necessary to rethink educational provision, quality assurance and learning assessments, as well as professional development for teachers and learning facilitators, if the framework of lifelong learning and the push to institute different corridors of learning are to be realised. Leadership in pursuing a lifelong learning system is also necessary. It is likewise important to define the key roles of the extension programme and other work of state universities and colleges, and that the universities continue their lifelong learning programmes and journey with their respective communities.

Source: 'Roles of universities in non-formal and lifelong learning in the Philippines', Cecilia Soriano in *At the Sunset of MDG and EFA: Lifelong learning, national development and the future*

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3

INDONESIA

More and better education for more people

In Indonesia education must meet two demands: higher levels of vocational skills and more education for more people. According to the World Bank, **this requires the government to play a more active role**.

The development of lifelong learning in Indonesia is largely inspired by the challenges of high unemployment, increasing poverty, a low-quality standard of living, and the social gap between the rich and the poor. According to a report from the World Bank on lifelong learning in Indonesia, Indonesia's education and training system is facing two key issues today: fragmentation and provision, and disconnections between demand and supply. At the same time, additional vocational or technical skills have become critical in Indonesia. It is clear that both technical and vocational education and training have become a prevailing part of lifelong learning in Indonesia. Individuals need this to adapt to the world of work.

Educational inequalities

Looking at the numbers, the inequalities in access to learning opportunities are large, particularly among children from households of different levels of wealth and income. According to the World Bank, less than 70 per cent of the children from the poorest 20 per cent of households reach junior secondary education. In contrast, over 80 per cent of the children from the richest 20 per cent of households participate in senior secondary education. Moreover, the disparities are larger at higher levels of education. At the tertiary level, the gross enrolment ratio for the children from the poorest households is only just over 2 per cent, compared with 50 per cent for the children from the richest households.

Predominance of vocational training

In spite of this, Indonesia has a long tradition of providing vocational training within the formal education system. These vocational secondary schools add specific occupational skills to their academic programmes and accentuate the preparation of students to enter the world of work and the development of a professional attitude. While the majority of these students enter the job market after graduation, an increasing proportion also continue to polytechnics and other professional training. More than half of the senior secondary schools are vocational schools and many public tertiary institutions are polytechnics, in addition to other vocationally oriented programmes in universities. To meet this increasing demand, a recent policy for the expansion of the vocational track has increased its enrolment share. In relation to this, some local governments have recently embarked on the possibility of establishing their own polytechnics. These initiatives are demand-driven, but financial and quality risks are great. Having said that, the new training programmes potentially have a clearer linkage to the skills needed by the local economies.

Active role of government

In addition, and in relation to the above, Indonesia has a remarkable tradition of private provision of education services to fulfil the described supply gap. However, most of these private schools and universities are largely considered as "second choice". According to the World Bank, there is therefore a need for the government to play an active role to deliver strengthened institutional support. Local governments in particular should reinforce their quality-monitoring and accreditation functions. All in all, the World Bank states that a lifelong learning system in Indonesia bears promises for the education and training system, but that these promises rely on the commitment to key policy reforms. ■

Source: *Indonesia: Broadening lifelong learning opportunities, World Bank*

Lifelong guidance:

a vulnerable **political concept** with a potential for development

In Europe, career guidance is high on the public policy agenda. **But in this policy review the view is also that guidance is a fragile concept since it is questioned whether it is inclusive enough**. EU resolutions on lifelong guidance have been adopted, yet there is no pan-European plan for developing guidance services. Guidance policies are national, not trans-national.

POLICY REVIEW

By Peter Plant
& Rie Thomsen
Aarhus University, Copenhagen, Denmark

The European Union adopted EU Council resolutions on lifelong guidance in 2004 and 2008, with a view to better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies. Thus the links between lifelong learning and lifelong guidance are clear, as they have been since the year 2000 with the adoption of the Lisbon Strategy on lifelong learning. In the most recent resolution, EU member states were encouraged to give special attention to four key areas in lifelong guidance:

- lifelong acquisition of career management skills
- **facilitation of access by all citizens to guidance services**
- quality assurance in guidance provision
- **coordination and cooperation among various national, regional and local stakeholders.**

This puts an emphasis on active citizenship, quality assurance and cooperation. But guidance has a wider role to play in relation to social inclusion in the lifelong perspective. Plenty of structural and cultural factors militate against the vulnerable members of society: they are being peeled off the societal onion, leaving a core workforce and a more peripheral group. In response, a number of recent guidance policy documents – including the resolutions from the European Council in 2004 and 2008, and *Career Guidance and Public Policy* from the OECD – have considered the following: the role of guidance is to be seen in relation to (a) the individual and (b) society – a classic pair. The two are seen as complementary, rather than as opponents. The overarching concepts that join the two are human resource development and social inclusion.

