



**Pilot Workshop on Developing Capacity for Establishing  
Lifelong Learning Systems in UNESCO Member States**  
Hamburg, Germany, 22 November – 3 December 2010

## **Final Report**

### **I. Introduction**

As part of its strategic objective to build capacity for effective lifelong learning policy and practice in Member States, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) organised a **Pilot Workshop on Developing Capacity for Establishing Lifelong Learning Systems in UNESCO Member States** in Hamburg, Germany, from 22 November to 3 December 2010. Tailor made for policy-makers and researchers, the workshop aimed at reinforcing momentum for lifelong learning created by CONFINTEA VI and strengthening their capacities to develop national policy and strategies to establish lifelong learning systems.

There were twenty participants in educational planning and lifelong learning from ten UNESCO Member States in Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya, Namibia, Rwanda and Tanzania) and Asia (Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam). These countries were selected on the basis of their political will and efforts in developing policies and initiatives to build lifelong learning systems.

The Workshop used a variety of methodologies including (1) presentations on key themes in lifelong learning; (2) group-work and discussion to reflect on issues raised in the presentations and to contextualise the issues to the respective countries; (3) field excursions to lifelong learning institutions in Hamburg, Brussels, Copenhagen and

Helsinki; and (4) the preparation and presentation by each country team, supported by UIL professional staff, of a draft outline for a national lifelong learning policy framework.

Presentations were given by leading international experts, including Mr Manzoor Ahmed (Bangladesh), Ms Rosemarie Mielke (Germany), Mr Gordon Mitchell (Germany), Mr Tom Schuller (UK), Mr Dieter Timmermann (Germany), Ms Rosa María Torres (Ecuador) and Ms Shirley Walters (South Africa). Senior UIL professional staff also gave presentations.

## II. Main themes and inputs

The programme content was carefully structured around the following policy and strategy themes in lifelong learning:

- Lifelong learning – conceptual evolution and new imperatives;
- Making a sound case for lifelong learning;
- Policy frameworks and implementation strategies to promote lifelong learning;
- Expanding provision and enhancing participation in lifelong learning;
- Financing of lifelong learning;
- Literacy and adult education as integral parts of lifelong learning;
- Higher education in a lifelong learning system;
- Recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) and National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs); and
- Monitoring and evaluation of lifelong learning systems.

### 1. Lifelong learning – conceptual evolution and new imperatives

This theme focused on the evolution of lifelong learning as a ‘master concept’ and ‘guiding principle’ in transforming education. Lifelong learning was defined as the integration of learning and living – horizontally in life-wide contexts across family, cultural settings, communities, study, work and leisure, and vertically over an individual’s lifespan ‘from cradle to grave’. It encompasses all organised and purposeful learning activity undertaken in formal, non-formal and informal settings. The challenge is to build learning families, communities and societies, and to emphasise learning throughout the life-cycle. Global education development platforms such as EFA have to incorporate lifelong learning. Traditional national education systems which pay scant attention to learning must change, taking into account that learning takes place beyond the formal school system as well as outside the Ministry of Education and other government structures.



## **2. Making a sound case for lifelong learning**

The presentations demonstrated the ability of lifelong learning to respond to global trends in developing quality human resources and active citizens. They also showed its contribution to meeting the challenges of the modern world, both for individuals and societies. Particularly in poorer countries, lifelong learning is seen as a means to enhance the capability of individuals to overcome developmental challenges, to reduce poverty and to build democratic societies. A presentation on the multi-faceted benefits of investment in lifelong learning emphasised both individual and collective effects of learning as well as the link between human and social capital.

## **3. Policy frameworks and implementation strategies for promoting lifelong learning**

Many countries lack a workable policy and strategy to promote lifelong learning. To establish much-needed policy frameworks and implementation strategies, the following key elements were highlighted: (1) a broader rationale for public and private investment; (2) resources, time and equity of participation; (3) a set of learning entitlements; and (4) the elaboration of the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders at local implementation level. Each country has to identify its specific conditions and particular contexts, such as the demand for lifelong learning created by labour market and demographic changes.

