



Thematic Report 3

Policies and Incentives to Promote Access to Lifelong Learning

Working Group 3

INTRODUCTION - CONTEXTUALISING AND DEFINING LIFELONG LEARNING.....	5
POLICIES FOR LIFELONG LEARNING.....	8
2.1 DEFINITIONS AND APPROACHES TO LIFELONG LEARNING.....	8
2.2 GENERAL COMMENT ON POLICIES.....	23
2.3 FACTORS AFFECTING POLICY DEVELOPMENT.....	24
2.4 APPROACHES.....	33
BARRIERS TO LIFELONG LEARNING.....	35
3.1 LACK OF INFORMATION ON COURSES OFFERED OR AVAILABLE.....	37
3.2 TIME CONSTRAINTS.....	39
3.3 LACK OF COLLATERAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS.....	41
3.4 FINANCIAL BARRIERS.....	43
3.5 INADEQUATE LEARNING INFRASTRUCTURE.....	44
3.6 LACK OF RECOGNITION OF LEARNING.....	45
3.7 SOCIAL OR WORK SETTINGS THAT DO NOT VALUE LEARNING.....	46
3.8 LACK OF MOTIVATION.....	47
3.9 LACK OF BASIC SKILLS.....	47
3.10 DISABILITIES.....	48
3.11 SOCIAL GROUP EXCLUSION / DISCRIMINATION.....	48
3.12 LACK OF ACCESS TO ICT.....	49
3.13 CONSUMER LIFESTYLE, LEISURE AND COMPETING INTERESTS.....	50
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT ON THE ISSUE OF LLL	51
4.1 INTERCULTURALISM – CELEBRATING CULTURAL DIVERSITY.....	51
4.2 THE QUESTION OF MIGRANT EDUCATION.....	51
4.3 CONFRONTING PASSIVITY / CONSUMERISM / INCULCATING LOVE OF LEARNING.....	51
4.4 ESTABLISHING LEARNING COMMUNITIES.....	52
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	53
5.1 INTER- INTRA- MINISTRY COMMUNICATION & COOPERATION.....	53
5.2 RIGHT TO LEARN.....	53
5.3 FINANCE.....	54
5.4 ACCESSIBILITY AND FLEXIBILITY.....	54
5.5 GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING.....	55
5.6 INTER-CULTURALISM.....	56

Introduction - Contextualising and Defining Lifelong Learning

The Delors Report (Learning: The Treasure Within)¹ sets out to secure Education and Learning within a common global policy for the twenty-first century. It does this by proposing four fundamental aspects or pillars of Lifelong Learning: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be. The report sets out the broad scope of learning for our age. It was the suggestion of the Director General of UNESCO that the report and its recommendations be used as the "principal instrument for dialogue concerning the role of education and the need for educational reform into the Twenty-first Century". The most important purpose of the report, is to stimulate reflection, debate, and reform which is now the task confronting educators and policy makers. While the report subscribes to a utopian vision of education and learning as a panacea, it broadens the scope and attaches to them the maintenance of a good quality of life for everyone. The report is visionary even if largely aspirational.

"There is a need to rethink and broaden the notion of lifelong education. Not only must it adapt to changes in the nature of work, but it must also constitute a continuous process of forming whole human beings - their knowledge and aptitudes, as well as the critical faculty and ability to act. It should enable people to develop awareness of themselves and their environment and encourage them to play their social role at work and in the community." Jacques Delors (1996)¹

The disparity between what is and what is desirable becomes more evident in the light of such reports as the OECD PISA Study². On the other hand, a more recent OECD study³ shows that human capital investment in post-compulsory education significantly develops the earning capacity and employment prospects for those who spend those extra years in school. Participation rates among different members of the population and access to lifelong learning are often skewed heavily towards the privileged, well-educated and more highly skilled individuals. Furthermore, not everyone continues in education after the end of compulsory schooling, reflecting the favoured backgrounds of those attaining higher education. These are more likely to benefit from public funding than are people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Attempting to address the issue of policies and incentives to promote access to lifelong learning in this context, therefore, -must also address the issues of widening access, thereby countering differential participation rates, whether based on social class, gender or ethnic differences.

The initiative undertaken and sponsored by ASEM reflects, *inter alia*, on those issues, which inhibit individuals of the member states from benefiting from their investment in lifelong learning. The term "Lifelong Learning", is intriguing. Unpacking the concept engenders wide-ranging implications for education providers. It is not Lifelong Teaching, Lifelong Education or Lifelong Schooling. The focus is clearly on learning, and learning as an active process. This process must of necessity be learner-driven, where self -motivation, self-empowerment, self-reliance become dominant features. Lifelong Learning is often encapsulated in the idea of the lifelong development of human potential to empower the learner to adapt to continuously changing circumstances. Many conceptualisations of education and learning promote a many-faceted aetiology consisting of active citizenship, personal

¹ Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for Twenty-first Century (1996)

² Knowledge and Skills for Life – First Results from the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA 2000).

³ OECD Economic Outlook No. 70, December 2001: Investment in human capital through post-compulsory education and training

fulfilment, employability and competitiveness and embraces formal, non-formal and informal learning modalities.

It has become problematic in this discussion to formally define lifelong learning. However it will emerge that the adoption of a connotive approach, in which an array of meanings prevails, has become a working model for the initiative. These will emerge presently. For instance Thailand sees lifelong learning as: "...education resulting from integration of formal, non-formal, and informal education so as to create ability for continuous lifelong development of quality of life."⁴ The European Lifelong Learning Initiative (ELLI) defines the term as "the development of human potential through a continuously supportive process which stimulates and empowers individuals to acquire all the knowledge, values, skills, and understanding they will require throughout their lifetimes and to apply them with confidence, creativity and enjoyment in all roles, circumstances and environments."⁵

The function of education providers, whether statutory or otherwise, is to facilitate the learner in meeting his/her lifelong needs or wants in society by providing suitable opportunities and environments conducive to learning. The work of this group has been to investigate the barriers, obstacles and challenges that prevent one from achieving these ends. In doing so, we explore locally various incentives, policies and strategies to overcome these obstacles and encourage learning. How we view the manner of promoting access to Lifelong Learning in this regard, depends in no small measure on how we understand the learning process itself.

In western countries in the 1970's and 1980's, a noticeable tension emerged in determining the broad social purpose of education/lifelong learning. In policy terms the decision was reflected in splitting training and education. Training came to be seen as being skill and specific; reductionist in its structure and highly task oriented. Education, on the other hand, remained more process focused; more learner centred and more broadly based.

Recent literature and, particularly, policy documents in the area of lifelong learning have tended to move beyond such dichotomous categorisations, primarily for pragmatic purposes, but also arguing there is now a convergence in the social purpose of lifelong learning between its training and its education components.

Employability, these reports suggest now requires a capacity for problem solving; lifelong adaptability; personal agency and social responsibility – all entirely consistent with the objectives of the Delors Report.

All contributing countries to this initiative are firmly committed to lifelong learning. It is at the heart of all policies for education and training. Emphasis is placed on lifelong learning because of the benefits that it brings to individuals, businesses of all sizes, communities and the nation. For individuals, it improves their chances of finding a job and of getting on. For business, lifelong learning is an investment in the future. It helps them to be more successful by adding value, generating ideas and keeping them up to date. For communities, it promotes social cohesion and for the nation it means a strong economy in a global marketplace. The Governments' role is to help create a framework of opportunities for people to learn and which the barriers that might prevent them from taking up those opportunities.