The dark side of guidance policies

Guidance is seen as a dual means to span both the development of individual competences in the lifelong learning perspective, and in terms of reaching out to those in need of support and guidance. This aim is expressed in the 2004 EU Resolution on lifelong guidance, which reads:

"All European citizens should have access to guidance services at all life stages, with particular attention being paid to individuals and groups at risk."

Clearly, these words balance the political aim of creating access to all-age, lifelong and comprehensive guidance services on the one hand, and focusing guidance services on those at risk, i.e. more narrowly focused guidance services, on the other hand. This political aim of targeting and limiting services to particular groups may have the counter-effect of stigmatising the very people who need career guidance services the most, thus placing career guidance in a social control role. This is the dark and often unnoticed side of narrowly focused guidance policies. The definition of career guidance adopted for a number of OECD/EU/World Bank reviews was this:

"Career guidance refers to services intended to assist individuals, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers."

This definition is wide and it encompasses a number of activities, often conducted in formal settings such as schools, colleges, universities or public employment services (PES), while social media, games, role plays, work experience programmes and other activity-based approaches are increasingly part of these efforts. In short, guidance is much more than a face-to-face interview. Collaboration, network-building and partnership are essential, as no single guidance practice or practitioner can fulfil all these roles, especially not in a lifelong perspective. Moreover, there is a move towards self-help approaches, including approaches designed to assist individuals to develop the skills of managing their own careers.

Comparative perspectives

Definitions of career management skills (CMS) vary across EU member states. CMS is Anglo-Saxon in origin. The French translation 'acquisition de la capacité de s'orienter' overlaps with the notion of 'self-guidance' Several countries (e.g. Slovenia and Sweden) consider aspects of CMS within broader forms of 'career education' and 'career development learning', including 'life skills' or 'personal and social education'. Some restrict its meaning to narrower tasks such as 'career planning', 'transition skills' and 'job search skills'. All this has implications for lifelong guidance approaches. Recently, the term 'career competences', based on experiences and concepts in the Nordic countries, has been introduced in an attempt to widen the understanding of CMS.

Despite difficulties that some countries have with the term 'CMS', there nevertheless seems to be a high degree of shared understanding, and most involve learning competences that support decision-learning, opportunity awareness, transition learning and self-awareness – the so-called DOTS framework.

In 2004 Watts and Sultana – respectively from the National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling, United Kingdom and the Faculty of Education, University of Malta, Malta – carried out comparative studies in the career guidance field. Clearly, guidance services reflect the economic, political, social, cultural, educational and labour market contexts – as well as the professional and organisational structures – in which they operate. Nonetheless, there are some specific differences between countries, for example differences between educational systems with strong early streaming and tracking mechanisms, and those with more flexible pathways where guidance services tend to play a more important role.

A vulnerable political concept?

In Europe, career guidance is high on the public policy agenda. Still, in most European countries coherent systems of lifelong guidance that are able to cut across sectors such as youth or adult learning institutions and the national or regional public employment services are still to be developed. Yet, there is no pan-European plan for developing career guidance services. EU think tanks such as the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network have taken the longer route to inspire national developments in a cross-country learning model, known in the EU as the 'open method of coordination'. This leaves lifelong guidance as a rather vulnerable political concept with potential for further development. ■

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Book review

Become your **own** confessor

A new book focuses on the many attitudes and different behaviours that affect **youth transitions in relation to work, well being, employment and career interventions**.

