

## CHANGING NOTIONS OF LIFELONG EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

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**Abstract** – Drawing on material from *IRE* as well as other sources, this article describes how the notion of lifelong education came into prominence in the educational world in the late 1960s, how it related to the concepts of formal, non-formal and informal education, and how it contrasted with the idea of recurrent education, as promoted by the OECD. The author goes on to discuss the emergence of the broader and more holistic concept of lifelong learning and the various ways in which it is understood. The article shows how *IRE* and its host institute have played an important part in the debate on these issues.

**Zusammenfassung** – Unter Bezugnahme auf Material aus der *IZE* und anderen Quellen wird in diesem Artikel beschrieben, wie der Begriff Lebenslanges Lernen in den späten 60ern in der Welt der Bildung bekannt wurde, in welcher Beziehung er zu den Konzepten formaler, nicht-formaler und informeller Bildung steht und in welchem Gegensatz er zu der von der OECD propagierten Idee der erneut aufgegriffenen Bildung steht. Der Autor befasst sich dann mit der Erstellung breiterer und holistischerer Konzepte des lebenslangen Lernens und der unterschiedlichen Auffassungsweise dieses Begriffs. Der Artikel zeigt, dass die *IZE* und ihr Gastinstitut eine bedeutende Rolle in der Debatte dieser Themen gespielt haben.

**Résumé** – À partir de documents de la *RIE* et d'autres sources, les auteurs décrivent la façon dont la notion d'éducation tout au long de la vie est passée à l'avant-scène du monde éducatif à la fin des années 60, quels sont ses liens avec l'éducation formelle, non formelle et informelle, et combien elle contraste avec l'idée de formation continue prônée par l'OCDE. L'auteur poursuit en analysant l'apparition du concept élargi et holistique de l'apprentissage tout au long de la vie ainsi que ses formes variées d'interprétation. Il démontre que la *RIE* et son institut d'origine jouent un rôle important dans le débat mené sur ces questions.

**Resumen** – Recurriendo a la *International Review of Education* (Revista Internacional de la Educación, editada por la UNESCO) como también a otras fuentes, este artículo describe cómo la noción de la educación durante toda la vida ha cobrado relevancia en el mundo de la educación a finales de los sesenta, cómo se relaciona con los conceptos de educación formal, no formal e informal y cómo está contrastada con la idea de la educación recurrente, promovida por la OCDE. El autor pasa a discutir la emergencia de un concepto más amplio y holístico del aprendizaje durante toda la vida y los diferentes modos de entenderlo. El artículo muestra cómo la *IRE* y el instituto que la respalda han jugado un papel importante en el debate sobre estos puntos.

**Резюме** – Опираясь на материалы *Международного Обзора Образования* и другие источники, в данной статье описывается, каким образом понятие непрерывного образования заняло видное положение в образовательном мире в конце 60-х годов, как оно связано с



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концепциями формального, неформального и информального образования, и как оно контрастирует с идеей возобновленного (рекуррентного) образования, поддерживаемого ОЭСР. Автор продолжает дискуссию о возникновении более широкой и всеобъемлющей концепции непрерывного учения и различных способах ее толкования. В статье показывается, какую важную роль в дебатах по данным вопросам играет *Международный Обзор Образования* со своим институтом.

The UNESCO Institute for Education (UIE) and its journal, the *International Review of Education*, have together provided a major platform for scholars and analysts interested in concepts, theories and principles of lifelong education since the 1960s. Malcolm Adiseshiah (1973), Manzoor Ahmed (1982), Paul Bélanger (1994), Arthur Cropley (1977, 1978, 1980), Ravindra H. Dave (1973, 1976), Ettore Gelpi (1984), Ursula Giere (1974, 1994), Torsten Husén (1968, 1974), Joachim Knoll (1974), Paul Lengrand (1970) and Bogdan Suchodolski (1972, 1976), to name some prominent contributors, were among the theorists who actively shaped the Institute's programme of work on lifelong education from the late 1960s. In those days one of the main preoccupations was to gain a systematic understanding of what was meant by the term, "lifelong education" and to study the implications for the content of education in the perspective of lifelong learning. This institutional interest in lifelong education built on important work on the education of workers and adults (Riedel 1955; King 1957; Deleon 1964).

