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Newsletter

Lifelong Learning and Non-formal Education in Lao PDR and Southeast Asia



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Towards a Lifelong Learning Society in Lao PDR

All experts agree that Lifelong Learning (LLL) is the best concept for education in the 21st century. It is mentioned in international frameworks like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is valued by regional bodies like ASEAN or SEAMEO and it is at the heart of the Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP) of Lao PDR.

However, the fact that experts and decision makers agree on a concept does not mean it is well- understood at all levels and accepted by the people. And it does not mean at all that it is being implemented and used to guide the education policy and practice.

“Lifelong learning is closely linked to the joy of learning. If learning means fun to you, you will be happy to learn throughout your life“.

- Uwe Gartenschlaeger

Maybe nobody can recognize this more than us, the people working in non-formal education (NFE). We are facing the fact that too often LLL is understood as a new term for NFE, as a more modern word for all education outside the formal system. In fact, it is something entirely different, and that is why we decided to dedicate this issue for clarifying the concept of LLL and providing some good practices. As for me, the key is to understand that **ALL** sectors of the education system should contribute to enabling our children, youth and adults to be lifelong learners:

- Pre-school and primary school for example should teach kids the joy of learning,

because without a positive attitude towards education it will be very difficult to motivate people to learn.

- Secondary school as well as higher education should enable students to learn by themselves, as it will be their task throughout their lives to continue learning.
- All sectors, including NFE should build bridges of transition between the sectors, because youth and adults should be allowed e.g. to move from vocational education to higher education or to received second chance education and equivalency programs.

It is still a long way to build these LLL societies. But it is encouraging that the government of Lao PDR has decided to adopt a Prime Minister Decree on LLL Policy, as this will enable all actors to move forward and to shape their constituencies and the whole education system in the spirit of LLL. DVV International is proud to support the Ministry of Education in the process of developing the decree.

As this is the last Newsletter for 2017, I would like to take the opportunity to express my gratitude to all our partners and friends, who work with us in upgrading the non-formal education in Lao PDR and beyond. I have always felt that we are not too many, but that all of us work with passion and dedication to improve the livelihood of many people through education!

I am looking forward to celebrating new successes in 2018.

Yours,
Uwe Gartenschlaeger
Regional Director

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The Lifelong Learning Chain

Lifelong Learning (LLL) is the concept for shaping education in the 21st Century. It was affirmed in the Sustainable Development Goals and the Education 2030 agenda.

But what is LLL? This LLL chain wants to support us to present the concept to our participants, partners and decision makers. The chain consists of 40 pearls, each representing two years of our life:

-  4 years of pre-school
-  4 years of primary education
-  6 years of secondary education
-  4 years of vocational or higher education
-  60 years of work, retirement and non-formal education

In an easy to understand how the chain demonstrates two main ideas of LLL:

- LLL is a process throughout the whole life. The journey of education is interlinked, it is not possible to isolate only one segment. Governments, society and development partners should support the whole education agenda.
- The most time of life, non-formal education is responsible for providing education services. This should lead to improved financing of youth and adult education as well.

The chain was developed by the Community Center of the German city of Aachen (www.vhs-aachen.de), who kindly gave the permission for the use of the concept.

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Lytou Buapao
at the Lifelong
Learning Policy
Forum

Lifelong Learning in Lao PDR

H.E Lytou Buapao
Former Deputy Minister of Education and Sports

Lifelong Learning for all is very important in the era of globalization, particularly in the context of strengthening rural economies to be resourceful and sustainable, and concerning the integration of political, social-economic and cultural aspects of life. Globalization increasingly breaks down barriers between information, technology and communication. Climate change is harming people all over the world. The world's population is growing rapidly together with poverty and diseases. To address those challenges, the United Nations set 8 Millennium Development Goals in 2000 and 17 Sustainable Development Goals in 2015. These goals are designed to support member countries, especially Least Developed Countries including Lao PDR, to improve their peoples' quality of life. To achieve those goals, the Lao People's Revolutionary Party agreed at its 10th Congress that human resource development should be an important aspect to develop our country. Lifelong Learning supports building a sustainable economy, empowers people to develop country ownership, and also to build their family's as well as their country's wealth.