By Claus Holm
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Live in public! Live as if you are constantly being seen, rather than trying to remain unseen. This was the philosopher Jacques Rousseau's moral philosophical advice, inspired by a Roman writer whose highest goal was to build a house that was so transparent that everyone could see what he was doing. Today we are striving to follow this advice of Rousseau and the Romans. Being open, honest and transparent has never been more appreciated than it is now. Two Swedish researchers, Andreas Fejes and Magnus Dalhstedt, take up this theme in the book *The Confessing Society*. The book is not only about learning to disclose oneself as part of therapeutic culture, but also about doing so within the framework of lifelong learning practices. The book thus describes how the technology of confession becomes powerful through the practice of lifelong learning – and in this way disclosure acts powerfully to shape the contemporary citizen as a lifelong learning citizen. This citizen is concerned with progress and personal development through learning, which is becoming an increasingly individualised and all-embracing life activity. "Life has been colonised to become a life of learning," write the authors, who are interested in how modern liberalism can be seen as a mode of governing or a set of ideas about how governing should be conducted. The govermentality of today is dependent on the freedom of citizens. So the technologies of confession and disclosure are new methods of controlling citizens, not signs of less control.

"Life has been colonised to become a life of learning"

So what does the book tell us about what kind of phenomenon disclosure is? And where and how is it concretely expressed in relation to lifelong learning?

The disclosure of the self is emphasised as an important part of how people come to shape and understand themselves as citizens

POLFOTO

in the present day. Fejes and Dahlstedt's diagnosis of the contemporary society is that people today are invited, encouraged and fostered to disclose their dreams, aspirations, beliefs, fears, and much more, in numerous practices and forms as well as in numerous domains throughout society. And it is through this disclosure that people become objects that can be calculated, assessed, scrutinised and compared, and by processes of subjectification people come to understand themselves as certain types of subjects with certain types of capacities. It is through the very act of disclosure that people come to know who they are. Who are they then? The answer is that people are in the process of becoming lifelong learners for whom the technology of confession becomes a still more prominent – and taken for granted – feature.

Where is this taking place? According to Fejes and Dahlstedt, it can be seen in formal schooling (e.g. educational guidance and cognitive behavioural programmes in schools), planned learning activities at work (e.g. reflective practices within in-service training) and everyday learning (e.g. parenting and nanny television programmes). Across these areas the book gives examples of how the confessional mode operates within educational practices through different pedagogical methods such as the 'circle' or through the use of dialogue pedagogy. What all of these practices have in common is that they encourage disclosure, which, however, takes different forms in different areas.

Chapter four of the book, for example, describes how lifelong guidance has become a central policy concept within the European Union (EU) policies on lifelong learning in recent years. The concept of lifelong guidance merges educational and vocational guidance, blurring the boundaries between education and work, and thus it becomes an all-embracing concept that relates to a person's entire life. According to Fejes and Dahlstedt, this is evident in EU policy on education and lifelong learning, where they analyse how guidance is construed as a way for the individual to know the self. For example they point to the fact that the Council of the European Union argues that career management skills include being able to evaluate oneself, knowing oneself and being able to describe the competences one has acquired in formal, informal and non-formal education settings. The consequence is that the ideal of the lifelong learning citizen emerges. This means citizens who create knowledge about themselves, their aspirations and beliefs in life, who can define their own aptitude for development and who manage to make well-grounded choices in order to fulfil such aspirations.

The way of realising oneself as this new type of citizen is through dialogue pedagogy contexts where a two-sided relationship between the counsellor and the adult is constructed. The focus is on the desires of the one being guided. The individual is invited to participate in, and decide about, his or her studies. Such an invitation is constructed on an equal and free basis. It is a dialogue between two persons of equal rank and the individual is positioned as one who is free to choose. This equal relationship and the activation of the individual can be further enhanced through an individual study plan, i.e. a plan that outlines the wishes of the adult, is signed by both parties and is then followed up at a later stage. Both the dialogue pedagogy and the study plan are techniques used to invite and ask for disclosure of the inner self through descriptions of desires and wishes for the future. Thus what we see is how technologies of the self are at play through the workings of pastoral power. Such power emerged with Christianity and is closely connected to confession and pastoral power. The aim was to secure individual salvation in the next world.

"Modern lifelong learning citizens are not saved by someone, but save themselves."

But the surprising conclusion of the book is the following: modern lifelong learning citizens are not saved by someone, but they save themselves. Become your own confessor and counsellor through guidance! This is Fejes and Dahlstedt's diagnosis of the way in which the modern neoliberal state controls individuals. Thus there is not less governing today than before; instead, governing has taken on new forms. The role of educational counsellors as representatives of the state at a local level has given way to self-management. This is a historically new phenomenon. For example, in Sweden in the 1950s the role of the counsellor was to judge and assess the talent of each individual based on scientific expertise in order to place each citizen in the position that corresponded to their talent. Today the situation is different; the educational counsellor, rather than defining talent and providing advice, should enable citizens to become their own confessors.

