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Newsletter

Lifelong Learning & Non-Formal Education in Lao PDR and Southeast Asia



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Dear reader,

Recently, ten students from the Vocational Education Development Institute (VEDI) embarked on the adventure of going to our Community Learning Centers in remote villages of Nong District on a three months scholarship. As it turned out, it was a real adventure for them, and an eye-opener for us at DVV International as well.

First of all, we had to realise that this kind of activity needs a well-reflected mentoring and support system to back up the students. This includes on the one hand all kinds of logistics, including transport, medical services and reliable communication channels. On the other hand, it requires a mentoring and coaching system providing opportunities for reflecting on and exchanging of the challenges and impressions the students gathered in the villages. This became obvious during the sharing and learning workshop at VEDI, where the students reported on their experiences. While the villagers shared their excitement for the opportunities the students presented to them, the students reported major difficulties in coping with rural society. It turned out to be yet more proof of the immense gap between urban and rural areas in Lao PDR, with both spheres encountering growing difficulties to understand each other.

This can be understood literately, as most of the villagers in Nong belong to ethnic groups and hardly speak any Lao. This can be understood as well in terms of education, because the education level in rural regions is much lower than in the cities. This can be understood in terms of lifestyle as well: While many villagers arrange their days according to the needs of the agricultural calendar and nature, the urban students are used to following the clock. As you can imagine, a lot of misunderstandings can arise on the back of these strong differences!

What does all this mean for Non-Formal Education? First of all, we should insist on our role to offer skills and knowledge especially to rural populations which belong to the most marginalized. It is only us who can reach out to them and who can offer them trainings in high demand, for example on agriculture, health and sanitation or literacy.

Secondly, we might reflect on the need to create more opportunities for exchange between the two parts of society in order to raise a better understanding especially among urban youth for the needs and aspirations of the villagers. This includes a better knowledge of the cultures and languages of the ethnic groups in Lao PDR.

The growing gap between both segments of Lao society is a major concern. It will be crucial for coherence, peace and development of the country that no one is left behind, including remote rural villages. NFE can play a major role in ensuring all citizens will be able to receive the education they need.

Yours,
Uwe Gartenschlaeger
Regional Director

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A Follow-up Approach – Training of Master Trainers Program

Freyja Dixon

To make an education development program – or any development program – sustainable, there should never really be an ‘end date’. Rather, it should be acknowledged and supported that development is ongoing and takes place over many years. This has been the approach of the Training of Master Trainers (ToMT), an education program spanning almost three years, eight four-to-five-day training workshops and multiple follow-up activities where 40 trainers from the non-formal education sector in Lao PDR have increased their adult education and facilitation skills.

From the 28 - 31 of May, a ToMT follow-up workshop was held in Vientiane Capital. The purpose of this workshop was to allow the graduated Master Trainers the opportunity to come back together, to share their recent experiences and to be taught additional knowledge and skills.

The ToMT, a joint initiative between DVV International and the Non-Formal Educational Development Centre of the Department of Non-Formal Education, has been developed and implemented by a range of local, regional and international partner organisations including the Asia Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE), RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia, UNESCO Bangkok and the Australian Volunteer Program. As a mark of the program’s success, the ToMT was recently awarded the Grundtvig Award of the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) as the best international adult education project of the year.

Over the course of the four-day follow-up workshop, Master Trainers shared their stories of Most Significant Change from the ToMT, and participated



Freyja Dixon
BEQUAL Project
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Members of the
Master Trainer
Program with the
Key Trainers



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in various sessions on method selection techniques, note-taking as a facilitator, and how to explain Lifelong Learning to different target groups. Stories the Master Trainers shared spoke of how their approach towards educating others had shifted and the opportunities that had come about through their involvement in the program. One story was that of Northern Master Trainers Ms. Khongmany and Mr. Sor of running an adult education training for health trainers for the Swiss Red Cross. At first, they had been concerned that since they have no expertise in health they would have little to offer. However, after running the training, they soon realised the importance of having strong trainers who understood the principles of adult education working in every sector.

This growing understanding towards the role that adult and non-formal education plays in multiple sectors in Laos is not only reflected in the incoming project requests, but also in the overall attitude of the Master Trainers themselves. An accountability has developed that surpasses that of simply being a good trainer, but extends to include a responsibility for advocating for adult education to wider national networks. Indeed, the concept of accountability was a central theme of the four-day workshop with many people reflecting on it on the final day. The discussions and stories shared throughout the training showed a remarkable shift in the way in which the Master Trainers see themselves and their place in the wider community.