The Lao constitution stipulates that education is the basic right of Lao citizens. In the new Education Law of 2016, Article 26 remarks that Lifelong Learning is the integration of the Formal Education, Non-Formal Education and Informal Education to promote people in our country to create a society of wisdom based on the needs of development. In 1952, UNESCO created the Institute for Lifelong

Learning (UIL). UIL contributes to UNESCO's mission through creating Non-Formal Education and Lifelong Learning plans for member countries, and supporting them with monitoring and evaluation processes.

The World Education Forum was held in 1990 by UNESCO in Jomtien, Thailand and all participants adopted the World Declaration on Education for All and the Framework For Action: Meeting Basic Learning Needs.

In 2015, the World Education Forum was held in Incheon, Republic of Korea and adopted the Sustainable Development Goal 4: "Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning", including vocational training, higher education, research, and ensuring the quality of flexible learning according to the socio-economic plan and learners' needs.

The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), an intergovernmental organization promoting regional cooperation in education, science and culture in the region, established a Regional Centre for Lifelong Learning (CELLL) to work on regional Non-Formal Education, Lifelong Learning, and training centres as well. Furthermore, SEAMEO member countries including Lao PDR also have national Lifelong Learning departments and institutions on ministry level, the Non-Formal Education sector and provincial level, district level and village level.

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4 QUALITY EDUCATION:
 Ensure inclusive and equitable quality
 education and promote Lifelong Learning
 opportunities for all



For example, in Germany, DVV works on both community learning within Germany as well as Lifelong Learning internationally, running literacy classes and vocational trainings for people in Least Developed Countries, such as in South Asia and Southeast Asia. As another example, the Republic of Korea has established a Department and Institute of Lifelong Learning, and such centres on provincial and district levels to provide trainings depending on people's needs.

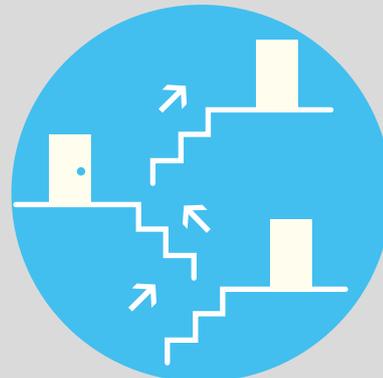
Lao PDR as a Least Developed Country wishes to liberate itself from this situation and to end poverty in the country. The Lao government has created the National Human Resource Development Steering committee, chaired by the Minister of Education and Sports, in order to achieve the educational goals of the People's Revolutionary Party as well as the Sustainable Development Goal 4. Best practices from neighbouring countries such as China, the Republic of Korea, Vietnam, Singapore, and Malaysia show that it can take less than 30 years to move on from the status of a Least Developed Country. A lesson learnt from those countries is to integrate Lifelong Learning for all as the first priority across a nation's development plan, not only concerning the Ministry of Education but all government, non-government and public sectors as well, from the central to the local levels. They all know the importance of Lifelong Learning.

Lifelong Learning for all with quality and a high standard is key to efficient, effective and successful human resource development. It is central to release our country from being a Least Developed Country, to make people wealthy, healthy, obtain home security and good regional integration.



There are still 750 million illiterate adults, two-thirds of whom are women

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- Over 150 countries are reforming qualification systems enabling recognition of learning outcomes irrespective of when, where and how the learning has taken place
- Over 95 countries have adopted policies on lifelong learning.
- ICTs have become a viable means for expanding learning opportunities

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Towards a Lifelong Learning Policy in Lao PDR

Ounpheng Khammang
DVV International, Vientiane Lao PDR

Concept and Background of Lifelong Learning

The evolution of human society from the past to the present has gone through a long process, we learn and create new things all the time and society always learns from those processes. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has made it their mission to promote and support the concept of Lifelong Learning in practice which was raised for the first time at the Second International Conference on Adult Education in 1960 in Montreal, Canada.

The concept of Lifelong Learning is a learning strategy which has started in the last 30 years under the joint efforts of the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development), UNESCO and the Council of Europe. Since then, the concept of Lifelong Learning has become more important. UNESCO has continuously presented ideas and suggestions for Lifelong Learning to the whole world in order to define the pathway for different countries.

In 1972, UNESCO held its 17th General Conference and presented the report of the International Committee on Lifelong Learning:

“Learning to be”. In this well-known publication, Lifelong Learning is defined as all forms of learning “from birth to death” or “from the cradle to the grave”. Lifelong Learning includes formal, non-formal, and informal education. It focuses on three areas such as literacy, vocational skills and professional skills to increase the rate of employment, and to foster personal as well as society’s development.

Development of the National Lifelong Learning Policy in Lao PDR

Lao PDR as a member of the United Nations and UNESCO, has committed to promote and implementing the Declaration of the Millennium Development Goals 2000 to 2015 (MDGs), Education for All (EFA), and the Sustainable Development Goals 2015 to 2030 (SDGs). These goals and the target of Lifelong Learning and Education have been set in different periods.

The Lao People’s Revolutionary Party and the Lao government have emphasised the importance of education as a key to the development of the human resource. In 2008, a new law on education was enacted, which has been revised and enacted again in 2015 to include informal education (Article 24) and



Our writer

Ounpheng Khammang, the
Former Deputy Director of DNFE

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Lifelong Learning include formal, non- (Article 26). Lifelong formal, and Learning is to informal education to encourage people to learn and build a sustainable society through development.

The new Education Development Plan of the Ministry of Education and Sports has attempted to develop legislation as a decree on non-formal education. Issued by the Minister of Education and Sports in 1998, this decree includes informal education and Lifelong Learning. Subsequently, the Department of Non-Formal Education has been responsible for developing the policy and the strategic plan for non-formal education from 2012 to 2020. Presently, in the 8th Education Sector Development Plan 2016 to 2020, seven strategies of non-formal education, and 36 indicators have been defined. The 5th strategy is to develop Community Learning Centres to be Learning Centres promoting Lifelong Learning for all, whereas the 6th strategy is to promote informal education and distance learning.

Concerning the Education Law, the Department of Non-Formal Education and other Departments concerned have developed a decree on Lifelong Learning with support from UNESCO and DVV International, The international experts have been invited to do research and draft the policy from 2015 onward. Currently, the Lifelong Learning policy is in the process of being reviewed and it will be sent to the Minister of Education and Sports for approval. The following step is to send it to the Prime Minister's office.

The Lifelong Learning policy is national legislation which will go down in history of Lao PDR as well as of the Education sector. It will create opportunities for Lao citizens to access education, improve livelihoods, and bring about sustainable development.

Rethinking Education from Lifelong Learning Perspectives

Dr Lamphoune Luangxay
 Department of Non-formal Education

Lifelong Learning (LLL) is a concept of education that acknowledges values of all learning outcomes and competencies in society. The concept is moving away from a narrow traditional view of education, which focuses on learning through formal schooling, to a notion of including all forms of learning – regardless of where and how such knowledge and skills have been acquired: through formal education, non-formal education and informal learning throughout one's life.

The recognition of all forms of knowledge and skills promotes all learning outcomes and competencies as equally important, which opens opportunities for all individuals to develop their expertise and to access benefits of national social and economic development policies. This should be considered as key for “development”, particularly to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In the context of Lao PDR, the Government has undertaken increasing efforts to provide education for all people. It is believed that attaining education means acquiring knowledge and skills for the development of individual and national levels.

Benefits of Lifelong Learning

<p>Individual <i>Healthy life and Decent work</i></p>	<p>Society <i>Contribute to peace, responsible citizenship and sustainable development</i></p>	<p>Economy <i>Contribute to inclusive and sustainable economic growth</i></p>
		

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Written by
Dr. Lamphoun
Luangxay

Proof of education's national importance can be found in the national development plan for each period of time in which the Government has prioritized the education sector over other development sectors.