But what is the scope of this conclusion? Are all practices suddenly turned into confession? And does confession take place in the same manner and with the same strength everywhere in the world? No, according to Fejes and Dahlstedt, not everything is turned into confession. You identify different ways to improve the working practice of involving measurement, assessment and normalisation by a teacher, colleague and the self. But if there is no decipherment of the self by the self, confession is not at play. But what about the question of how widespread confession through technologies of disclosure is? This question is not fully addressed by Fejes and Dahlstedt. However, it is an interesting question whether an individual, for example in Hong Kong, is just as much a part of the confessing society as a Swedish citizen is? It is not necessarily the case.

In the article 'The influence of Confucianism: a narrative study of Hong Kong teachers' understanding and practices of school guidance and counselling', Dr Ming-Tak Hue from the Hong Kong Institute of Education describes a study where the teachers (12 in-service teachers who had enrolled in the Postgraduate Diploma in Education programme at the Hong Kong Institute of Education) for the first time were not overwhelmed by imported elements from a foreign culture, even though the discourse of counselling and its knowledge has been dominated by models devised from the experience of Western countries, such as person-centred therapy. By contrast, the study showed that the teachers continued with some of the traditional cultural beliefs and practices related to Confucianism. For example the study showed that students are led to think more about their social duties and responsibilities, while the fulfilment of personal needs and the exercise of individual rights are also emphasised. To put it in another way, the teachers tend to help students see the reflection of their 'heart' and connect it to the outer social world. This study also showed, more generally, that it is essential to study cultural belief systems in relation to counselling. The reason is that teachers are carriers of such cultural orientation patterns and values that you must be aware of when helping to shape the culture-specific ways in which to confess to.

But let me finish this book review in the spirit that the book inspires – at least it inspires me to disclose that I find it very inspiring. ■

TEACHERS ARE MORE **INNOVATIVE** THAN POLICY PROMOTES

By Annette Haugaard

New research shows that the **strictly economic focus of Singapore's lifelong learning policies is not always reflected in the local practices of adult teachers**, which have a more humanistic orientation.

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"The whole country must become a Learning Nation. We will have to evolve a comprehensive national lifelong learning system that continually retrains our workforce, and encourages every individual to learn all the time as a matter of necessity."

By these legendary words in 1998, Singapore's former prime minister Goh Chok Tong embarked on investment in an educational system with the purpose of preparing a generation of thinking citizens capable of contributing towards Singapore's continuing growth and prosperity. But even though education and training programmes in Singapore since then are nationally sanctioned and targeted at learning specific skill sets, new research now shows that there is still room for individual variations in educators' teaching methods.

"Singapore's ecocentric and pragmatic approach to lifelong learning is far from homogenous in its acceptance and enactment. Cultural ways of being and differential placement within an ostensibly rigid system play out in ways that vary from officially sanctioned outcomes," concludes Dr Helen Bound from the Institute for Adult Learning in Singapore. Together with Associate Professor Peter Rushbrook and Magdalene Lin she has contributed to a newly published book called *Promoting, Assessing, Recognizing and Certifying Lifelong Learning*.

"Singapore's ecocentric and pragmatic approach to lifelong learning is far from homogenous in its acceptance and enactment."

Helen Bound
PROFESSOR

The Singapore Story

Lifelong learning in Singapore goes further back than the speech in 1998. Since 1960, when the country was under British influence, there has been established a legislated funding source along with training for non-professional and lower-skilled workers. In 2000, policies and practices created a system for continuing education and training (CET), with what Helen Bound calls a perceived need for steerage, quality assurance and surveillance which was expressed through a series of binding master plans.

"Singapore has a lifelong learning strategy and policy environment that links the circumstances of its history with the contingencies of a willing engagement with contemporary globalisation," explains Helen Bound.

Nevertheless, the above-mentioned speech is essential. It is seen as a central part of what is referred to as *The Singapore Story*, constructing a social imagination of a country that has a can-do reputation embedded in its national psyche and that lacks abundant land and natural resources so it needs to rely on a workforce with knowledge and skills strong enough to remain globally competitive.