From those early days until today, the UIE has continued to devote a significant part of its resources to sustained work on lifelong learning, adult education and literacy. Much of the body of work that has emerged during the intervening period is still both valid and valuable today. This is especially true for the philosophical concepts and normative principles that underpinned the idea of lifelong education, as formulated in the early 1970s as part of the UIE programme of work. It is unfortunate that much of the recent literature on lifelong learning does not acknowledge these important contributions made two and three decades ago. This article will provide a brief historical survey, examining the changing notions of lifelong learning, both in the wider context and as reflected in the work of UIE and the content of the *International Review of Education*.

The article will of necessity focus on the period from the late 1960s, since before that point in time the terms "lifelong education" and "lifelong learning" were not the common currency that they later became. However, they clearly drew partly on older concepts and practices, and it is worth taking a very brief glance back to see how these are reflected in the journal in earlier times. The term *Erwachsenenbildung* (adult education) is one that appears in *IRE* as early

as the fourth issue of 1931/32 in an article by Ernst Michel entitled “Die deutsche Arbeiterbildung und der geistige Standort der Akademie der Arbeit” (German Workers’ Education and the Scholastic Standpoint of the Labour Academy), a historical survey of attempts to provide workers with access to various forms of education. At a time of confusing social and cultural change, the task of adult education, writes Michel, “is to equip the human being mentally to master his or her immediate life’s task” (570). This is, after all, not so far from the notion of adult education as “empowerment”, to use a current buzz-word.

Skipping to the post-war period, the second issue of 1948/49 contains an interesting article by M. Eder on “Das Chinesische Theater als Faktor der Volkserziehung” (The Chinese Theatre as a Factor in the Education of the People). The author writes: “The content of the Chinese theatre reflects the soul and the highest ideals of the people. In the world of the theatre the predominant themes are elements of ancient Chinese mythology, Confucian ethics and matters of state as well as Taoistic and Buddhist ideas. . . . The stage therefore helps to ensure that this heritage of culture and knowledge is passed on to each new generation” (211).

Such articles are, however, few and far between in the journal, and the issues of the 1950s and 60s contain very little material connected with lifelong education, even under other names. It was not until the mid 1970s that the growing interest in lifelong education began to be noticeably reflected in the pages of IRE. Before looking at some examples of how the topic was covered in the periodical it might be useful to take a broader look at the concept itself and its role in the educational debate.

### **Lifelong education**

Since the late 1960s much has been said about the concept of lifelong education and lifelong learning. In the report of the UNESCO Commission chaired by Edgar Faure (1972), a former French minister of education, lifelong education was considered, not as a system of education but, rather, as a philosophical principle with respect to the organisation of education. R. H. Dave (1976: 34) defined the concept broadly, justifying its wide scope as a means to make it applicable for different contexts and cultures: “Lifelong education is a process of accomplishing personal, social and professional development throughout the life-span of individuals in order to enhance the quality of life of both individuals and their collectives. It is a comprehensive and unifying idea which includes formal, non-formal and informal learning for acquiring and enhancing enlightenment so as to attain the fullest possible development in different stages and domains of life”. A few years earlier, at the outset of the UIE work programme on lifelong education, a group of international experts had agreed on the “concept characteristics of lifelong education”. These characteristics were described as follows:

