

# Lifelong learning: current issues and perspectives

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October 2015

***Lifelong learning - not a 21<sup>st</sup>  
century idea***

**VADE MECUM**

**I am growing old but still learning  
many things**

**(Solon c630–c555 BCE)**

# Triadic conception of lifelong learning for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century....

- A triadic conception of lifelong learning:
- 1) education for a more highly skilled and knowledgeable workforce.
- 2) personal development for a more rewarding life; appreciation of what life has to offer.
- 3) creation of a stronger and more inclusive society.

The 'triad' implies interdependency of these three dimensions, according to Aspin, Chapman, Evans and Bagnall (2012) *Second International Handbook of Lifelong Learning*

# Current (and enduring) issues...

1.

- **How can we make sense of international versions of lifelong learning, at the national/local levels? (From buzzword to feasible policies?)**

2.

- **How can the outcomes of 'informal' lifelong learning be better recognised and certified to support adults across lengthening (working) lives?**

3.

- **how can quality frameworks improve lifelong learning opportunities ?**

# Two analytical perspectives

- **Social organisation of learning**
- emphasises adjustments to changed conditions in work and society
- dysfunctionality in existing provision
- Needs for 'flexibility' and recognition of prior and informal learning
- work/community discourses 'learning organisations' or 'communities of practice.'
- **Learning as biographical process – the learning individual**
- emphasises conditions and opportunities for people as 'social actors'
- social structuring of the life course and accumulation of risk/inequalities
- reflexivity in learning
- significance of social networks and use of 'social capital'

Current (enduring) issue 1: Moving from buzzwords to implementable policies.

Example from the Asia-Europe Hub for Lifelong Learning (Malaysia):

**'Lifelong learning is a relatively new buzzword in Malaysia... it has also been converted into a policy blueprint as a starting point for the enculturation of a national lifelong learning culture'.**

Sees lifelong learning as **' not only a vocation or an obligatory phase of one's life but a culture and a lifestyle – a way of life'.**

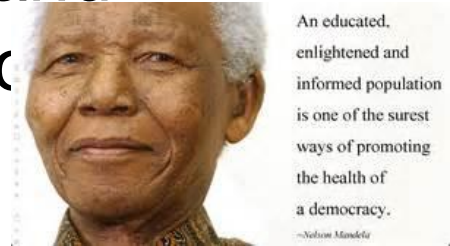
(M.Fadzil, ASEM Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning)



**Asia-Europe Meeting**  
ASEM Education and Research Hub  
for Lifelong Learning

# Dominant discourses of LLL change over time....

- Lifelong engagement with the ideas and practices of democracy, the 'public good' *(often expressed in social movements)*.
- The flowering of human potential – *humans can grow and flourish through learning at all ages.*
- Economic productivity – 'the more we learn the more we earn' – and *vice versa. Individual responsibility for economic security throughout lifecourse.*
- Inculcating learning as a culture and a lifestyle