Money versus Knowledge

It is believed that once people acquire "sufficient" education, they will be able to help themselves to improve their quality of living and to contribute to their communities as well as the national development as a whole. The higher the level of education a person acquires, the higher the level of development success. This means a person with higher knowledge and skill can choose an occupation that she/he wants and that returns higher benefits than people whose knowledge and skills are lower.

"A tray full of money is not worth a mind full of knowledge"

This view of education does not stem from experiences of the present world only, but it has existed for generations teaching younger generations. For example, our Lao older generation holds a proverb "A tray full of money is not worth a mind full of knowledge", which clearly illustrates that money is not as important as knowledge. This proverb reminds us that money will be used up one day sooner or later, while knowledge can be used to earn money and will inherently remain with us throughout our lives. It is thus that the difference of wealth of individuals and societies can be seen from their education attainment.

However, I would like to argue that knowledge or education in this sense should not be viewed as and limited to only the knowledge and education acquired from formal education institutes. Obviously, it is verified by certificates or degrees such as Bachelor, Master's and Doctor's degrees. There is a need to include all diverse skills and knowledge obtained from different education channels including formal education, non-formal

education and informal learning. I am saying this because, as you may see from the real world, knowledge and skills that people acquire from accumulated real-life experience are as important and useful as knowledge and skills provided by formal education or in some cases even more useful. For example, it is often said that "ten knowers talk, is not as good as an experienced person", which means knowing by talking (theory) is not actual knowing (understanding) until we apply this theory and gain experience from actual practices. Similarly, it is said "a head full of knowledge, but can do nothing for life". This proverb refers to the failure of people who were awarded with certificates or degrees but cannot transform their knowledge into real practice in their everyday lives. It seems to be true that degrees or knowledge acquired from formal education are not a 'magic formula' for solving every problem and they are, in many ways, not more important than knowledge acquired from experience, the so called "degree of real life". Unfortunately, it does not seem like there are any educational institutes which include this knowledge and skills in the curriculum and teach us all of these skills within 16 years (from primary education up to the completion of higher education).

I am neither saying that formal education is not useful, nor am I arguing that learning through real-life experience is more important than the qualification of formal education, but my argument here is that there is no single perfect knowledge which can be used for all problems in all contexts throughout one's life. Therefore, all knowledge including knowledge acquired from formal education, non-formal education and informal learning throughout everyday life activities should be seen as equally important and useful. However, it seems that people tend to define knowledge as dependent on certificates and degrees obtained from the formal education system only, while less attention is paid to the importance of knowledge and skills acquired from other learning sources including self-directed learning and experience. Ignoring such knowledge and skills creates inequity in society in a sense that it does not

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provide opportunities for those people who do not have degrees from the formal education system, and thus they are disadvantaged to have choices for occupations and employment. In order to improve this situation, the policymakers and educators should open their minds to a “new”, broader view of education, the concept of Lifelong Learning.

Recognition, Validation and Accreditation

As stated at the beginning, Lifelong Learning suggests rethinking and viewing education as part of the lifelong learning process ‘from cradle to grave’. It offers to view all knowledge and skills regardless of their learning sources as equally important, and suggests to re-conceptualize education in order to meet the new requirements for social and economic development in the era of globalization and rapid change of technology advancement. More importantly, the concept of Lifelong Learning requires to recognize, validate and accredit all knowledge and skills. Benefits for individuals and societies should be maximized through a system promoting and including such knowledge and skills in laws, policies, principles and rules. Individuals should be able to develop and utilize their knowledge and skills for themselves and thus to contribute to national development. Also, the private sectors and social organizations should equally recognize the importance of knowledge and skills. Therefore, it is not only important to understand the concept of Lifelong Learning, but more importantly there is a need for legitimate support from political will, policymakers and educators.