- “ 1. The three basic terms upon which the *meaning* of the concept is based are *life*, *lifelong* and *education*.
2. Education does not terminate at the end of formal schooling but is a *lifelong process*.
3. Lifelong education is not confined to adult education but it encompasses and unifies all stages of education – pre-primary, primary, secondary and so forth. It thus seeks to view *education* in its *totality*.
4. Lifelong education includes formal, non-formal and informal patterns of education.  
... [5. 6. 7.] ...
8. Lifelong education seeks continuity and articulation along its vertical or longitudinal dimension (*vertical articulation*).
9. Lifelong education also seeks integration at its horizontal and depth dimensions at every stage in life (*horizontal integration*).
10. Contrary to the elitist form of education, lifelong education is *universal* in character. It represents *democratisation of education*.
11. Lifelong education is characterized by its *flexibility* and *diversity* in *content*, *learning tools* and *techniques*, and *time* of learning.  
... [12. 13. 14. 15.] ...
16. Lifelong education carries out a *corrective function*: to take care of the shortcomings of the existing system of education.
17. The ultimate goal of lifelong education is to maintain and improve the *quality of life*.
18. There are three major prerequisites for lifelong education, namely *opportunity*, *motivation* and *educability*.
19. Lifelong education is an *organising principle* for all education.
20. At the *operational level*, lifelong education provides a *total* system of *all* education” (Dave 1976: 51–52).

Generally, lifelong education is based on the idea that the above mentioned *organising principle* for *all* education cannot be based on the traditional, “front-loaded” approach, according to which learning is mainly confined to a sequence of compulsory schooling and formal education at the upper secondary and post-secondary stages of the education system. Important also for today’s understanding of lifelong learning is the classification in terms of formal, non-formal and informal patterns of education and the notions of vertical articulation and horizontal integration in a life-wide perspective. Coombs (1973) and Coombs and Ahmed (1974), in a study sponsored by the World Bank and carried out under the auspices of the International Council for Educational Development (ICED), first made a careful analysis of the nature of the learners and their requirements, before proceeding with an investigation of the possible means by which these requirements might be met. In this initial analysis, it was determined that it was no longer possible for the definition of education as a whole to be confined to limited periods of time or to particular institutions or locations such as schools, nor for it to be restricted to a perspective where its measurement was to be in terms of the number of years an individual had been exposed to it. Consequently, Coombs and Ahmed (1974: 8) argued that education be considered, instead, as occurring throughout the life cycle of each individual, “from earliest infancy to

adulthood and involving a great variety of methods and sources". The authors thus determined it desirable to distinguish between three modes of education, as follows:

*Formal education:* "the highly institutionalised, chronologically graded and hierarchically structured "education system", spanning lower primary school and the upper reaches of the university."

*Non-formal education:* "any organised, systematic, educational activity carried on outside the formal system to provide selected types of learning to particular subgroups in the population, adults as well as children."

*Informal education:* "the lifelong process by which every person acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights from daily experiences and exposure to the environment – at home, at work, at play; from the example and the attitudes of the family and friends; from travel, reading newspapers and books or by listening to the radio or viewing films or television" (p. 8).

In the view of Philip Coombs and Manzoor Ahmed, formal education is thus structured in a system of "intellectual" parts (p. 233), while non-formal education is composed of a variety of educational activities that are not usually interconnected in any systematic way. However, the authors point out that there are no definitive or clear-cut boundaries between these three modes of education and, consequently, both overlapping and interaction may occur (see also Colletta 1996). In addition, they identified a number of similarities between formal education and non-formal education, whereby both: "... have been organised to augment and improve upon the informal learning process – in other words, to promote and facilitate certain valued types of learning (such as reading and writing) that individuals cannot as readily or quickly acquire through ordinary exposure to their environment" (op. cit., p. 8).

Subsequently, Coombs and Ahmed describe non-formal education and formal education as having similar pedagogical forms or methods, whereas they usually differ with respect to sponsorship and also in terms of the manner in which they are arranged together with the objectives towards which they aim, both of the latter being determined on the basis of the nature of the groups they are to serve. Elements from formal, non-formal and informal education should be synthesized and strong links developed between them, in order for systems of lifelong education to evolve. Distinctions between formal, non-formal and informal education are useful when elaborating the "life-wide" perspective of lifelong education. Rao, as early as 1970, had described both informal and formal elements in education, where the possibility was discussed of "informalising" the formal system, by introducing informal elements into formal education or, in other words, to "... provide linkages between education of terminal character and education which continues throughout life" (Rao 1970: 50). In an address delivered before a conference held under the auspices of the International Schools Association, at the United Nations in New York in 1970, Malcolm Adiseshiah had pointed out that lifelong education encompassed both a vertical and a horizontal continuum.