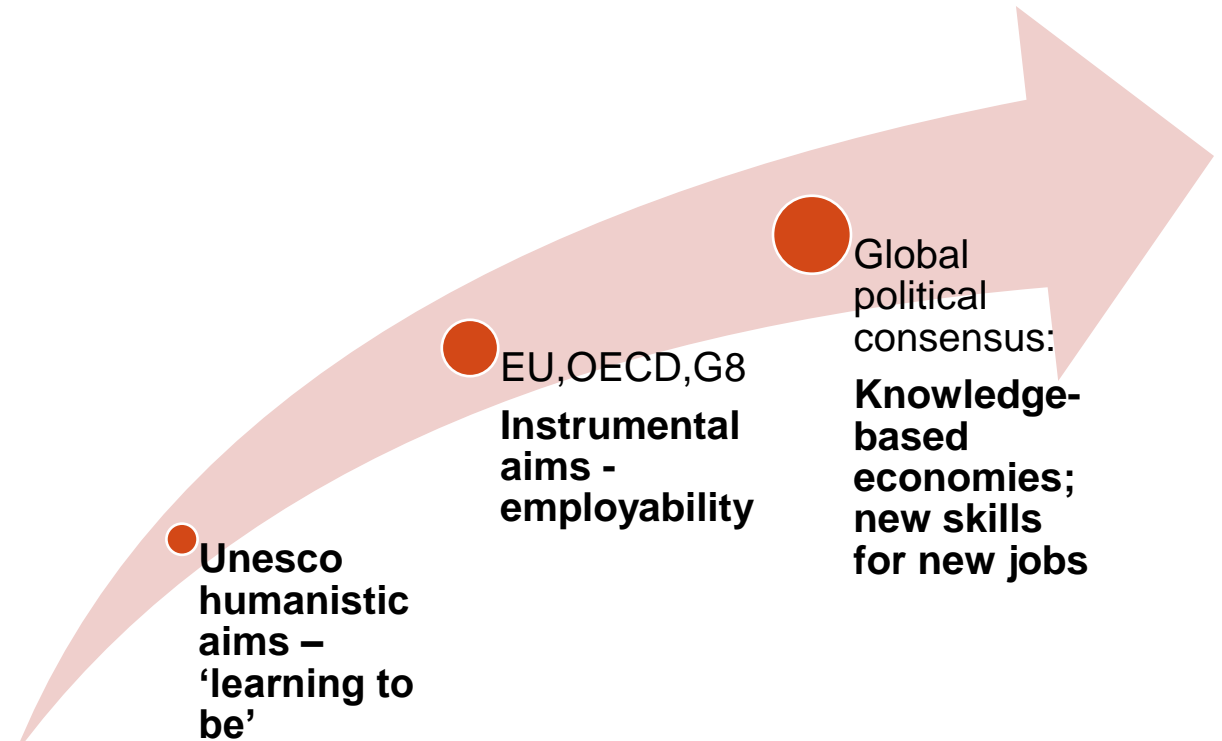


# Lifelong Learning- towards a global political consensus

UNESCO Faure  
Report, 1972 .

1996- 1999 Delors  
Report, OECD , G8  
'International Year  
of Lifelong  
Learning'; EU  
Memorandum,  
2001.

21<sup>st</sup> Century  
consensus: nature  
of work changing;  
dysfunctional  
systems; search for  
innovation and 'new  
skills for new jobs'.



Unesco  
humanistic  
aims –  
'learning to  
be'

EU,OECD,G8  
Instrumental  
aims -  
employability

Global  
political  
consensus:  
**Knowledge-  
based  
economies;  
new skills  
for new jobs**



# What is a learning society?

- Husen (1970s) is held to have invented the term
- untapped potential is viewed as the norm, not the exception, in human development – and societal structures support its development throughout the life course.
- *utopian version - developed by Delors – ‘fostering a deeper and more harmonious form of human development’.*
- *dystopian version - coercive state of permanent instruction and control; or increasing polarisation.*

• aim to foster cultures/structures which

# Indicators of learning society in 2015?

- Adults take place in organised learning activities throughout their lifespan
- post school systems are populated by adults as well as young people
- non formal learning permeates daily life and is valued
- other indicators?? (*See NIACE Monitoring Reports on Participation 1997-2013; Eurostat* )

# ‘winners and losers’

For those who have successful experience of education, and who see themselves as capable learners, continuing learning is an enriching experience, which increases their *sense of control over their own lives* and their society.

For those who are excluded from this process, however, or choose not to participate, the generalisation of lifelong learning may only have the effect of increasing their isolation from the world of the ‘knowledge -rich’. The consequences are *economic*, in under-used economic capacity and increased welfare expenditure, and *social* in terms of alienation and decaying social infrastructure.

OECD 1997

# EU

undertakes  
analytic work in  
lifelong learning

Finances large EU  
policy related  
programmes

# OECD

Monitors strategic  
goals with  
operational  
significance

Learner-centred;  
Self-directed  
learning; lifelong &  
life-wide across  
multiple settings.

# UNESCO

Updating of 'four  
pillars' of lifelong  
learning

GRALE monitoring  
exercise to re-gain  
its global values-  
based leadership  
position

# Memorandum of Lifelong Learning

- Initial (2000) definition : ‘all purposeful learning activity undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence’
- Reformulated in 2001 to :  
‘ all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective.’ (EC 2001)

# Memorandum of Lifelong Learning

- Established directions in EU for first two decades of 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

## **Key messages:**

- New basic skills for all – primary skills for labour market
- Increased investment in human resources
- Innovation, including shift towards user-oriented learning system
- Valuing learning, particularly recognising informal and non-formal learning
- Guidance and information