With larger projects now coming in such as a major training collaboration with the Basic Education Quality and Access in Laos (BEQUAL), a nation-wide primary education program aided by the Australian Government and the European Union, this accountability and expertise will only continue to grow. Through committing to annual follow-up activities such as the May workshop, the partner organisations and key trainers who have nurtured the ToMT over the years are supporting the Master Trainers to step into a role of advocacy and deep understanding towards adult education and Lifelong Learning in Lao PDR, ensuring a sustainable and lasting impact to the program.



Our Advisor
Mr. Ounpheng Khammang
the former Deputy Director
of DNFE

Opening of the District Non-Formal Education Centre in Xepon, Savannakhet Province

Ounpheng Khammang, DVV International

Xepon is a mountainous district located in Savannakhet province, 200 kilometres east from the city of Savannakhet and bordering Vietnam which is a good opportunity for economic growth and therefore for improving local people's livelihoods. Its population comprises around 61,000 people from four ethnic groups: Laoloum, Phutai, Tri and Mangkong. The latter two constitute over two thirds of the population. There are 88 villages in Xepon, including six village clusters, 14 development villages, and 14 big villages which are working towards becoming sub-district centres.

Xepon district announced completion of the primary education equivalency programme on 4 March 2014. Since the announcement, Xepon's education sector has been growing steadily. In the academic year of 2017/2018, Xepon had one kindergarten as well as 27 kindergartens within primary schools (946 students), 109 primary schools (8.994 students), six lower secondary schools with 2.193 students, and four higher secondary schools with 856 students. Concerning equivalency programmes, 546 students are enrolled in a primary equivalency programme while there are 250 students in a lower secondary education equivalency programme. Furthermore, there is an Integrated Vocational Education and Training School with 164 students. In all cases, there are more boys than girls enrolled.

Since 2013, the Xepon District Education and Sports Office with support from DVV International has implemented non-formal education activities in seven Community Learning Centres (CLCs). The main objective is to improve people's livelihoods. For example, illiterate people can complete primary education, move forward to attend secondary education, and gain knowledge about basic vocational skills. The activities in CLCs further include health education, cultural activities and also activities for children.

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In 2017, the Director of Savannakhet Province Education and Sports Services as well as the Xepon district governor suggested that Xepon and Nong District Education and Sports Offices shall ask DVV International to support establishing Non-Formal Education Centres (NFECs) in Nong and Xepon district. Nong and Xepon districts are where DVV International has been implementing a project targeting in remote village CLCs. With approval from the local authority, Xepon District Education and Sports chose for the old building of Thakong village's primary school to be renovated and to be used as a District NFEC.

District NFECs fulfil roles and functions defined by the Ministry of Education and Sports. For instance, they provide NFE services, promote lifelong learning, provide

literacy training as well as primary and secondary equivalency programs for youth and adults, especially for women and disabled people. Additionally, NFE centres also support CLCs on village level and conduct monitoring and evaluation activities in the communities.

It is planned for the Xepon District NFEC to become a model NFE Centre of learning in the future. In order to achieve this goal, the NFEC will focus on literacy programmes and continuing education, promote lifelong learning, offer basic vocational training, generate income for the center and the target groups, and support the community. Moreover, the NFE Centre wishes to have a good cooperation with and support from different donors such as the state, the private sector, NGOs and the wider community.



Building before renovation



District NFEC building after renovation



Ms Phateng
Luanglamoun
CLC authority from
Ban Pajatien

People should get more active!

Interview with *Ms Phateng Luanglamoun*, CLC authority from Ban Pajatien, Nong District, Savannakhet Province
Questions by *Uwe Gartenschlaeger*, DVV International, Regional Director and *Dokkham Xomsihapanya*, DVV International, Project Manager for Literacy and Non-Formal Education

In March 2018, Ms Luanglamoun participated together with a representative of DVV International in the conference “Thriving in the Margins” at the SEAMEO INNOTECH Centre in Manila, Philippines. The event brought together villagers and poor people from all over Southeast Asia to exchange their activities in Non-Formal Education. The colleagues from SEAMEO wanted to give a voice to marginalised people themselves instead of hosting experts merely talking about them.

After returning to Lao PDR, we spoke with Ms Luanglamoun.

Can you tell us a little bit about yourself, your family and your village?

My name is Miss Phateng Luanglamoun, I have two children, one girl and one boy. I live in Ban Chatthyan in Nong District of Savannakhet Province. In our village, we have 65 families. I am married to a Lao man. I am Mang Kong and speak the Brue language. I finished primary school and continued to secondary school. This school was far away from my village, in Sepon, and the Government supported me to attend it. After just one year in secondary school, however, my parents passed away, and I had to leave. I had to take care of my brother and sister.

Involvement with Lao Women’s Union

You are active in a Community Learning Center (CLC). What is your role, what do you do there?

I am the Head of Lao Women’s Union in my village, and so I joined the CLC committee. I am responsible for the weaving group in our CLC. I take care of the cleaning of the CLC, and of planting activities as well.

What is currently happening at the CLC? What kind of activities take place?

We offer skills training, like hairdressing, agricultural skills, basic knowledge about electricity, goose raising, and rattan planting. We also have a kindergarten group, but not enough teachers in the village to offer it every day. It opens one day a week at the CLC, and four days at the school. At the CLC, we focus on reading and drawing because we have a library there. All in all, there is a need for more activities.

We face challenges as well: In the village, many people don’t understand the need for learning. Some trainers are not very engaged and do not have enough skills.

You just came back from the Philippines. What did you do there? What was new and interesting for you?

I participated at a conference where very interesting stories from villages from different regions in Southeast Asia were presented. Very much the same like my village. For example, they showed us how to teach disabled people; that impressed me. They are poor, but they are more active. Many create their own jobs or own businesses.



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Can you use some of the things you learnt in your work at home in the CLC?

When I go back, I will organize a meeting in the CLC to share my experiences. I think for example that we should organize more literacy trainings. We should train the villagers as well on how to communicate with the authorities. We should also start to organize group discussions, e.g. with the youth group. I will start with the most active people. Too many people are not active and do not believe that it is useful to become active. In the Philippines, I saw good examples of active people. I have many ideas now!

We have to work as well on improving our CLC management structure with clear responsibilities.

Do you have a wish for the future of your CLC?

I want to design activities for income generation in the CLCs, not only trainings. I will focus on the weaving group first. I will organize the production and maybe have a shop. Lao Women's Union can help me to sell products outside the village.

... and for yourself?

I want to open a business for trading with weaving products from my village.

Thank you very much, Ms Luanglamoun for the interview, and all the best for you, your family and the CLC!

VEDI students share experiences of the internship in Nong district

Xenglee Faidar & Dokkham Xonsihapanya
DVV International

The Vocational Education Development Institute (VEDI) in Vientiane is an institution that provide service training of vocational teacher from across the country. Earlier this year, from February to May, VEDI in collaboration with DVV International sent 10 of their students to practise their skills at target villages in Nong District and also in Sepon District at the invitation of DESB. The objective of this program was for the interns to propel their professional development and to increase their teaching capacities as well as to help villagers to have basic knowledge in five vocational areas: agriculture, electricity, food processing, construction and mechanical repair.

The VEDI students taught vocational training classes at the CLCs with active support from DVV field staff as well as the Education and Sports office Nong district. The interns stayed with villagers directly in the communities which offered them in-depth insights into Brue culture, and enabled them to establish good relationships with the villagers. The DVV field office helped with facilitation materials, equipment for carrying out activities, and provided advice on creating activity plans for the villagers and youth groups. Prior to creating these training plans, the VEDI students evaluated the needs of the villagers in order for activities to be suitable to the context and reality of the villagers. After that, VEDI



Ms. Dokkham our Project Manager. Who works closely with the Students



Our Co-Writer Ms. XengLee

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students brought in the knowledge gained to teach and led the villagers to do activities in each of their respective fields in the CLCs and gardens of the village groups:

Agriculture: planting fruit trees and gardens around the CLCs, especially banana and timber

Electricity: light installation in houses and CLCs, particularly with youth groups

Food processing: different kinds of banana, potato, rice and meat products

Construction: building toilets

Mechanical repair: motorbike and tractor repair, inspection of tools and safety gear

As a result, after attending one of these trainings, the villagers can take their lessons learnt and teach others in the subject matter to spread their knowledge among their families and communities. In addition, due to VEDI students staying directly in the villages, they also learned about further training needs of the villagers such as hygiene classes and encouraging their children to study Lao language and learning how to read and write Lao. Upon returning to Vientiane, the students shared their

observations on how the villagers' vegetable gardens provide basic supply of food, the importance of village rules and traditional customs, medical treatments, and the need of encouraging people to attend vocational trainings in order to improve their livelihoods.