⁴ National Education Act B.E. 2542 (1999)

⁵ European Lifelong Learning Initiative (ELLI) <http://www.noesis.se/elli/>

The principal objectives for Lifelong Learning, within the ASEM initiative, as perceived by the participant countries, include:

Cultural competence

- Developing skills and knowledge for a productive workforce and globally competitive economy
- Fostering greater creativity, innovative thinking and enterprise
- Increasing and widening participation in learning
- Creating an all-inclusive society
- Raising standards in teaching and learning.
- Contributing to the creation of a Knowledge Society
- Contributing to the awareness by involvement of all citizens regarding the importance of lifelong learning in its formal, non formal and informal components
- Ensuring an extensive debate on the strategies and measures to guarantee the access to lifelong learning by all citizens
- Providing encompassing strategies that include the policies in the areas of education, training, youth, employment, social cohesion and the information society

Many reviews by international organisations and bodies have produced a wealth of information relating to *Policies and Incentives to Promote Access to Lifelong Learning*. Each in its turn reflects interpretations from different sectors and stakeholder representatives. They supply background to global and regional policies and approaches to lifelong learning in all its expressions. They include:

- UNESCO⁶ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO Institute for Education: Documentation Centre and Library | UNESCO-Bangkok
- OECD⁷ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development: Education, Documentation
- ILO⁸ International Labour Organisation: Joint Meeting on Lifelong Learning in the Twenty-First Century: The Changing Roles of Educational Personnel
- UNDP⁹ United Nations Development Programme
- ASPBAE¹⁰ Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education
- CEDEFOP¹¹ Centre Européen pour le Développement de la Formation Professionnelle.
- EAEA¹² EAEA (European Association for the Education of Adults)
- ELLI¹³ ELLI (European Lifelong Learning Initiative)
- ESREA¹⁴ ESREA (European Society for Research on the Education of Adults)
- IACET¹⁵ IACET (International Association for Continuing Education and Training)

⁶ UNESCO Institute for Education: Documentation Centre and Library http://www.unesco.org/education/uie/documentation/life_learning.shtml UNESCO-Bangkok : <http://www.unescobkk.org/>

⁷ Education, Documentation <http://www.oecd.org/oecd/pages/home/displaygeneral/0,3380,EN-documentation-4-nodirectorate-no-no-no-4,FF.html>

⁸ Joint Meeting on Lifelong Learning in the Twenty-First Century: The Changing Roles of Educational Personnel <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/sector/techmeet/jmep2000/>

⁹ Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education : <http://www.aspbae.org>

¹⁰ UNDP: http://surf.undp.or.th/Knowledge_Bases/Institutions/education/education.html

¹¹ CEDEFOP: <http://www.cedefop.eu.int/>

¹² EAEA (European Association for the Education of Adults): <http://www.eaea.org/>

¹³ ELLI (European Lifelong Learning Initiative): <http://www.noesis.se/elli/>

¹⁴ ESREA (European Society for Research on the Education of Adults): <http://www.helsinki.fi/jarj/esrea/>

¹⁵ IACET (International Association for Continuing Education and Training): <http://www.iacet.org/>

Policies for Lifelong Learning

2.1 Definitions and Approaches to Lifelong Learning

As this initiative arose out of the concern about the negative effects of globalisation, it is critical to centre the discussion of policies within that context and the discourse of the global economy. However, coming to terms with an agreed view of globalisation is difficult.¹⁶ Definitions of globalisation vary according to one's values and accordingly, the word awakens certain sentiments in the definer. It is an emotive term.

However, new information and communication technologies represent one factor in speeding up trade flows. Markets globalise and simultaneously segment in order to retain increasingly mobile customers. Businesses have to adapt their structures more and more quickly in order to remain competitive. The intensive use of team-work, flattening of hierarchies, devolved responsibilities, as well as greater multi-tasking are leading to the growth of learning organisations. This contrasts with the Taylorist work organisations, which still operate in a number of enterprises. Public service enterprises are confronted with the same challenges.