# Four model structures (analytically – defined) in which LLL policies are enacted

strong non-formal sector model

market driven model

How does LLL sit in these models?

strong school-based with welfare model

dual (enterprise-voc school) model

## Strong non-formal sector

- **Early school leaving generates inequalities in adult life**

- Lower aggregate skills levels and productivity

tradition of

- - informal learning
- - self-employment
- - family support

*but*

- -relatively little formal VET
- -lack of formal



## Strong non-formal sector

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## Market driven

- **Diversity in schooling – generates inequalities**
- Moderate aggregate skills levels and productivity, reflecting polarising tendencies
- Relative high adult learning participation rates
- Adult learning close to market needs
  - - flexible
  - - learning situated in “real world” of work **but**
  - - insecure pathways
  - - little social support
  - - lack of citizenship

## Dual (enterprise-schooling) model

- Secure structured pathways
- High aggregate skill and productivity

**but**

- Inflexible pathways
- Access thresholds
- Lower levels of participation in LLL
- LLL often equates to 'going back to 'square one'

## Strong school-based plus welfare model

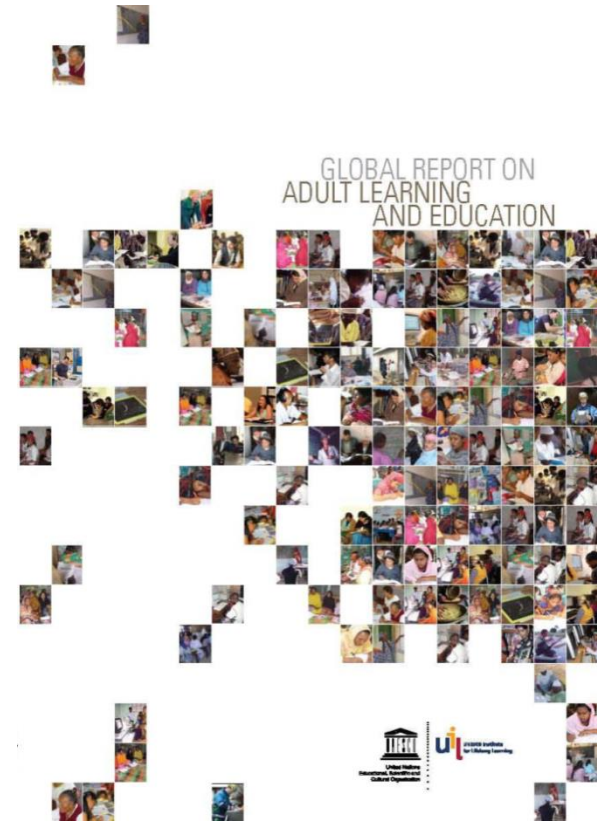
- **Egalitarian schooling;**
- Strong labour protection and regulation policies.
- redistributive effects from welfare systems
- high income equality
- high skills and productivity
- active labour market policies
- high levels of participation in adult education, incl. general edn. **But**
- barriers in school to work transition and work

# National agendas

- Reflect *and* influence agendas set by international organisations
- In practice, governments pick and choose what to focus on and more importantly how to interpret the concepts – *eg Nordic interpretation is different - sees LLL through welfare lens.*
- Relationships with existing traditions of adult education are always an issue.

# GLOBAL REPORT ON Adult Learning and Education 2009, 2015...

‘Repositioning adult education within lifelong learning requires a shared philosophy of the purposes and benefits of adult learning.’



## Current issue (and enduring challenge) 2: valuing and recognition of 'informal' learning, requires:

*'The most common sites and settings for learning that occur throughout everyday thinking and acting largely sit outside experiences provided by taught courses'.*

Billett, 2014

- Central emphasis on the persons learning
- More inclusive accounting of the circumstances in which learning arises, across and beyond extended working lives
- Mechanisms for recognising and certifying this learning
- Action for promoting environments and learning spaces that are which are rich in opportunities.