The definitions of formal, non-formal and informal education, cited above, were thus used as a basis for defining the horizontal or life-wide axis of lifelong education. For example, Hawes (1975: 71) observed that "Lifelong education seeks continuity and articulation along the vertical or longitudinal dimension . . . lifelong education also seeks integration at its horizontal and depth dimension at every stage of life". Skager and Dave (1977) utilised the notions of horizontal and vertical integration with regard to curriculum design and evaluation in lifelong education. They also developed practical implementation specifications in a comparative study of Japan, Rumania and Sweden. Skager (1978) also applied the concepts of formal, non-formal and informal education in a study of learning processes.

Eventually, towards the end of the 1970s, a formal model of lifelong and life-wide education was proposed. This occurred in 1978, when a number of specialists were brought together under the auspices of the UIE, with the aim of preparing a theoretical schema for lifelong education. These specialists had been drawn from a number of different arenas: socio-political, legislative, financial, organisational, planning and administrative. The subsequent outcome of their deliberations was the publication, *Towards a System of Lifelong Education*, edited by Arthur Cropley (1980).

From the mid 1970s this debate began to be increasingly reflected in the *International Review of Education*. The second issue of 1974 contained an article by Michael Huberman of the University of Geneva entitled "Looking at Adult Education from the Perspective of the Adult Life Cycle". Although he does not use the term "lifelong education" Huberman deals with many of the important issues of the debate, such as the need for a more holistic view of education that does not restrict learning to the years of school and university. The article contains some useful observations on the changing educational needs and capacities of the adult mind and on the different types of motivation for learning in adulthood.

However, the journal first gave substantial prominence to the subject in the fourth issue of 1974, a special number on *Lifelong Education and Learning Strategies*, guest-edited by R. H. Dave and Paul Lengrand. The issue begins with a foreword by the then Director of UIE, M. Dino Carelli, in which he writes: "In support of the diffusion and implementation of the idea of lifelong education, the Unesco Institute for Education has since 1972 focussed its programme on the reform of the organisation, form and content of school-based education as the phase in which the foundations for education as a lifelong process are laid. Within this context the present special issue of the *International Review of Education* has been conceived" (426). The editors make clear in their introduction that lifelong education implies not merely an extension of education in time but a whole different approach. "The idea of lifelong learning is characterised by its flexibility, diversity, universality and dynamism. It therefore presupposes the existence of alternative arrangements for acquiring education and the adoption of a variety of learning styles, tools

and techniques to suit the varying educational needs and interests of individuals and different points in time” (427).

A subsequent special issue of the journal, number one for 1982, was guest-edited by Manzoor Ahmed and was on *Formal, Nonformal and Informal Structures of Learning*. In several of the articles in this issue the subject of lifelong learning is closely interwoven with the title theme. Thomas J. La Belle, for example, in his article “Formal, Nonformal and Informal Education: A Holistic Perspective on Lifelong Learning”, examines the viability of these various approaches across different ages, sexes, social classes and ethnic groups (159–175). Ahmed’s introduction to the issue is entitled “Putting into Practice the Perspective of Lifelong Recurrent Learning”. The use of the word “recurrent” reappears in other contexts with somewhat different connotations in the term “recurrent education”, and it might be useful to look briefly at the emergence and application of this term.

### **Recurrent education**

In parallel with the development of lifelong education concepts by UNESCO, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) advocated recurrent education as a strategy for promoting lifelong education. Recurrent education was defined as: “. . . a comprehensive educational strategy for all post-compulsory or post-basic education, the essential characteristic of which is the distribution of education over the total life-span of the individual in a recurring way, i.e. in alternation with other activities, principally with work, but also with leisure and retirement” (OECD 1973: 16). An important difference between the concepts of lifelong education and recurrent education was thus that the former referred to all stages of education and life-wide learning whereas the latter came to be associated with policies for the promotion of formal adult education. The goal of recurrent education was the modification of the education system so that access to organized education would become available throughout the lifetime of each individual. A recurrent education strategy would seek to promote complementarity between school learning and learning occurring in other life situations. This implied that degrees and certificates should not be looked upon as an “end result” of an educational career but rather as steps in a continuing process of lifelong education (Bengtsson 1985; Tuijnman 1990). The strategy would also promote policy co-ordination across sectors, especially education and the labour market, extend the provision of planned adult education to a wider audience, and facilitate the participation of adults in higher education and universities.