Altogether, the internship program has been very successful and all sides wish for it to be repeated after evaluation and improvement of the framework. VEDI students benefited from living with the villagers and learning about traditional customs, planning and creating activities and networking with all partners involved; they commented they would have appreciated closer support by DVV field staff which will be worked towards for the next intake of interns. Villagers, lastly, enjoyed being able to provide insights into their everyday lives to urban people, and feedback that the teaching quality of VEDI interns was very high.



Students interviewed the villagers before training



The students with the villagers during a session of construction training

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The National Education Congress in Cambodia - What is new for Non-Formal Education?

Vanna Peou, DVV International Cambodia

The National Education Congress is organized every year under the leadership of the Prime Minister in order to gather more than 1,000 participants from all technical departments of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS), the 25 Provincial Offices of Education, Youth and Sport, relevant government ministries and institutions, higher education institutions, and all education stakeholders and development partners. The Congress' main objective is to discuss the achievements and challenges of education, youth and sports activities for the 2016-2017 academic year and the goals for the school year 2017-2018.

The Congress set an important signal for the Non-Formal Education sector. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport committed to increasing their collaboration efforts with the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training. The aim of joining hands is to address the gaps of technical and vocational

skills of youth in as well as out of school. Especially the system of Community Learning Centres at village level is supposed to be improved.

The international CLC standard is too high for the Cambodian context. DVV International Country Director Vanna Peou therefore suggested to use existing CLCs and strengthen support for curricula based on learners' needs by sub regions. Further, the capacities of CLC committees need to be supported as well as managers' and teachers' skills developed. CLC budgets need to be managed more efficiently to enable CLCs to implement their work plans. Overall, coaching should be increased and there needs to be more follow up from national, subnational and district levels.

Supporting CLCs together means participating in the mission to reduce poverty, domestic violence, and migration!!!



Ms. Vanna Peou
Our Country Director
in Cambodia



With the project “Tackling the Implementation Gap in Education Reform, Mobilizing Civil Society”, NGO Education Partnership (NEP) Cambodia and DVV International aim to establish a stronger flow of local knowledge to the national decision-making level. This objective is worked towards by developing networks and supporting both national and sub-national authorities with their decision-making.

NEP has put in place a process for the development of a joint CSO position statement on education policy, framing clear advocacy activities and specific calls for action. On 25 June 2018, such a position statement on “Ensuring the Functioning of Community Learning Centres to Create Lifelong Learning Opportunities” was launched.

NEP POSITION STATEMENT: Ensuring the Functioning of Community Learning Centres to Create Lifelong Learning Opportunities

The Background

The concept of Lifelong Learning has been promoted since Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals. With the recent commitment to the global agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which includes the target to “ensure inclusive equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (SDG 4), a deeper focus has to be given to the non-formal education sector. The Education 2030 Framework for Action furthermore recognises that “the provision of flexible learning pathways, as well as the recognition, validation and accreditation of the knowledge, skills and competencies acquired through nonformal and informal education, is important.”

Community Learning Centres (CLCs) have been playing an important role in providing lifelong learning opportunities to communities in the Asia-Pacific region for many years. According to UNESCO, “the number of CLCs and similar NFE literacy centres is estimated to be more than 170,000” (UNESCO, 2008). Being at the heart of the community they are able to reach marginalised groups, school drop-outs, and promote gender empowerment and civic participation through their wide range of programmes. Responding to the

local needs, they offer literacy, post-literacy, income generating skills, life skills and vocational skills programmes. Some CLCs might also include mother language literacy, conflict resolution, peace building and the use of ICTs for work and personal development. All in all, they improve the livelihoods of everyone in the local community.

The planning and operations of CLCs are often more influenced by national policies and programmes than by localised planning and programme development. In Cambodia, 350 CLCs have been established and we congratulate the Royal Government of Cambodia for all the work that has so far contributed to the functioning of these centres and for the development of minimum standards for CLCs. However, the insufficient and unpredictable financial support has had a huge impact on the quality of programmes offered, the personal development of educators and volunteers, and the overall functionality of the CLC.

Recommendations

1. Strengthen the CLC Management Committees (CLCMC)

A strong management committee is the backbone of every CLC. However, research has shown that they are not all informed about having to write their

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own budget plan, or do not have the capacity to do so. The Provincial Office of Education (PoE) continue to doubt their ability to perform their work and to deal with the actual budget. Therefore, CLCs are not given the full budget, or only receive resources in form of materials. We strongly call for the MoEYS to strengthen the CLCMCs through the following:

1.1. Refine the training for the CLCMC

A strong and capable CLCMC is also a key factor for the sustainability of CLCs themselves. In this sense, a training of master trainers for one staff member of each District Office of Education (DoE) would be a sustainable activity as not only a small number of committees would be trained, but training for CLCs in the whole country would be made possible and the situation of CLCs as a whole improved. These experts will then regularly provide trainings to the committees in their districts. We recommend the development of a training of at least 12 days. This could be based on the successful GOCA¹ approach that has been recently developed and tested by ACTED.

1.2. Employ a full-time CLC Manager

Community Learning Centres primarily run through volunteers. The salary for teachers and the CLC Management Committee is extremely low, and librarians do not receive any salary at all. Therefore a problem that often occurs is that the staff leave their position or do not pay a lot of attention to their tasks because of a better income opportunity elsewhere. We recommend that each CLC should have a paid full-time CLC Manager who is able to focus all his/her time and energy in his/her work, and that furthermore the librarian, as the main provider of a post-literacy programme, should receive a salary or an incentive as well.

¹ The GOCA (Grassroots Organizations Capacity Assessment) is an assessment carried out to measure the institutional capacity of the Community Learning Center Management Committee and it's designed to facilitate group discussions between members of grassroots organizations and external facilitators providing capacity-building support.



2. Strengthen the CLC system

In order for a CLC to be functioning, reaching and involving the communities in the programmes and activities it offers, both a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Plan and information and outreach activities should be in place. This should aim to raise awareness among people and education providers. Therefore, we advise to conduct the following:

2.1. Monitoring & Evaluation Plan

A Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Plan is necessary to continuously record activities, attendance and results and its maintenance. The M&E plan should include a needs assessment to find out if the activities satisfy the beneficiaries and the CLC buildings are equipped to offer such activities. After all, CLC activities and programmes are offered to respond to the communities' needs.

2.2 Information and Outreach activities

Often communities are not aware of the existence of the CLCs or the importance of their activities. The same happens with the formal education system that doesn't always recognise the benefits and programmes provided at the CLCs. The budget assigned to the CLC should include information campaigns and outreach activities that would foster the role of the CLC within the educational system and as a focal place of informal and non-formal learning opportunities.

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3. Clarify, adjust and follow financial disbursement processes.

A 2015 publication by NEP covered case studies in five provinces on financial disbursement for Community Learning Centres. The case studies aimed, “to investigate the financial disbursement process for Community Learning Centres (CLC) overseen by the Department of Non Formal Education (DNFE) in order to identify any issues” (NEP 2015). The study concluded saying that the financial disbursement practices, “are neither effective nor efficient and that they vary in a number of ways from the central guidance.”

We recommend direct disbursement to a CLC bank account, which is taken care of by two to three members of the CLCMC. This process would reduce transportation costs and potential redirection of funds to other sectors and/or programmes. As the budget for CLCs is not high, we furthermore recommend a one-round budget disbursement at the beginning of the year.

Moreover, it would make sure that the budget will be in form of money rather than materials.

All processes, including the verification processes of the budget, have to be consistent with current policy movements and clarified for employees at national as well as subnational level and all stakeholders to reduce the risk of a continuously unreliable and insufficient budget.

4. Prioritize the Non-Formal Education Sector.

The Incheon Declaration from June 2015 states, “that the aspirations encompassed in the proposed SDG4 cannot be realised without a significant and well-targeted increase in financing” and recommends, “prioritizing financing and aid to neglected sub-sectors.” This was eventually confirmed at the Oslo Summit on Education and the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, which both took place in July 2015.



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In Cambodia, the overall budget of the Education sector has grown over the years, but a 2017 analysis by DVV International indicates no prioritisation of the non-formal education sector. On the contrary, there has even been a decrease looking at the percentage of what the sector receives annually. In order to be able to achieve the targets of SDG4 and to follow the Education 2030 Framework for Action, the Non-Formal Education sector that so far only receives less than 1% of the budget needs to be strengthened and for its funding increased.

For Community Learning Centres this would come with a wide recognition throughout communities and Government, opportunities to reach the minimum standards that have been set, higher chances of improving the quality of their work and programmes, and therefore the livelihood of the Cambodian People.

References and Evidences

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Latest activities at the Resource Centre

Somchit Phonvilai, Resource Centre
Non-Formal Education Development Centre

The Resource Centre (RC) at NFEDC, KM8, presents many opportunities for adults and Non-Formal education activities in general in Laos. It consists of two components – a physical library/training room and an online platform. The online platform is made up of a website and a Facebook page. The purpose of the website is twofold, (1) to promote the activities and services of the NFEDC and (2) to provide trainers and staff working in NFE across Lao PDR with online training materials and information as well as to enable them to connect easily.

Nearly two years since the RC was established, we have already implemented a lot of activities, and also this year we plan to have many activities to promote NFE, and to build the capacity of

NFEDC staff. After the first half of the year, we have already completed three activities such as website training, the annual meeting of the Master Trainers, and training on teamwork. Since recently, we have also been running after-hours RC activities for teaching basic English to school students at the training room.

Our plans for the second half of the year include a sharing and learning workshop, renovating the old NFEDC and the new RC library, exploring possibilities of regional resource personnel and facilities to expand and support regional RCs, creating a brochure, and conducting website and resource management training for regional centers and library management training for the NFEDC RC team.

More information:

www.nfedi.org & www.facebook.com/nfedc



Somchit Phonvilai
who takes care of
the Resource Centre



Why invest in adult learning? – An appraisal from Austria

Gerhard Bisovsky, Association of Australian Adult Education Centres

Adult education is effective and worth it. Adult education is often seen as less valuable, and therefore it commonly receives less funding than formal and initial education. However, recent studies by several Austrian and German research institutes focussing on adult education and vocational training show that investments in adult education by the state, the economic sector, and individuals pay off – for every one of these three actors.

Benefits for individuals

Individuals, first of all, can benefit from adult education by raising their income after training. They also improve their chances of finding employment and are at the same time empowered to start their own businesses. It has also been found that adult education has positive effects on individuals' well being and life satisfaction. Lifelong learning increases people's self-confidence by giving them new skills and making them curious about learning new things. Adult education can also improve health by raising awareness of health issues and wellbeing in general.

Benefits for the economy

Secondly, the economy profits from an active culture of adult education and Lifelong Learning by increasing its productivity. Innovation is more likely to happen in an environment supporting people eager to learn as they keep themselves up to date on new technological and other developments. For example, it has been shown that among member countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), around 57 per cent of employed adults with good skills in the areas of information and communications technologies (ICT) and problem solving participate in professional development and continuing education activities¹.

1 OECD (2015), *Education at a Glance 2015: OECD Indicators*, p 116. Online: <http://www.keepeek.com/>

The same is true for only about 9 per cent of adults without computer experience and problem-solving competences. Further, adult education takes into account skills needed by the economy and is more flexible and quicker to react in doing so than formal education. Employees usually attend formal education only once or twice in their lives. Yet, the needs of the labour market alter constantly, due to innovation and technological progress. Upskilling or changing career through non-formal education is a very effective way of increasing one's value on the labour market.

Benefits for society

Society as a whole benefits from these two areas combined: With people being wealthier, and the economy more agile and thus more productive, societies overall tend to be healthier, more peaceful and harmonious, and the environment cleaner. Moreover, inequalities are reduced in well-educated societies, which contributes to them being more stable and safer. Finally, people's involvement in non-formal education activities fosters their sense for community and makes them more likely to volunteer their time for a good cause and help others.

Overall, state investment in adult education is worth it and has a good return on investment. Apart from the above-mentioned benefits, a very important point for governments is that with individuals earning more income, tax revenue rises. Returns from adult learning can be assessed as highly as those from initial education. Several studies show that investments in adult education can be recovered through higher wages and improved employability of the population. For example, a study by the Research Institute for

Digital-Asset-Management/oeecd/education/education-at-a-glance-2015_eag-2015-en#.V-OaRvmLSJA [16-07-2018].

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Vocational Training and Adult Education at Linz University, Austria, measured the overall benefits to society of a socio-economic company. The result was that during the funding year, 86 per cent of the investments that had been made could be returned to the public sector.

Note: This article is a shortened version of the author's original, published in "FinALE. An advocacy toolkit for Financing Adult Learning in Europe: Why and where to invest", pp. 9-12.

Benefit from adult education

Individual	
Monetary effect	Income
Employability	Basic education
	Skills and qualifications
Well-being	General well-being
	Self-confidence
	Health (mental and physical)
Social benefits	Voluntary activities
	Activities for society
	Civic commitment
Economy	
Innovative capacity	Employee skills and competence
	Participation and learning process
Competitiveness	Productivity
	Flexibility and innovation
	Motivation
Society	
Social effects and sustainability	Health
	Environment
	Reduction in criminal activity
Effects on living together	Social cohesion
	Tolerance
	Living together
	Developing democracy
Budgetary effects	Tax payments
	Transfer payments
Return on Investment	

The village in the 21st century and literacy practices

Dr Lamphoune Luangxay, Department of Non-Formal Education,
Ministry of Education and Sports

An evolving concept of literacy

Literacy programmes are shaped by the ways in which literacy “experts” and policymakers perceive what literacy is. However, in most cases, this idea of literacy is based on an outdated UNESCO definition from sixty years ago, namely, the skill of being able to read and write¹. This article argues that literacy in the 21st century is not only the ability to read and write a language but instead, it is the capability to understand the meaning of words, signs and symbols which have meanings for an individual for a specific purpose in a particular context.

A few years ago (from January to March 2015), I conducted fieldwork as part of my PhD dissertation in a rural community in Luang Prabang Province. I immersed myself in the community for nearly three months to explore what rural people actually do with their “literacy” skills – reading and writing Lao language – in their everyday lives. I applied a well-established ethnographic method, known as the ‘walk along’ method² through which I followed villagers everywhere and got involved in all their activities. I observed what modes of literacy they used, how they used them, and why they applied them to specific situations and purposes.

Telephone technology and literacy practices

Globalized technologies have entered the villagers’ everyday lives and they have increasingly replaced their traditional ways of life over the course of the last decade. Although the village I stayed in is a rural village surrounded by forests, mountains and rivers, new technologies such as mobile phones

have arrived in the village and have become popular among its inhabitants. It is interesting to note that this technology has not evolved from a traditional, landline

telephone system. Instead, the villagers jumped this step and have gone straight to mobile technology.

The technologies of the telephone and telecommunications services influence learning by generating meanings from signs and symbols. For example, in order to refill money onto their phone cards, villagers dial *121*PIN No.# (see Figure 1). For checking the lotto service or downloading ringtones, there is a similar mechanism. At the time of research, villagers preferred to refill 5,000 Kip each time as the minimum rate. They chose this amount of money over other refill options to suit their economic situations. This also meant that villagers used the refill service more often than any other services, so they had become very familiar with the steps and keys required.

It was clear that the villagers did not have to read the instruction details on the cards in order to use the telephone services. They either remembered how to take the necessary steps from previous use, or they followed instructions from their friends who knew the steps by heart. I argue in this article that knowing how to use a phone is a form of literacy, even if one does not know how to read and write language. Here is an example of how a villager practiced her literacies:

Mina (anonymous) is a thirty-two-year-old woman who has difficulty reading Lao language, and yet used the phone services described above fairly efficiently. Further, she helped other villagers with accessing these services, even when they had better language reading skills than her. When I



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¹ UNESCO. (2005). *Aspects of literacy assessment: Topics and issues from the UNESCO Expert Meeting on June 10-12, 2003: Paris: UNESCO.*

² Carpiano, R. M. (2009). *Come take a walk with me: the „go-along“ interview as a novel method for studying the implications of place for health and well-being. Health & place, 15(1), 263-272.*

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Figure 1: Examples of telephone services and instructions



Refill card and instructions



Checking lotto service



Music ringtone service

asked her how she could do this, she told me that “I do this frequently, so I remember how to do it”. Her brother who can read and write Lao language with more fluency than her, even said that he asks her to refill his phone credit. I saw how effortlessly she used the different keys on the phone to enter service numbers for checking the balance, refilling, and browsing for ringtone music from packages of the telephone company.

The emerging new literacies of the telephone

The example of using a telephone illustrates multiple literacies including recognition and use of signs, symbols, numbers and sound. The practice of these literacies shows that the acquisition of multiliteracy skills is likely to be different from the traditional acquisition of literacy³. Mina had tried different keys in order to understand the diverse functions of the telephone: she observed signs, symbols, and used the auditory literacy memory built into the telephone, including images, numbers, signs, symbols, and sounds of the keys on the telephone keypad. Mina’s story may be an example of how technologies cause a change in literacy from print literacy to visual literacy, and of how people are making use of new technologies to satisfy their own needs. We are also moving away from a singular literacy, which used to be viewed as the ability to read and write in a national language, to plural literacies. As seen in Mina’s use of the telephone, as well as other villagers’ practices, they have had to cope with multiple modes of literacies (texts, symbols, and images) that are associated with telephone technologies. Mina’s use of the telephone thus illustrates that in order to cope with today’s world in which information and knowledge come in multiple modes of literacies, there is a need to understand multilingual and multiple modes of communication⁴.