# Learning spaces

- Informal learning occurs in spaces outside normal and non-formal adult education:
- For example : through popular culture including films, TV, social media, magazines, museums and galleries and informal cultural organisations ( eg reading groups).
- Such public cultural spaces may not have overt educational purposes – but have powerful effect on people’s understandings of themselves in the world.
- Pedagogies (eg of self directed learning) can enhance the ways adults make meanings and connections in these situations

# Recognition of informal learning

- Recognition of 'informal learning' often hinges on disassociating learning outcomes from the means by which they were developed and acquired.
- French example significant because of successful introduction into context of academic elitism
- To remedy perceived 'social justice deficit' and weakness in equality of opportunity.
- ***Validation of Acquired***

# Validation of Acquired Experience

## (French example)

- The law of 2002 established the right for all working individuals to earn a recognised diploma or professional qualification through the accreditation of prior learning.
- 'The implementation of APL can now be seen as a 'small revolution' in France'
- Accrediting institutions have to set out how candidates should demonstrate skills and knowledge, how they should be guided in building solid 'candidature' and how juries will be chosen to assess.
- Limitation becomes: How to gain quality of experiences necessary



What candidates do ( with 40 -50% success on first application):



## Current issue 3 - how can quality frameworks address poor quality environments for lifelong learning?

**EU Renewed agenda for lifelong learning 2012-2014**

**(Compare and contrast with UNESCO framework)**

- Focus on developing quality assurance systems for providers; strengthened by regional qualification frameworks (EQF) :
- Improvement quality of staff
- Viable and transparent financing
- Bring provision closer to labour market needs
- Intensify cooperation between 'stakeholders'.

## **Bémel Framework for Action (UNESCO 2009):**

**‘Fostering a culture of quality in Adult Learning’** requires:

- relevant content and modes of delivery **–with staff reflecting target groups**
- learner-centred guidance and needs assessment
- professionalisation of educators (content and process expertise)
- **the enrichment of learning environments (motivating..)**
- **empowerment of individuals and communities**
- **emphasises role of public authorities ....extending to private sector in interests of effectiveness and consumer rights**

# Analysis

## Ingredients:

➤ Equity

➤ Efficiency

➤ Effectiveness

➤ Relevance

- Issue: Shifting paradigms from ‘equity-driven’ ( education accessible for all - UNESCO influenced) to ‘effectiveness and relevance – driven’ ( e.g. programmes better reflect labour market needs.)
- To date, little comparative evidence/analysis on quality approaches at national level.
- Greater emphasis needed on enrichment of learning environments.

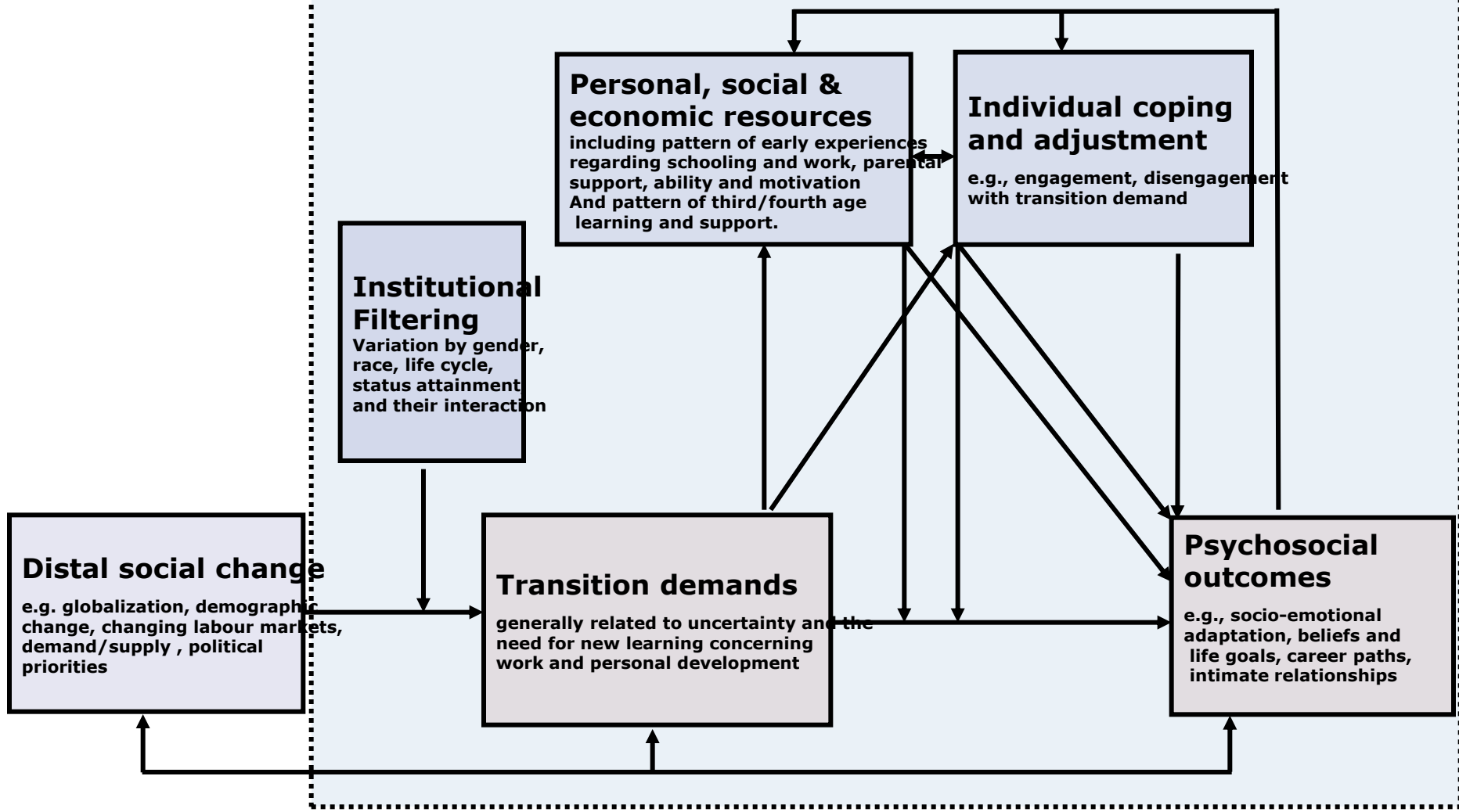
# Conclusions – the challenge for lifelong learning