Recurrent education and lifelong education had several concept characteristics in common. There were also obvious parallels with the concept of *éducation permanente* advanced by the Council of Europe at about the same time (Schwartz 1968, 1970). In the early 1970s the concepts were proposed

and also widely accepted as representing ambitions rather than concrete educational policies. They paid tribute to the conviction that access to educational opportunities should not be confined to the individual's early years but become available over the whole life-span. But despite this basic commonality there also were important differences.

The concept of recurrent education, as envisaged by the OECD, was more limited in scope and more utilitarian than lifelong education. It emphasized the correspondence between education and work and the interdependence of education policy and labour market policy. Recurrent education moreover implied instances of interruption in the lifelong process of education, as it advocated the idea that education should be spaced cyclically and in alternation with other activities. Whereas lifelong education emphasized holistic and humanistic ideals, recurrent education held a more utilitarian appeal. It offered more scope for actual implementation because it was aimed at the gradual introduction and expansion of educational opportunities for adults and at the improved alignment of adult education with the regular formal system.

It is important to emphasize that recurrent education was proposed not as an alternative to lifelong education but as a precursor: it was from the outset regarded as a planning strategy for the introduction of lifelong education. Thus OECD did not advance recurrent education as fundamentally distinct from or opposed to lifelong education. There was a difference in focus, however, in that the former was seen as being concerned mainly with post-secondary education, whereas lifelong education was clearly defined as encompassing life-wide learning activities across the entire human life-span (Ryba and Holmes 1973). Advocates of lifelong education moreover tended to emphasize the extension of educational provision into adult life as a basic human right, whereas recurrent education paid more attention to the correspondence between goals and functions of education and work.

Whereas the idea of lifelong education had its roots in a humanist, holistic and compensatory tradition, the concept of recurrent education was more utilitarian and tied to the world of work. It had its roots in human capital theory and ideas about "rolling reform" and "social engineering": making society better and more equal by improving and extending educational opportunities to all citizens. The goal of recurrent education was the redistribution of education opportunities over the life span, in alternation with work and leisure, and as an alternative to the lengthening of education in the first part of life. In contrast, the architects of lifelong education did not generally support the idea that some part of initial education should be delayed or shortened (Houle 1974; Lengrand 1986; Hameyer 1979).

Recurrent education thus represented an instrument for checking the expected enrolment explosion in upper secondary and higher education, expanding vocational training at secondary and tertiary levels and, above all, of supplying labour markets with the skilled work force required to sustain economic growth. Lifelong education, in contrast, was ". . . to include all stages, forms and patterns of enlightenment throughout the life-span" (Dave



1976: 20) and, as noted above, made the *democratisation* of education central to its concept characteristics. Thus recurrent education represented a much more limited and manpower oriented strategy whereas lifelong education sought human liberation and enlightenment in a learning society.

Lifelong education and recurrent education were advocated at a time when the economic difficulties that followed in the wake of the oil crises of the 1970s began to bite. Country interest in lifelong education and recurrent education began to wane during the late 1970s and instead they followed more piecemeal and ad hoc approaches than the demanding ones initially suggested. Thus the holistic vision that had been promoted especially by UNESCO and experts associated with the UIE in Hamburg was replaced during the 1980s with a focus on the solving of concrete problems besetting the renewal of secondary vocational training and formal adult education. Although many of the changes that were introduced in the education systems of OECD countries during the 1980s were in line with characteristics of a recurrent education strategy, they nevertheless were mostly ad hoc and sequential developments. The successful expansion of formal adult education was one important development in several European countries (Tuijnman 1992). Another was the strengthening of preparatory vocational education in secondary schools. But the goals of reducing the direct rate of transition from secondary to tertiary education and the capping of student numbers in higher education, which were absent from lifelong education but central to the recurrent education strategy, were not realised. But even though recurrent education had not been implemented on a wholesale basis, in the economically advanced countries many of the building blocks for lifelong education had progressively been put into place during the 1970s and 1980s.