According to Helen Bound, this rhetoric is based on a global discourse of lifelong learning privileging education as a human capital investment rather than a broader humanistic ›


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approach with the purpose to learn to know, to do, to be and to live together with others. Along with her two co-authors, she claims that Singapore's foci on productivity and innovation suggest that policy supporting lifelong learning has a principally economic intent.

"Singapore's adult education system focuses not so much on the need and development of individuals but on the capacity of the system to produce workers with knowledge, skills and attitudes for increasing productivity within the knowledge economy," Helen Bound states.

Exceptions at the local level

However, everyday actions in the Singapore adult education sector do sometimes differ from the dominating discourse. In *Promoting, Assessing, Recognizing and Certifying Lifelong Learning*, this is shown through two case studies and interviews with not only adult teachers who participate in courses developing educational capacities, but also programme managers and designers of the same courses.

"It is through the implementation of CET lifelong learning policy and how it plays out at the local level that it has the potential to be challenged and reinterpreted. Policy imposition is rarely total and may always be contested through the subjectives of agency. Consequences are played out and rules and procedures are interpreted in multiple ways," Helen Bound states.

The research team followed a Diploma of Adult and Continuing Education (DACE) course, which aims to develop reflective practitioners with a critical perspective who can have "a discussion about the different approaches to assessment and talk curriculum" as a senior manager within the CET sector describes it.

According to the three researchers, that was exactly what they saw when observing a highly experienced adult teacher. He, for instance, uses tea breaks as a liminal space for informal learning, risks stepping outside the suggested module instructional guidelines or sends his amended slides to his students without getting approval in advance. When confronted with this, he says that "I am very mindful that it is not a one-size-fits-all kind of cookie-cutter curriculum. You've got to trust the professional judgement of what is the best route to get the learners to the outcome."

According to Helen Bound, she sees him as a teacher challenging the dominating thinking within carefully defined spaces.

"He acknowledges that while some modules within his teaching programme appear to provide limited creative opportunities, they nevertheless can be reworked imaginatively within the state's competences and content," she explains and continues: "He is a change agent who develops an acute and critical but distanced understanding of the practicalities of curriculum implementation and transcends his understanding through innovative, imaginative teaching strategies."

"Policy imposition is rarely total and may always be contested through the subjectives of agency. Consequences are played out and rules and procedures are interpreted in multiple ways."

Helen Bound
PROFESSOR

Requiring breaks from the assumptions

Helen Bound underlines that the possibility of juggling with the standardised curricula does not only depend on the individual teacher's will and skills, but also on how strong a position he or she holds in the education system.

This is highlighted from the observations described in *Promoting, Assessing, Recognizing and Certifying Lifelong Learning*. A manager of the professional development of adult educators, participating in a project aiming to introduce meta-tools and meta-thinking processes and make small changes in the practice of adult education, created a project with the intention of "helping people to express the different issues with and aspirations of being a teacher," as the person explains it herself. She created an ecology room, a learning environment, for her own training team and afterwards a change was registered as she was more determined to help people find their way and become trainers after she had heard their stories.

"This resolve was driven by her awareness of her position within the organisation which she describes as 'a kind of catalyst, connector and a bit of a mover and a shaker'. She was able to use her powerful managerial position to advance her cause to implement an ecology room," Helen Bound notes.

Opening of limited space

According to Helen Bound, there are limited spaces opened for agential exploration by educational actors at the end of the policy chain. This is something she underlines with the example of using the tea breaks to explore implications of the shared class material and in the position of power to brave the workplace introduction of an ecology room learning space.

"To implement these apparently small learning gestures required a large break from the assumptions informing CET learning delivery, hence their agential qualities. So in spite of itself, Singapore may be exposing its workers, citizens and other learners to a broader range of lifelong learning possibilities than it promotes. Lifelong learning and its trajectories, then, though officially prescribed as a course of collective action, remain at least in part within the ambit of socially mediated individual choice," Helen Bound concludes. ■

Helen Bound
Helen Bound is a Principal Research Fellow and Head of Centre for Research in Work and Learning at the Institute for Adult Learning in Singapore. Her research work focuses on learning across a variety of contexts, including workplace learning, e-learning, professional learning and learning through collaborative activity.