Currently, the Government of Lao PDR, and particularly the Department of Non-Formal Education at the Ministry of Education and Sports with support from its development partners are in the process of designing and developing a national policy on Lifelong Learning with a focus on the issues of recognition, validation and accreditation of all forms of learning outcomes and competencies. This policy is an innovative vision of education responding to the issues and problems of globalization and social change. It is, thus, required for us to break through the traditional view of education and to establish the concept of Lifelong Learning in Lao society as well as among international development organizations working in Lao PDR. We hope and are looking forward to receiving support and cooperation to promote Lifelong Learning for all individuals. As for the organizations, including private sectors and international organizations, we hope the concept of Lifelong Learning will shed light on their policies and we hope that this new upcoming policy will serve as working guidelines to promote Lifelong Learning in their organizations. We wish for them to become actors providing opportunities for all Lao people to access Lifelong Learning and to create enabling conditions for all people to enjoy the benefits of social and economic development and improve their quality of lives.

“Ten knowers talk, is not as good as an experienced person“

Lifelong Learning is a Human Right - A personal story from Cambodia

Peou Vanna
DVV International Cambodia



DVV International Cambodia's Country Director, Ms Peou Vanna, would like to share her own experience and personal story of Lifelong Learning with us for this Newsletter dedicated to LLL.

Ms Peou Vanna shares: "While I am learning English, I wanted to try some new methods that are quite different to the way that I used to learn Russian. In Cambodia, English grammar and reading skills are mainly taught in the public education system for only young generation students. During my formal education, I had no opportunity to learn English."

Therefore, I have had the freedom to choose a new way of learning – repeating simple sentences that foreigners usually use to learn other languages. To apply this way, I listened to audio tapes from English learning books to repeat and follow lessons

in the book. Fortunately, at my work place, I found my foreign colleagues who can provide me with the correct English, and who I can practise speaking English with. This way is useful to me as a beginner who learns the language for the first time, and I have no opportunity to attend a class. Every day I have to spend 30 minutes to learn the language by myself, and when I meet with people who speak English, I try to practice with them because I am sure they will be happy to speak with me and correct me.

In my case, I had some difficulties when I began to study English pronunciation and basic grammar because most English language books published in Cambodia are written focusing on conversations. However, I could establish the ground for English learning through my work place, I learned to write through email, I learned to speak with foreign colleagues, and I learned to listen through the audio tape.

In this century, technologies make it significantly easier to find and access things through the Internet. Especially for people who want to learn new languages or other things gain access to many new opportunities. For us, we just need to commit to prioritise Lifelong Learning in our everyday lives.

Lifelong learning is Human Rights!



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Vietnam Association for Learning Promotion as a Lifelong Learning Promoter

Khau Huu Phuoc
SEAMEO Regional Centre for Lifelong Learning



BACKGROUND

On 29 February 1996, an association was established in Vietnam with the mission to promote learning and nurture talents, and to build a learning society of Vietnam.

Neither official CLCs, nor recognised learning families or learning clans whatsoever were known of in the country at the time, and education activities were on a downward trend.

Twenty years later, learning movements have spread throughout the country not only through formal school activities but also thanks to more than 11,000 CLCs, over 8.4 million learning families, 65,200 learning clans and 70,356 learning communities, all being the vehicles for lifelong learning development.

A key player in this process is the organisation established on that date of 1996, Vietnam Association for Learning Promotion (VALP).

VALP is a social organisation established to garner different social resources for learning promotion, talent nurturing, and construction of a learning society in Vietnam. It has a hierarchical system of governance from central to local levels (wards and communes). Significantly, within twenty years of the establishment, VALP has developed and branched out to all provinces, cities, districts and communes.

KEY ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

In 2007, VALP was commissioned by the Ministry of Science and Technology to carry out research on appropriate models for a learning society in Vietnam. The research report, evaluated in 2009,

concluded that for a learning society to be built in Vietnam the pathway would be to start at the basic level of commune, ward, and hamlet, through the development of CLCs, learning families, clans and communities at hamlet level. The recommendation was approved and pilot movements were initiated.