## **4. Expanding provision and enhancing participation in lifelong learning**

This theme reviewed the gaps in provision of learning opportunities and analysed various barriers (institutional, dispositional and situational) to participation in lifelong learning. To expand provision and enhance participation, well-targeted policies are needed, including: infrastructure; incentives; flexible delivery; and active labour market policies. The workshop also introduced the concept of learning cities and communities, based on the understanding that responsibility to build lifelong learning systems rests not only at national government level, but also at city and community levels. Experience from many countries has shown that building a learning community/city has become a pragmatic and effective approach to mobilising local-level government initiative in building a learning society.

## **5. Financing of lifelong learning**

This issue was addressed by highlighting some of the financial modalities, such as training vouchers and learning accounts, that are being implemented in many European countries. One of the main challenges is the inclusion of disadvantaged target groups. Funding for these groups should be based on criteria such as limited income, low initial level of education and/ or no participation in training over a certain period. Financial resources need to be understood in relation to the broader concept of 'resources' (mental, time, institutional, physical and money). In addition, it was emphasised that there is no single universal funding mechanism, but a mix of financing modes.



## 6. Literacy and adult education as integral parts of lifelong learning

Literacy and adult learning and education are integral parts of lifelong learning. Presentations on this topic highlighted the key messages of the *Belém Framework for Action*, adopted at CONFINTEA VI, as an important guide for countries to harness the potential of adult learning and education. In response to technological advances, globalisation, development challenges and changing work contexts, governments need to develop and implement ‘fully-costed’ programmes, policies, plans and legislation for both literacy and adult learning and education. These should be based on a sector-wide lifelong learning perspective. In exploring the role of literacy as a foundation for lifelong learning, it was emphasised that the development of reading, writing and numeracy skills involves a continuous process in literate environments.

## 7. Higher education in a lifelong learning system

The presentation on higher education in a lifelong learning system showed that lifelong learning challenges the dominant paradigm of higher education. When a lifelong learning approach is adopted, all aspects of higher education institutions are affected: strategic partnerships and linkages; regulatory frameworks; research; teaching and learning processes; administration policies and mechanisms; and student support systems and services. To transform teaching and learning strategy at tertiary level, learners and teachers must accept that they live in a world of permanent change, and students have to become lifelong learners. Modern education and learning should focus more on procedural knowledge – knowing how to learn – and not only learning content.

## 8. Recognition, Validation and Accreditation (RVA) and National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs)

The presentations on this theme showed that non-formal and informal learning – learning that takes place outside formal education institutions – can be a rich source for obtaining knowledge, employability and personal development. The recognition, validation and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning provide an alternative route to qualifications for adults and young people. The shift towards recognising, validating and accrediting all learning outcomes and the need for national qualifications frameworks to support the process of RVA were also emphasised. Practice in many

countries has demonstrated that NQFs provide effective linkages across the education and training system.

### 9. Monitoring and evaluation of lifelong learning systems

Discussions on this theme revealed the very complicated nature of a lifelong learning system and emphasised the necessity to include both *quantitative* and *qualitative indicators* in monitoring and evaluation. In addition, it was mentioned that while monitoring and evaluation of a lifelong learning system can be comprehensive, it can also focus on niche areas (such as community colleges, basic skills, adult learning and education) provided that these are related to the entire lifelong learning system and include all stakeholders.

### III. The field visits

As a supplement to the conceptual presentations and discussions, and to gain insights from innovative and practical programmes, field visits were organised to institutions and organisations engaged in policy-making and providing a variety of learning opportunities.

Field visits in **Hamburg** comprised: (1) Ida Ehre Gesamtschule – a comprehensive school with a long-standing tradition of innovative practice in providing vocational orientation; (2) ELBCAMPUS – a Chamber of Crafts competence centre which provides a wide range of services to promote a strong and competitive crafts sector; (3) Arbeit und Leben (Work and Life) – which promotes the implementation of the Hamburg Law on Educational Leave; and (4) the Family Literacy Project (FLY) – an inter-generational literacy programme that targets parents, children at pre-school, kindergarten and early primary school, as well as children with special learning needs. All participants also visited the Hamburg Agency for Political Education, which offers a broad range of publications and public information activities. A presentation by the Strategic Development Department of the Hamburg Ministry for School and Vocational Education gave participants an understanding of key issues and challenges relating to the educational reform agenda in Hamburg.