Lifelong learning is, by definition, a complex and cross-sectoral area of policy development that transcends conventional boundaries because learning takes place in a variety of settings and in different contexts for economic, social, personal and societal purposes. Working in the field of lifelong learning on the global scale, Arne Carlsen, director of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, identifies ten challenges facing ASEM countries now and in the next decade. **Lifelong learning research ought to offer new knowledge for devising solutions suited to different contexts**.

10 CHALLENGES FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

By Arne Carlsen,
director of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
& Que Anh Dang,
University of Bristol, UK

1.

Ageing population

Many ASEM countries are now experiencing the effects of an ageing population, although starting at different times and proceeding at different rates. This implies that there are more people in the 'third age' and they require specific learning opportunities for personal development, for inter-generational transmission of knowledge and skills, and for an active and healthy life in retirement. Many societies also need the workforce to work for more years, and therefore there is a growing need for constant upgrading and updating of skills. These factors alone provide a powerful impetus for lifelong learning.

2.

Health

A healthy population is the wealth of a nation. Some research results show that learning helps people to have healthy lifestyles, to respond positively to changes in their circumstances, remain engaged in society and stay physically and mentally active. We need more knowledge on the effects of lifelong learning on health and human well-being.

3.

Employment

In a time of economic volatility and changing demand in the labour market, lifelong learning has become a 'must' if individuals are to create their own employment. The motto 'create your job, not apply for it' is becoming increasingly relevant. How can workplace learning and continuing professional development respond to the fast-changing nature of skill demands in the economy and make one employable and able to remain in employment?

4.

Multiculturalism

In environments where cultural diversity, race and ethnicity, and multilingualism are ordinary and seen as resources for social cohesion, a multilingual ethos and inclusive education can guide policy and practices. What role does lifelong learning play in the overall social project to create a harmonious, democratic cultural pluralism, and a healthy cultural diversity?

5.

Social cohesion and a harmonious society

Social capital of individuals, families and local communities is not the same thing as social cohesion at the country level. We have seen that intra-group bonding does not always translate into inter-group harmony. How can lifelong learning work in tandem with other policy areas (labour market, welfare, etc.) and social norms to enhance trust, civic engagement and tolerance among people and create a harmonious society in the ASEM countries?

6.

Migration

The trend of people migrating between European countries has increasingly become a norm supported by the right of EU citizens to free movement. In Asia, cross-border migration is still under tight control, but one of the blueprints of the establishment of the ASEAN economic community in 2015 is the free flow of skilled workers. In Asian countries, migration from rural to urban areas is a real social phenomenon. What kinds of learning opportunities need to be created for domestic and international migrant workers and their children?

7.

Community development

Local community is the everyday environment of people. Many Asian countries have a long tradition of community learning centres that organise lifelong learning activities to develop the community for better life and work.

Community decay is often associated with low skills, unemployment, benefit dependency, drug abuse and crime. Lifelong learning advocates have been encouraged by evidence that adult learners tend to be more active in their communities than non-learners. But what kind of lifelong learning will galvanise disadvantaged individuals and their communities, and thereby generate more neighbourly and safer social relations – 'the oil of community development'?

8.

Passivity and consumerism

The challenge of lifelong learning policy is how to strike the balance with the passivity engendered by the content-driven curricula of formal education and the neoliberal learner/customer choice. The passivity of conventional schooling and the culture of consumerism can militate against active, self-motivated learning.

9.

Gender equality

Gender is a major determinant of life chances at different stages in life, including schooling, job opportunities (and retirement age in some countries). In the past few decades expectations of gender roles have been changing, while men's and women's life expectancy and retirement age have also been converging in many ASEM countries, but not all. Gender inequality is in many ASEM countries still a major concern and challenge for lifelong learning.

10.

Sustainable development

'Learning to care for our planet' could be added as the fifth pillar next to 'learning to be, learning to know, learning to do, and learning to live together'. The Asian concept of a harmonious society emphasises, among other things, the harmony between human beings and nature. Current conceptions of lifelong learning tend to be orientated around economic versus humanistic interpretations. Sustainable development emphasises integration of economic, social and environmental issues and therefore may potentially provide an opportunity to re-inject social purposes into economic ones, and to humanise the economy. ■

LIFELONG
LEARNING
& THE NEW
AGENDA