'The real priority ....to re-establish the relationship between education and real life, throughout the whole of life.'

# Conclusions – the salience of a life course approach

- Human development is profoundly affected by macro-economic conditions, institutional structures, social background, gender and ethnicity as well as acquired attributes and individual resources such as ability, motivation, aspirations (see [Heinz et al 2012](#); [Schoon et al 2014](#)).
- Decisions about participation in learning can be conceptualised as part of a process of biographical negotiation involving contextualised preferences rather than as series of discrete ‘rational choices’\*
- *(see Evans, Weale and Schoon 2013 Can lifelong learning reshape life chances) .*

**H i g h e r - o r d e r e c o l o g i c a l s y s t e m s**  
(such as macroeconomic conditions, cultural belief systems, welfare regimes, social institutions and their interactions)



**Early socialization**

**Youth/early  
adult life**

**Adulthood**

**Third Age**

# Questions

- What different versions of LLL do practitioners subscribe to, in your fields of interest?
- *How do different discourses of LLL translate into teaching and learning practices?*
- What assumptions are made about individual responsibilities and wider social responsibilities in versions of lifelong learning with which you are familiar?
- *How do cultural differences influence the lifelong learning discourses and values that are dominant in different societies and groups?*



**Спасибо за внимание!**  
**Thank you for your attention...**

## ANNEXE:

Systemic blocks to LLL in UK, continued (*Source, NIACE Inquiry, continued*)

- Educational inequalities accumulate over the life course to an unacceptable extent.
- ‘for all the rhetoric’, high skilled economy not yet in prospect’.
- System does not recognise the increasingly diverse employment pathways – extent of horizontal movements.
- System complex, opaque and demotivating to many adults.
- Governance in England is over-centralised, not stable and does not trust its professionals enough. (Better governance in Scotland and Wales.)
- Infrastructure of building, technologies and services not well integrated : and system does not create and

# Recommendations;

- Base lifelong learning policy on new model of educational life course, with 4 stages: up to 25, 25-30, 50-75, 75 plus.
- Rebalance resources fairly and sensibly



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# Aim for Learning entitlements

- Build a set of learning entitlements:
  - Legal entitlement to free access
  - Financial entitlements to minimum level of qualification
  - Entitlements to learning leave as occupational benefit to be developed flexibly and over time as part of mainstream employment conditions
- Construct a curriculum framework – of learning opportunities that should be available in any given geographical area:
  - Civic, digital, health, financial, employability competences
  - Minimum local offer, interpreted locally to