



Iranian National
Commission for
UNESCO
UNESCO Tehran
Cluster Office



National Training Workshop on Innovative Concepts and Systems of Lifelong Learning

Tehran, 11 to 14 February 2013

Concept Note

1. Background

1.1. Lifelong learning - a short history in the context of UNESCO

Lifelong learning is a UNESCO priority set by its Member States, including the Islamic Republic of Iran, to promote every individual's right to education.

The commitment of UNESCO's Member States to lifelong learning is expressed in two landmark reports: (1) *Learning to be: The world of education today and tomorrow*, the report of the International Commission on the Development of Education (known as the Faure Report, 1972); and (2) *Learning: The treasure within*, the report of the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century (known as the Delors Report, 1996).

These reports have contributed to the development of policy and practice in lifelong learning and to the creation of learning societies in UNESCO Member States.

Lifelong learning encompasses formal, non-formal and informal learning. It emphasises the integration of learning and living and applies to all aspects of life – family, community, study, work and leisure – and to all phases of an individual's life.

In a knowledge-based global economy, future prosperity and security as well as peace, social harmony and care for the environment will depend on people's access to knowledge and their capacity to make informed choices. Increasingly they will need to adapt to rapid change and to find sustainable solutions to complex problems. Lifelong learning is the essential organizing principle for enabling people to meet these challenges.

1.2 Lifelong learning in the Islamic Republic of Iran

The Islamic Republic of Iran Government is well on track as regards the EFA goals and education-related MDGs. In particular, Iran has made remarkable improvements in enrolment ratios at all levels of education throughout the country, and gender parity has been achieved from early childhood care and education to higher education. The education system has contributed significantly to building human resources and citizens capable of playing their full part in the country's social development and economic growth.

Meanwhile, the Government of Iran has attached great importance to meeting the development challenges that the country is facing, including the challenges emerging from the employment market, urbanization and



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migration, and bearing in mind the significant proportion of youth in the population, as well as other social and economic challenges.

To ensure sustainable development in both economic and social sectors, a country needs to pursue further innovations for developing the education sector, in order to ensure high-quality human resources and active citizens, possessing sound life skills, social and entrepreneurial capacities, employability and creativity.

Therefore, it is vital to continue exploring and adapting effective ways of continuously improving quality and inclusion in education and learning, and equipping children, youth and adults with the necessary skills to adapt to a rapidly changing society.

As a *master concept* and *guiding principle* for education development and reform, lifelong learning for all has a crucial role to play in addressing these issues.

In response to these challenges, the Ministry of Education of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the National Commission for UNESCO and the UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office have asked the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, UIL, to provide technical support and develop a concept note for organizing a **National Workshop on Innovative Concepts and Systems of Lifelong Learning**, which is below. (For further information on UIL, please kindly see point 9 below.)

The Workshop will also contribute to the expected results of the effort that has been given first priority under the United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2012-2016 in the Islamic Republic of Iran, namely poverty reduction through improvements in national and sub-national capacities for formulating lifelong learning policies and plans for sustainable human development, and for enhancing access to and participation in learning and education.

2. Aim and objectives

The overall aim of the Workshop is to reinforce the capacity of leading policy-makers and policy-driven researchers at national level for creating and implementing innovative policies and strategies to strengthen a lifelong learning system and to make lifelong learning for all a reality.

The major specific objectives of the Workshop are:

- to articulate a sound conceptual understanding of lifelong learning and make a case for lifelong learning for all in the context of the Islamic Republic of Iran;
- to exchange international experiences and successful stories, and generate innovative ideas to develop and implement a comprehensive national strategic document on lifelong learning;
- to develop a contingent of policy makers and researchers in promoting evidence-based policy making and research with the goal of strengthening lifelong learning for all.

3. Major contents

The programme will be largely action-oriented and will have the following main elements:



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- an analytical overview of the history and development of the concept of lifelong learning, and a discussion of the importance of lifelong learning at international and national levels in the context of UNESCO priorities as defined by its Member States;
- an assessment of socio-economic, political and cultural demand for key competences that men and women, young and old in Iran should have in the interests of: (1) individual empowerment and cultural prosperity; (2) social cohesion and economic prosperity; (3) sustainable development.
- reflection on the development of some major building blocks of a lifelong learning system, including: (1) inclusive and quality learning from basic to higher education; (2) learning in communities and families; (3) effective learning for and in the workplace; (4) use of modern learning technologies; and (5) recognition of outcomes of all forms of learning.
- sharing of ideas on some fundamental conditions for creating a strong and integrated lifelong learning system, including: (1) vision, political will and commitment; (2) shared governance and participation of all stakeholders; (3) mobilisation and effective use of resources and potentials; and (4) capacity for evidence-based decision making in the domain of lifelong learning.

4. Dates and place of the Workshop

Four working days: 11 to 14 February 2013

Place: International School for Boys, Sa'adat Abad, Tehran

5. Working languages of the Workshop

Farsi and English (with simultaneous interpretation).

6. Participants

The Workshop will have about 35 participants, including:

- national policy makers from education, higher education, health, labour and other ministries which have direct responsibilities for education and human resources development;
- the Islamic Parliament of Iran, the Centre for Women's Affairs of the Presidential Office and the Ministry of Mines and Industry;
- sub-national-level educational policy makers;
- leading researchers on education policy;
- experts from non-governmental educational organizations, such as the Iranian Scientific Society; and
- journalists of the Education Channel and other relevant sections of the media, including education-related media.

The participants will be selected by the national partners and due consideration will be given to gender balance.



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7. Methodologies

The Workshop will be organized in an interactive and participatory manner and will combine **presentations, group work and discussions.**

In the presentations, some examples of best practice and innovative approaches will be introduced and discussed with the aim of integrating research findings and practical solutions.

In the group work and discussions, participants will be requested to reflect on key issues raised in the presentations and generate new ideas for strengthening lifelong learning for all in Iran. Practical support for activities conducted by participants (individual or group) will be provided by resource persons.

8. Resource persons

To reflect the state-of-the-art in lifelong learning policies and strategies at the national level, in addition to professional staff of UIL, two high-profile specialists from Asia and Europe will be invited to serve as resource persons.

9. Introducing UIL

As one of the six Category I educational institutes of UNESCO, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL, <http://www.uil.unesco.org/>), located in Hamburg, Germany, has been given the mandate to:

- a. enhance national capacities for the provision of a wide range of formal, non-formal and informal learning opportunities;
- b. build on policy-driven research that centres on effective learning strategies and supportive learning environments; and
- c. provide an international forum for the exchange of information on new directions and innovative developments regarding educational policy, concepts and best practices in the field of lifelong learning.

In view of the significance of lifelong learning in UNESCO Member States for harnessing the power and potential of learning and education to ensure a viable future for all, UIL has developed and launched a new programme to enhance capacity for establishing and enhancing lifelong learning systems in UNESCO Member States.

Created at the request of national authorities and tailor made for policy-makers and researchers, the programme aims at facilitating innovations for developing and improving national policies and strategies to establish modern lifelong learning systems. (UIL contact for this workshop: Mr Jin Yang, Senior Programme Specialist, ji.yang@unesco.org).

10. Co-organisers

The co-organisers of the Workshop will be the Ministry of Education of Iran, the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO, the UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office and the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning.