

***'Lifelong Learning in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Implications for Policy and Practice'* - a UIL Think-Tank meeting on lifelong learning and the SDGs**

27-28 September 2016, Hamburg, Germany



The UIL think-tank meeting on lifelong learning was organised to deliberate on the operationalisation of lifelong learning as a core framework of SDG Goal 4 and the Education 2030 Framework for Action.

ASPBAE participated in the 3rd Third Think-Tank Meeting on Lifelong Learning convened by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) in Hamburg. The meeting was organised to offer a platform to deliberate on the operationalisation of lifelong learning as a core framework of SDG Goal 4 and the Education 2030 Framework for Action. Around 30 experts from governments, civil society, universities and research institutes, UNESCO and the UN system, notably the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO), participated in the meeting.

The discussions, in the main, were structured along the following areas – (1) an analytical overview of the development of the concept of Lifelong learning (LLL); (2)

LLL in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in Education 2030; 3) a review of LLL policies and strategies; and 4) Monitoring and evaluating LLL.

Participants highlighted the importance of broadening the understanding of LLL as they relate and respond to highly diverse historical and contextual realities in the different parts of the world. Several participants argued for the need to promote a wide conception of lifelong learning – ‘from cradle to grave’, appreciating education throughout a whole lifespan and encompassing a wide range of education modes and settings - formal, non-formal, informal. Several observed that lifelong learning tended to be understood and interpreted in a far more limited way – different stages of formal education i.e. early child education, primary, secondary, and tertiary education. The current financing frameworks for the new 2030 agenda is indicative and/or contributory to this, having been consistent in their exclusion of youth and adult literacy and non-formal education in their discourse.

Peter Mayo, from the University of Malta, reminded on the strong neo-liberal influences on how lifelong learning is understood and promoted. He noted that the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and EU stress on ‘learning’ over ‘education’ is a “*far from innocent discursive shift*” where “*emphasis began to be placed less on structures of education provision and more on individuals taking charge of their learning*”. Increasingly, education and learning had also become seen as an ‘individual’ rather than a ‘social’ responsibility with the whole process of learning seen in economic/consumption terms rather than as a public good. The role of the State has been much minimised with the market becoming more dominant. The SDG 4 and UNESCO’s articulation of LLL opens a great potential to advance a wider understanding of lifelong learning – to situate its value and role in promoting overall ‘well-being’ of people and communities (not just economic ends); in asserting the



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ASPBAE President Jose Roberto Guevara and Secretary-General, Maria Khan, participated in the think-tank meeting that brought together experts from governments, civil society, universities, research institutes, and the UN system.

social value of education and learning – valuing people as relational beings within wider communities, ecosystems and ‘ecologies’.

The participants also underscored the need to encourage sector-wide and inter-sectoral collaboration in the conception and implementation of lifelong learning policies, strategies, and programmes.

On the discussions related to the evaluation and monitoring of lifelong learning, the participants underscored the need to develop relevant indicators for LLL. Many agreed that existing education indicators are often easier to apply to formal education, and that non-formal and informal learning tends to be more difficult to measure. An important point emerging from the meeting was therefore the need for indicators to measure learning in non-formal and informal settings.

Aaron Benavot, Director of the Global Education Monitoring Report (GEMR), further underlined that most monitoring has focused on effective demand of LLL and less on the actual supply of LLL opportunities. Much more also needs to be done to monitor affordability and quality. Understanding that LLL plays out differently in the diverse contexts of the world, he proposed that perhaps regional organisations have a role to play in facilitating consensus around contested concepts and indicator development in lifelong learning.

In conclusion, participants of the Think-Tank Meeting drafted a set of recommendations for policymakers seeking to harness the potential of lifelong learning to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These recommendations will be published by UIL in a forthcoming policy brief. There will also be a special issue of the International Review of Education, Journal of Lifelong Learning (IRE) focusing on the implementation and monitoring of lifelong learning in the 2030 Agenda for Development to be edited by its guest editors, Leona English, and Arne Carlsen, Director of UIL.

ASPBAE Secretary-General, Maria Khan, and ASPBAE President, Jose Roberto Guevara, represented ASPBAE in the 3rd Think Tank Meeting on Lifelong Learning.

Awarding of the 2016 UIL Honorary Fellows

This 3rd Think-Tank Meeting also offered the occasion for UIL to award Honorary Fellowships to seven distinguished scholars and practitioners who have made outstanding contributions to international lifelong learning, adult and continuing education, literacy and non-formal basic education. The 2016 Honorary Fellows are Maria



ASPBAE's Maria Khan, Heribert Hinzen of DVV International, and Alan Tuckett and Shirley Walters of the International Council of Adult Education (ICAE) were amongst the UIL Honorary Fellow awardees.

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Lourdes Almazan Khan, Leona English, Heribert Hinzen, Raafat Radwan, Kjell Rubenson, Alan Tuckett, and Shirley Walters.

Addressing the awardees at the conferral ceremony on 28 September, UIL Director, Arne Carlsen, said, *"Your contribution has made a remarkable difference in shaping the work of UIL over the years. All of you have, in your own ways, touched the lives of many people and helped create more understanding and awareness of lifelong learning. We are honoured that you continue to share your knowledge and expertise with UIL and the world."*

This article includes excerpts from 'Rethinking Lifelong Learning in the Context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' at the UIL website.

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