Educational policies and their analysis are, of their nature, public domain phenomena, relating as they do to the public provision of education by the state. Furthermore, the power afforded to non-sovereign entities by neo-liberalisation and market-driven globalisation, to encroach upon sovereign decision making is a cause of concern to many countries. As educational policy is primarily concerned with the regulation, control and politics of publicly financed education, the deregulation of education will of necessity contribute to the further erosion of policy. It is a worrying thought when considering human capital, that the state policies on education provision may ultimately be interpreted as a form of protectionism. The penetration of private foreign enterprises into education provision, albeit selective, gives cause for concern and makes it difficult to formulate policies in this regard.

Implementing educational policies to facilitate and promote lifelong learning and its access, has remained largely, the responsibility of governments. What follows is an overview of the approaches taken by contributing members of the working group in this promotion. They address local issues while at the same time situating their approach within the context of the global market.

In response to the initiative taken by the European Commission to launch a consultation process on the basis of its Memorandum on Lifelong Learning¹⁷ in all member States, Portugal set up a joint group between the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour and Solidarity and the Ministry of Youth and Sports to address the national consultation process. This process allowed a large participation involving local and regional actors, as well as the educational research community, enterprises, the social partners and non-governmental organisations involved in lifelong learning – shared responsibility – embracing three levels of intervention at the policy level, the institutional level and at the end-user/citizen level. The Portuguese Strategy attempted to observe the contents of the Lisbon Summit, the European Commission's Memorandum and the Portuguese Situation, aiming to reach the following objectives:

¹⁶ ILO: Globalisation http://www.itcilo.it/english/actrav/telearn/global/ilo/globe/new_page.htm

¹⁷ "Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality". <http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/life/index.html>

"Memorandum on Lifelong Learning: Who gave their views during the consultation."

A comprehensive collection. http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/life/report_en.html

- To contribute to the creation of a Knowledge Society with more and better employment and social cohesion
- To contribute to the awareness by involvement of the citizens regarding the importance of lifelong learning in its formal, non formal and informal components
- To ensure a large debate on the strategies and measures to guarantee the access to lifelong learning by all citizens
- To contribute to propose/maximise encompassing strategies that include the policies in the areas of education, training, youth, employment, social cohesion and the information society

In Portugal, ¹⁸ the policy for Lifelong Learning is put into action in the triple perspective, by:

- The creation of conditions allowing the extension, in time, of access to education and training for all, in a duration overlapping people's life cycle, from "the cradle to the grave" (lifelong learning)
- The extension of learning to all life domains, from family life to leisure, to work life and, of course, to education and training institutions, by giving to understand that teaching and learning are roles and activities that can be changed and interchanged in different moments and spaces (lifewide learning)
- An overall framework of prospective reflection and systemic approach of Lifelong Education and Training, integrated in the new Knowledge and Learning Societies

In pursuance of its policy, Portugal has identified some of the problems including long-term unemployment, the sustainability of employment, low levels of schooling, concerns about those poorly qualified, lack of qualifications and consequent discrimination. These are further intensified by the necessity to engage in the Information Society with its attendant requirements for ICT skills. The Portuguese policies in this context have been anchored in social partnership,¹⁹ and justifiably lean towards the employability end of the education spectrum. In attempting to move the process from an objectives phase to one of implementation, the partnership has clarified three priorities, which will bridge the gap between its European partners. Combating low levels of schooling and professional qualifications, promoting quality employment and intervening via active, integrated policies dealing with employment, training and jobs, form this three pronged approach. In addressing these priorities, a set of strategic objectives were formulated, which will be implemented by four policy measures. These measures seek to promote (a) quality in training and skills accreditation, and certification (b) professional training development, professional qualification of active workers and increasing company competitiveness, (c) initial training and transition to employment and (d) increasing the levels of employment quality.

The eight objectives address the sustained access to lifelong learning for all, particularly on-going professional training with its role in corporate competitiveness, the improvement in early education, the problem of premature entry to the workplace, the question of accreditation and certification, and finally, the integration and supervision of the educational system as a whole.