New literacies call for a new pedagogy

Mina’s story challenges the traditional literacy pedagogy, a

3 The New London Group. (2000). *A pedagogy of multiliteracies: designing social futures*. In B. Cope & M. Kalantzis (Eds.), *Multiliteracies: literacy learning and the design of social futures* (pp. 3-37). New York: Routledge.

4 Gee, J. P. (2012). *Social linguistics and literacies: ideology in discourses*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

formal school-based approach that requires participants to memorize rules of reading and writing⁵. Many scholars⁶ contend that learning is not something that merely relies on absorbing theory, but instead it is shaped by using tools and experiencing situations of everyday life. Using her phone has been the best learning source for Mina in acquiring a new literacy, as the more she practiced the more experience she gained and accumulated. Similarly, many educational studies⁷ hold that professional skills are not only learnt through formal training, but through experiences using objects and by being in situations of everyday life.

Solving “illiteracy” should not be viewed as providing second learning opportunities to those who have missed out on formal schooling in their childhood. Instead, it is important to help them to deal with their current and future issues and problems. The 21st century as the era of globalization has been and will be bringing new and modern technologies, and new modes of literacy including words, signs and symbols into our everyday lives – even into a small, rural village like in this case study. The findings from this literacy practice suggest for literacy “experts” and policymakers to rethink literacy to be more than just the ability to read and write as it was seen sixty years ago. Instead, literacy is a social practice and each mode of literacy including print literacy, signs and symbols has a particular meaning to people’s lives in a particular of use. The policymakers and literacy “expert” thus should support and help adult learners to acquire literacy skill which is useful for them. In doing so, literacy content programmes and learning approaches should be redesigned based on the different needs of individuals.

Note: This is the shortened version of a chapter by the author in Uwe Gartenschlaeger (Ed): Rethinking Adult Education – Asian Perspectives, Bonn 2018.

5 Rogers, A. (2000). *Literacy Comes Second: Working with Groups in Developing Societies*. *Development in Practice*, 10(2), 236-240.

6 For example, Taylor, M. C. (2006). *Informal Adult Learning and Everyday Literacy Practices*. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 49(6), 500-509.

7 Borko, H., Davinroy, K. H., Bliem, C. L., & Cumbo, K. B. (2000). *Exploring and Supporting Teacher Change: Two Third-Grade Teachers’ Experiences in a Mathematics and Literacy Staff Development Project*. *The Elementary School Journal*, 100(4), 273-306.

Basic Development Leadership Workshop in Mongolia - A personal experience report

Amphone Lorkham, Non-Formal Education Development Centre

Every year, the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) organizes a Basic Development Leadership Course (BDLC). The workshop aims at building the capacities of young leaders from the region, and at sharing knowledge and experiences together in order to make them applicable to everyone's work environments.

In October 2017, the most recent BDLC was held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. Thirty-four delegates, among them 19 women, from various countries such as India, New Zealand, Vietnam, Turkmenistan, Nepal, the Philippines, Indonesia, China, Cambodia, Myanmar and Lao PDR came together. From Lao PDR, Ms Beykham Saleumsouk, Project Manager at DVV, and myself took part in the workshop. The main topics for learning and knowledge exchange encompassed the Sustainable Development Goal No. 4, Adult and Lifelong Learning, Gender Mainstreaming, Youth-led Action Research, and Global Citizenship.

I gained a lot of knowledge from the training: I learned about the sustainable development goals, deepened my

understanding of Lifelong Learning and adult education, and I particularly enjoyed the field visit we undertook to the Women for Change Organization. There, we learned about their many activities working towards women's empowerment. The most important thing throughout the workshop was that the content was delivered through a variety of participatory learning activities, such as icebreakers, energizers, group work, sharing experiences, role plays, site visits as well as watching videos. These activities were very exciting and captured my attention for the entire time.

I also took away a lot from living and working together with the other participants, listening to each others' stories, sharing experiences, solving problems and helping each other. Every minute of attending the training and being in this stimulating environment was worth it for me. I am confident that I can apply all the knowledge I have gained at BDLC back here in my work in Lao PDR.



Amphone Lorkham
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