Generously supported by external partners, field visits were also organised to the European Commission and two Nordic countries. One group went to **Brussels**, where it attended a seminar on policy issues with EU policy-makers in lifelong learning at the DG Education and Culture in the European Commission. The second group went to **Copenhagen** visiting a folk high school, the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art and an adult education centre. The group also attended a seminar to discuss the Danish lifelong learning tradition and system with

representatives from the Danish Ministry of Education and the Danish School of Education. The third group went to **Helsinki** where participants visited adult education centres, a folk high school, and a continuing education centre at the University of Helsinki. This group also visited the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture to discuss contemporary education policies and trends in Finland.

The field visits offered a unique opportunity to get first-hand insights in policy formation and innovative approaches on personalised learning; citizenship education; continuing education for both personal development and employment opportunities; methodological and didactic approaches for inclusion; as well as tripartite (employers, trade-unions and government) partnership approaches to continuing and adult education. Participants were able to get an understanding of lifelong learning policies and systems as they are implemented concretely in some European countries. As a participant said afterwards, the field visits were 'a lifetime opportunity to experience lifelong learning in real life'.

#### **IV. Preparation of a draft proposal for a country-based policy framework**

Each country team was required to produce a **draft proposal for a national lifelong learning strategic policy framework**, in order to transform conceptual discourse into policy considerations. To facilitate this task, a set of questions was sent to the participants in advance, and an outline structure for the proposal was suggested during the Workshop. UIL assigned two professional staff members to each country-team for technical assistance and support.

Based on input from the presentations, group discussions and field visits, each country team worked intensively to prepare the draft proposal. All ten country-teams presented their draft frameworks on the final day. Each presentation included a country-related analysis and reflection on: socio-economic, demographic and development priorities and contexts; the existing policy environment to support lifelong learning; priority areas; implementation strategies; and the financing and monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

## V. Evaluation

According to the participants' final evaluation, the Workshop successfully fulfilled its aims, objectives and expectations. All participants considered the themes of the Workshop



highly relevant in the context of the development agenda of their respective countries. One participant put it: 'I have understood the concept of lifelong learning and the intricacies involved in its implementation'. Another participant described the workshop as 'very fruitful and timely'. Participants gained a better understanding of the lifelong learning concept; its role in promoting sustainable social and economic development; the building blocks of a holistic lifelong learning policy framework; and key issues in the implementation of such a framework. For UIL staff, the Workshop

offered a chance to better understand in-depth country contexts and key aspects of lifelong learning. It offered a unique opportunity for policy-makers, advocates and academics to share experience and achievements, and to debate the crucial issues facing lifelong learning now and in the future.

## VI. Follow-up strategy

To have a real impact on policy and practice in participating countries, the Workshop must be followed by robust and concrete actions. A follow-up strategy, covering actions to be taken by participants and by UIL, was discussed and adopted at the end of the Workshop.

Participants will:

- File a short report about the Workshop to their respective Ministers of Education, National Commissions for UNESCO and Permanent Delegations to UNESCO;
- Publish articles promoting the concept of lifelong learning in leading national newspapers/journals;
- Form a core national working team/task force to develop lifelong learning policy;
- Consolidate their draft proposals for a national policy and strategy framework with key stakeholders and in alignment with other international programmes;
- Organise a national seminar to disseminate key messages in the proposal and receive comments, and to mobilise and nurture change agents;
- Facilitate the official approval of a national lifelong learning policy and strategy framework;

- Mobilise between two and five regions/cities/communities to develop a local policy and strategy or to pilot the implementation of the national policy and strategy framework.

UIL will:

- Provide continuous technical support (documents and expertise) in collaboration with UNESCO Regional Bureaux and Cluster/Country Offices;
- Offer fellowship at UIL to participants or other members of the national working team to help them in developing/strengthening policies according to country proposal, and facilitate regional/bilateral/multilateral exchanges and collaboration among national working teams/task forces;
- Review progress in the ten participating countries. In the case of Africa, draft and submit a review paper to the ADEA Triennale 2011.

The most important outputs of the country teams were the draft proposals for a national lifelong learning policy framework which covered key issues and policy considerations in building lifelong learning systems in their respective countries. The follow-up process will therefore seek to disseminate and discuss such proposals to allow more stakeholders to be involved in the process of transforming conceptual discourse into concrete policy and strategies.