In December 2015, VALP issued the Index of Learning Families, Learning Clans, Learning Communities, and Learning Units for the period 2016-2020. The Index is a resolute step towards promoting lifelong learning in Vietnam.

VALP offers a wide range of social services from supporting individuals in their learning to aiding teachers in difficult circumstances, from providing CLCs with consultation to publishing a newspaper and a journal. The online newspaper "Dan Tri" (People Intellect) with a wide circulation is a strong tool of knowledge dissemination. According to the online traffic ranking website "Alexa", it ranks 13 in Vietnam overall (2017), and as the fourth most-read domestic newspaper (after vnexpress.net, dkn.tv, and 24h.com.vn). The VALP Journal "Teaching and Learning Today" (ISSN 1859 - 2694) with many specialised thematic sections has established itself as a trusted science and education forum.

FUNDS

In September 1999, the Prime Minister signed Decision 183/1999/QĐ-TTg on the establishment of the Vietnam Learning Promotion Fund. The fund would come from four sources: membership fees, state funding, services (mainly commissioned projects), and donations (from individuals, and substantially from the business sector).

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In 2015, funding from various sources tallied at over 2,000 billion VND, double that of 2010. In the same year, the total state budget for education in 2015 was 224,826 billion VND, representing a substantial 20 percent of total state expenditure. Considering VALP's fund of 2,000 billion VND, chiefly from voluntary contribution, the association is indeed successful in pooling financial resources for education.

SUCCESS FACTORS

VALP has grown from an association with 100,000 members in the early period to 14,557,471 in 2015, with local units rooted in all local communities, and many schools of Vietnam. This success comes as a result of the convergence of:

- The resolution of the Central Government, and ruling Party to promote learning
- The close vertical coordination from the central government to local government
- The effective awareness-raising promotion of the benefit of education
- The synergy of different government offices and agencies, business sectors, and individuals in providing for people's learning

Twenty years to change the social conception for learning and to transform it to a nationwide learning promotion movement is a marvel. The path to the destination of a learning society is long, but VALP definitely will remain a key agent that accelerates the process.

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Lifelong Learning in Korea

An interview with Sunok Jo, Director of the Lifelong Learning Voucher System, National Institute for Lifelong Education (NILE), Republic of Korea

Interview questions by Raphaela Hess, DVV International, Laos

Q: Please tell us a little bit about yourself, and your organisation.

A: I am Sunok Jo, a Director of Office of the Lifelong Learning Voucher System at the National Institute for Lifelong Education (NILE) of the Republic of Korea. I have also worked in the field of lifelong learning and adult education with international organizations, including DVV International.

The National Institute for Lifelong Education is a public institution that specializes in the planning and implementation of the Lifelong Education Policy. All of the work that we do is closely connected to the lifelong education-related policies of the government institutions. The range of work that we do at our institution is very broad, starting from providing assistance in establishment of the nation's lifelong education comprehensive policy, to adult literacy education support work, learning city support work, to K-MOOC, the Korean MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses) operation work.

Q: What characterizes Lifelong Learning policy in Korea?

The lifelong education policy in Korea is based on the notion that the 'central and local governments have the duty to promote lifelong education'. The Lifelong Education Act of Korea requires that the central and the local governments establish lifelong education promotion policies and push them forward, in order for all citizens to be given the opportunities for lifelong education. Accordingly, the most distinctive characteristic of the lifelong education policy of Korea can be said to be the 'institutionalization' that propels the lifelong education policy based on the law and the basic plan. Of course, the level of such institutionalization

is not proportional to the level of budget or the size

of the workforce invested by the central and the local governments. However, it can be seen as an effort to increase the possibility in a more sustainable way, to expand the direct and indirect assistance for the lifelong education policy via possessing the minimum institutional foundation.