### **Lifelong learning**

The concept characteristics of lifelong education, as initially formulated by a group of experts to the UIE, are very much present in recent definitions of lifelong learning, even though relatively more emphasis is placed on learning rather than education. By the mid-1990s the concept of lifelong learning made a strong come back in international and national arenas (UNESCO and Delors et al. 1996; OECD 1996). The latter organisation abandoned recurrent education and instead adopted a definition of lifelong learning that was consistent with the concept characteristics identified by UIE experts: "Lifelong learning is best understood as a process of individual learning and development across the life-span, from cradle to grave – from learning in early childhood to learning in retirement. It is an inclusive concept that refers not only to education in formal settings, such as schools, universities and adult education institutions, but also to "life-wide" learning in informal settings, at home, at work and in the wider community" (OECD 1996).

Current statements on lifelong learning are similar in that they go far

beyond providing a second or third chance for “at-risk” adults. They generally define a broad set of beliefs, aims and strategies around the central tenet that learning opportunities, available over the whole life span and accessible on a widespread basis, should be key attributes of modern societies. They are based on the belief that everyone is able to learn, all must become motivated to learn, and should be actively encouraged to do so throughout the life span, whether this occurs in formal institutions of education and training or informally – at home, at work or in the wider community. This understanding of lifelong learning is pervasive because it is not restricted to learning that is somehow intentional and structured, or that takes place in formal, institutional settings. OECD (1996) puts it as follows:

“Despite its all-embracing nature, the new concept of lifelong learning has several features that give it an operational significance for education and training policy in distinction from other approaches:

- the centrality of the learner and learner needs: that is, an orientation towards the “demand side” of education and training rather than just the supply of places;
- an emphasis on self-directed learning, and the associated requirement of “learning to learn” as an essential foundation for learning that continues throughout life;
- a recognition that learning takes place in many settings, both formal and informal; and
- a long-term view, that takes the whole course of an individual’s life into consideration.”

Thus it is now widely acknowledged that lifelong learning implies that learning takes place throughout life, that it is neither confined to any specific age group nor to the education administered by educational institutions. The concept refers to all systematically organised learning activities associated with formal education as well as to learning that takes place in informal or non-formal settings. The importance of the “life-wide” continuum is thus generally accepted, in both developing and developed countries (Sachsenmeier 1978; Kassam 1982; King 1982; La Belle 1982; Atchoarena 1995). Consequently today’s concept of lifelong learning pays somewhat less regard to the role of formal, traditional institutions and more to non-formal learning in a variety of settings. Further, it is today also generally accepted that lifelong learning is by definition a holistic, visionary, normative and value-laden concept in the same way as, for example, ideas about democracy or equality (Dohmen 1996).

An additional reflection concerns responsibility. The lifelong learning framework implies a shift in responsibility not only from the state to the world of work and the civil sectors of society, but also from the state to the individual. The emphasis on “learning” rather than “education” is highly significant because it reduces the traditional preoccupation with structures and institutions and instead focuses on the individual. The individual is at the heart of a lifelong learning “system”, and the realisation of lifelong learning depends

to a large degree on the capacity and motivation of individuals to take care of their own learning.

Lifelong learning is a large, overarching concept with many adherents. Popular education, formal schooling, adult education, self-directed learning, continuing vocational training, on-the-job training, informal learning in the work place, and social education for senior citizens are examples of more specific elements (Sutton 1996). Lifelong learning, as a concept, thus embraces all learning that takes place from infancy throughout adult life, in families, schools, vocational training institutions, universities, the work place, and at large in the community. Its merit lies in the challenge it brings to using institutional and age criteria as delimiting factors in educational policy. But in so doing it creates another problem. Because lifelong learning denotes a philosophy and an ideal based on humanistic principles it so far has evaded precise definition.