Based on such an institutional foundation, we have put in much effort to establish a system to promote a lifelong education policy for the nation of Korea, regions, and even to the unit of towns. If the central level has the Ministry of Education and National Institute for Lifelong Education, the local level is in charge of fulfilling the obligation to promote works related to the lifelong education policy through the local government and the Municipality Institute for Lifelong Education of each region as well as lifelong learning centers in cities. Therefore, the operation is structured so that the learning cities of Korea and local learning centers also receive financial support from the central government and applicable local governments. The regions which receive the financial support from governments are selected based on a fixed standard of evaluation by the central government, and also on the various types of lifelong educational programs that are in operation.

Q: Which has been your best personal experience with implementing LLL policy in Korea?

The most memorable moment for me, while working at the National Institute for Lifelong Education was the illustrated poems exhibition awards ceremony for adult literacy education. Support for the adult literacy education takes priority in the lifelong education policy of Korea. According to the study by the National Institute for

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Lifelong Education, the number of adults who do not have a basic literacy capability is approximately 2.6 million. Therefore, the National Institute for Lifelong Education serves as the national literacy education center with the assistance and support of the Ministry of Education in carrying out adult literacy education support work for these people to gain at least the minimum literacy capability in living their lives.

One of the most important tasks of the adult literacy education support work is raising social interest and improving awareness regarding adult literacy education. As part of this, each year we host 'the illustrated poems exhibition for adult literacy education'. Learners of the adult literacy education institutions prepare poems and paintings, and outstanding works are selected from these. Not only are they awarded but they are also showcased in exhibitions throughout the country. In Korea, a considerable number of adult literacy education learners are elderly women. Each year, when I see the winners dressed in beautiful traditional Korean clothes, talking about the joy of being able to read and write, with tears running down their faces, I feel the value and worth of working for lifelong education once again.

In addition, the award ceremonies also offer cherished moments for me to meet friends working for lifelong learning policy in different countries and receive requests from countries to share our experiences regarding the development of lifelong learning policies.

CONFINTEA – Global Support for Local Action

Heribert Hinzen, former DVV International Regional Director

How can big international conferences be important for national in-country work? Relevant for us is CONFINTEA, which is an acronym for a series of UNESCO world conferences on the development of education, training and learning during adult life. CONFINTEA brings together representatives from governments, civil society, universities, and international organizations.

For professionals and civil society, such conferences create the opportunity to influence content and orientation of the global debate on adult education and learning, and the outcome documents. Later, the respective recommendations and commitments can be used for advocacy work.

CONFINTEA and Community Learning Centres

CONFINTEA takes place every 12 years. The first conference was in 1949 in Helsingör, Denmark, and the latest in Belem, Brasil in 2009. In between, there have been Regional Pre- and Post-conferences as well as Midterm Reviews (MTR) to inform and exchange on what has been achieved, and what has not. The most recent took place just now in Suwon, Republic of Korea, during October 25 – 27, 2017.



Scene from the illustrated poems exhibition awards ceremony for adult literacy education

Education for Everyone. Worldwide.
Lifelong.



Lao PDR took up its responsibility and was represented by HE Vice-Minister Lytou Boaupao and Deputy-Director General for NFE Ounpheng Kammang in Belem, and HE Vice-Minister Khampay Sisavanh and Deputy-Director General Philany Phissamay now in Suwon. This is important as they can bring back global experiences to the national level.

Non-formal education, especially for youth and adults, is an important part of Lifelong Learning. This is true for Lao PDR as well as neighboring countries in South and Southeast Asia. Related activities are implemented by community-based institutions on the local level. In most cases, they are nowadays called Community Learning Centers (CLCs). Governments should support CLCs through policy, legislation and financing. However, looking at the current reality it becomes evident that more can be done, and should be done. Otherwise, “leave no one behind”, the new slogan coming from the global level, will not come true.

The Belem Framework for Action and the Sustainable Development Goals

Let us take one example from CONFINTEA VI. The Belem Framework for Action (BFA) states clearly: “Lifelong Learning ‘from cradle to grave’ is a philosophy, a conceptual framework and an organizing principle of all forms of education, based on inclusive, emancipatory, humanistic and democratic values”. Later, in pointing to details: “We recognize that adult education represents a significant component of the Lifelong Learning process, which embraces a learning continuum ranging from formal to non-formal to informal learning.” And in respect to CLCs it is called for “creating multi-purpose community learning spaces and centers.”