Conceptually, lifelong learning activities can be classified in various ways. One is in terms of the types of institutions that support learning. The distinction between formal, non-formal and informal learning is still relevant in this respect (Hager 2001). Another classification might be based, for example, on the degree to which learning activities are publicly or privately organised, funded or supported. But the presence of the longitudinal and life-wide continua means that lifelong learning cannot be measured and analysed using dichotomous, two-category variables. The requirement that continuous variables should be used implies recognition of the fact that many providers of lifelong learning opportunities differ on classification criteria *only in degree*. Another group of relevant variables can be derived from characteristics of the learners themselves, using socio-economic or demographic variables – for example, initial educational attainment, age, sex, ethnicity, household composition, employment situation, occupational status, income situation, motivational orientations, and leisure versus career orientation. The latter distinction is especially relevant because it acknowledges another major concept characteristic, namely that lifelong learning is undertaken not only for job and career related reasons but also and especially for personal development, self-fulfilment and quality of life.

As Arthur Cropley states in his introduction to *Towards a System of Lifelong Education*: “Lifelong learning existed before the emergence of current interest in it and would continue to occur even if educators ignored it” (1980: 1). He specifically mentions that lifelong learning takes place not only in formal education settings but also entails a life-wide perspective, and he emphasises “the contribution to learning of people who are not trained, paid or acknowledged as teachers” (Cropley 1980: 5). The definition of learning proposed by Cropley is that it is “. . . a process of change occurring within people as a result of experience” (Cropley 1980: 3), while his definition of *education* is that it “. . . involves the influences which guide or encourage learning” (Cropley 1980: 3). Therefore, he concludes, changes in education have a direct effect

on lifelong learning practices. Similar ideas have been expressed in several recent publications (Medel-Añonuevo et al. 2001; OECD 2001; Wilson 2001). Cropley also addressed the topic in two articles in the *International Review of Education* (1977 and 1978). In the first one, a note on “Educational Brokering: Access to Lifelong Education” he described the emergence of brokering agencies acting as intermediaries between the would-be learners and the sources of learning, a phenomenon which had become particularly noticeable in the USA. In the second article, “Some Guidelines for the Reform of School Curricula in the Perspective of Lifelong Learning”, he dealt with the important issue of how schools can foster the knowledge, motives and attitudes necessary for learning throughout life.

Aspin and Chapman (2001) distinguish between four different categories of policies for lifelong learning. The first are those that entail a compensatory education model aimed at making up for inequalities in the system of initial, formal schooling. The second are those that constitute a model of continuing vocational training. The third implies a social innovation model of lifelong learning, promoting socio-economic transition and democratisation, whereas the fourth category of policies refers to a leisure-oriented model of lifelong learning. Aspin and Chapman (2001) treat lifelong learning as a triadic concept, where the three different entities are economic progress and development, personal development and fulfilment, and social inclusiveness, democratic understanding and activity. With this triadic concept, as advanced by Aspin and Chapman, the first element can be seen to represent the human capital perspective, the second element may represent both the social- and human capital perspectives, while the third is indicative of a social capital perspective on the concept of lifelong learning (Schuller and Field 1998; Field 2001; OECD 2001).

Policy issues were the subject of a special section of the *International Review of Education*, in the triple issue one to three for 1996, edited by Sergio Haddad under the title *Adult Education – the Legislative and Policy Environment*. This consisted of ten country profiles: Australia, Brazil, Côte d’Ivoire, Hungary, India, Morocco, The Philippines, Switzerland, England and Wales and the USA. The papers revealed both the enormous variations between countries in this regard and the crucial nature of an adequate base of laws and policies for the effective provision of adult learning opportunities.

In 1994, twenty years after the Dave and Lengrand issue of 1974, the journal again devoted an issue specifically to the subject of lifelong education, edited by Paul Bélanger, the then Director of UIE, and Ettore Gelpi of UNESCO. The issue was more than twice the length of the earlier one, indicating the increased importance that had come to be attached to the subject within UIE over the intervening years. It brought together 17 contributions from many countries, addressing a wide range of issues related to lifelong education, including changing patterns of employment, the interrelationship between education and social structures, differing views as to the role of the state, and the emergence of a “biographical” approach in which education

becomes a process of shaping one's own life story. It is evident that by the time of this issue the concept of lifelong education/learning had emphatically come into its own within the educational debate.

### **Evaluating lifelong learning**

Looking at the present state of the debate, it is apparent that the wide-ranging orientation of lifelong learning poses nearly insurmountable conceptual problems for scholars and policy analysts alike. Because lifelong learning is not tied to any institutional context it requires them to take a large, holistic perspective. They should consider the whole range of educational provision from pre-schooling and care, through all stages of education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels, to continuing vocational training in educational and labour-market institutions, informal learning on the job, and self-directed and co-operative learning at large in society. Methodological problems arise because it is not possible to draw a clear boundary between what can be considered learning activities and the range of other experiential and behavioural activities in which people engage.

The all-embracing nature of the concept of lifelong learning, as currently accepted by the OECD and other international organisations, may therefore be said to have certain drawbacks, among them the risk of dispersion, a loss of focus and the difficulty of assigning and evaluating priorities. A vast and inclusive concept of lifelong learning holds certain appeal to policy-makers, in part because it can serve to obscure attempts to define clearly what educational goals should be pursued and who should be responsible for which specific provisions and actions. For researchers and analysts, however, this all-embracing approach holds much less appeal, not least because the concept evades clear definition and hence is not directly amenable to measurement or evaluation.

An overarching conceptual framework is needed, one that describes the basic dimensions, relates central elements and points to strategic issues and considerations relevant for policy and practice. Because it is difficult to define the concept in unambiguous, operational terms, it follows that the effort to examine the efficacy of the proposals that are currently being advocated under its banner is undermined. Could it be that lifelong learning is proposed as a panacea for solving all kinds of social ills and economic problems, precisely because the term is not exact and therefore evades evaluation? As countries adopt a lifelong approach to learning, there will be a need to re-consider current approaches to measurement and evaluation. This applies not only to system-internal aspects of evaluation but also to the relationships between education and training systems, on the one hand, and the "external" worlds of work and culture, family and community life, and the social dynamics of human security, justice and democracy on the other hand. In a lifelong learning philosophy, opportunities to learn outside the formal system are to be placed

on an equal footing with those occurring within. An important condition for this is that such learning is properly evaluated.

Given the sheer scope and volume of the learning activities occurring in sectors where the Education authorities normally exercise little control or responsibility for management, it is clear that the information infrastructure for lifelong learning needs to be diverse, yet inclusive: it needs to comprise comparable indicators not only of the contexts, inputs, processes and multiple outcomes of formal education as well as informal learning in the life span, but the information also needs to be presented at several levels of aggregation. Pre-schooling, tertiary education for young adults and senior citizens, on-the-job training as well as informal learning at home and in the community, whether undertaken for investment or consumption purposes, all need to have their proper place in the information system.

Market failures in lifelong learning can result from a lack of information about supply and demand elasticities, the absence of data on costs and benefits, and the inability to assess and certify the effects of learning projects in ways that are independent from and unconstrained by the traditional qualification frameworks. Perhaps the most important information gap concerns the lack of data on multiple learning outcomes. Not only governments and employers need better information about the nature and distribution of learning opportunities across the life-span. This holds true also for institutional suppliers of learning, and the communities, families and individuals concerned. Making progress in lifelong learning therefore presents a number of large challenges also to the scholarly community. Addressing them will require the co-operation of experts in different disciplines and fields of specialisation.

As this article has shown, the UNESCO Institute for Education and the *International Review of Education* have demonstrably made important contributions to the conceptualisation of lifelong learning theories and practices over many years. Despite the work accomplished – or perhaps thanks to it – there now loom a number of large challenges in the implementation of lifelong learning on the horizon. The building of a holistic and comprehensive framework of lifelong learning indicators that would facilitate broad-based evaluation is only one among them. Given that lifelong learning has generally been adopted as the guiding principle for the development of the “educative society” in the 21st century, it can be expected that the UNESCO Institute for Education and its journal will be well placed to make a difference and will continue to contribute to conceptual and practical developments.

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