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were agreed upon by the United Nations in 2015 to cover the years up to 2030. They were a follow-up on two processes which had been important for Lao PDR also: Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In our advocacy work, we often expressed our frustration that non-formal and adult education played a very limited role in their implementation. We therefore used to refer to EFA with a second meaning: “Except for Adults”. Of course, this situation was not acceptable for us.

We advocated strongly in favor of youth and adults in the Post-EFA-2015-Process, and especially towards a Lifelong

Learning perspective. And in several respects we succeeded. The overall education goal is now stated closely aligning with our own ideas: “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote Lifelong Learning opportunities for all”. And in respect to CLCs, we managed to include: “Make learning spaces and environments for non-formal and adult learning and education widely available, including networks of community learning centers and spaces and provision for access to IT resources as essential elements of Lifelong Learning.”

CONFINTEA Midterm in Suwon

The conference brought together 410 participants from 103 countries. It was more of a technical meeting to review what has been achieved since 2009. The Republic of Korea was a wonderful host which all of us enjoyed. The program was rich with a huge number of plenary and workshop sessions. They centered around regional reviews, how to improve action, perspectives towards the SDGs, as well as monitoring and measurements at national and global levels.

The Report on the Conference is currently under preparation. It will cover all the presentations and discussions in a condensed form. An important feature is the big question on how to bring the goals, targets and indicators of the two processes of the BFA of CONFINTEA and the SDG No. 4, Education Agenda 2030, closer together.

I was a member of the Drafting Group for the Outcome Statement. Actually, it was five of us in this group who had already worked on the BFA. The Draft was introduced in the last session of the conference and widely approved of. At the same time, several suggestions for improvement were made, and they should be included in the final version.

Soon the Report and the Statement will be made public, and together with all other details like the regional reports, will be available on www.uil.unesco.org.

Interesting

Important Website in region

www.aspbae.org

www.pria.org

www.seameocelll.org

Interesting publications

Adult Education and Development

AED 84: Inclusion and Diversity

AED 83: Skills and Competencies

AED 82: Global Citizenship Education

AED 81: Communities

International Perspectives in Adult Education

IPE 78: Adult education as a key to development - challenges and success factors

IPE 76: Refugees: A challenge for adult education

IPE 75: Agenda - 2030 - Education and Lifelong Learning in the Sustainable Development Goals

IPE 74: 21st Century Mass Graves - Proceeding of the International Conference Tbilisi, Georgia

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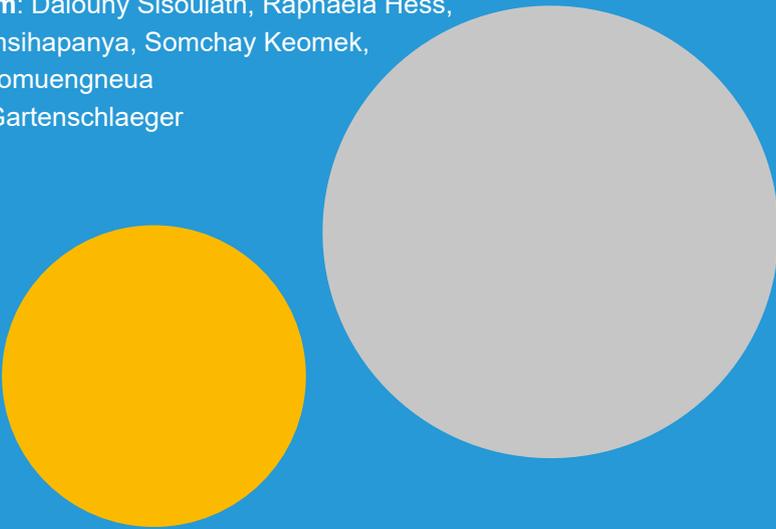
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