The policies for lifelong learning and education in general, in Thailand are determined by the Constitution, the National Economic and Social Development Plan, and the current government. Emphasis is placed on grounding lifelong learning within the educational system as a whole with particular support given to basic education till the age of 12 years. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand ²⁰ contains several provisions relating to education, religion and culture. It declares that the State will "improve education to be in harmony with economic and social change", which means

¹⁸ National Action Plan for Employment and the national Strategy for Lifelong Learning. May 2001

¹⁹ Agreement on Employment Policy, Labour market, and Education and Training, Lisbon, Feb 9th, 2001

²⁰ B.E. 2540 (1999)

that the government is committed to initiate education reform whenever it is necessary in pace with dynamic change. Furthermore, it is provided in the constitution for the first time that all the Thai people will have equal rights to receive free basic education of quality for at least 12 years, facilitating extending basic education to children of those years. It also ensures that all Thai people will have both the rights and duties to receive education and training and secured academic freedom. This is endorsed by the right to procure care and education for children, youth, women, the elderly, the under privileged and the handicapped. These provisions will protect the right to education of all Thai people thereby moving towards a knowledge-based economy. In providing such educational opportunities, maximum public benefit through the national communication resources and the conservation and restoration of local wisdom are taken into consideration.

The role of the private sector in the provision of education at all levels is also emphasised and encouraged. The constitution ensures the right of local organisations to participate in the provision of education, which will facilitate decentralisation of educational management. Furthermore, participation of local people and communities in educational provision will be enhanced which will make education both relevant to the needs or wants of the people and responsive to changing environments, demands and opportunities at local level. These provisions are deemed to empower and strengthen the organisation of education in order to provide greater access for all Thai people through formal, non-formal and informal education. This, it is considered, will transform Thai society into a “learning society”.

The National Educational Act (1999) serves as master legislation on education for the country, leading to significant education reform, the major tasks of which are: learning reform, reform of educational administrative structure, legal measures.

The National Economic and Social Development Plan ²¹ has determined that Thai society should be the learning and wisdom society that gives opportunities to all people to be reflective, rational, creative, continually learning, in order to be ready to face the dynamically changing environment. To achieve this, the Plan emphasises the focus on human development by educational reform and methodology for upgrading the skills and readiness to have standardised skills consistent with changing production structures. This will enable Thai people to attain a quality of development and labour skill standards by:

- Producing and developing a strong labour force by integrating local intelligence and life skills with basic knowledge. This involves the expansion of overall labour skill standard tests
- Establishing a network for co-operation between the educational and training institutions and the workplace to exchange resources and to co-operate in labour skill development
- Supporting and providing open opportunities to any person who has working experience to use this experience to pursue further studies at higher levels and promoting workers to obtain a basic education of not less than 9 years
- Encouraging government and private sector to do research and development to create new knowledge and policies for educational and training development consistent with the new economic era of technological development and self-reliance

Singapore, on the other hand, has undergone extensive economic transformation since its independence in 1965. Over this period, they have aligned their manpower development efforts closely with their economic development strategies. Singapore’s export-oriented economy in the 60s and 70s saw them focus on providing basic education for all, and expanding technical education

²¹ No. 9 (B.E. 2545 – 2549) (2002 – 2006)

opportunities at the post secondary and tertiary levels. In the 1980s, the move towards higher value-added activities was supported by a growing emphasis on the upgrading of in-employment skills; and the development of a pool of IT professionals to leverage on IT to support economic growth. Globalisation and technology emerged in the 1990s to shape an increasingly connected world. With the free flow of capital and technology, physical capital - in the form of natural resources and financial capital - has become less important in the pursuit of economic competitiveness. Instead, human capital – as represented by the people’s knowledge and skills, and their imagination and enterprise – has emerged as a key source of economic competitiveness.

Singapore has adopted a two-pronged approach for lifelong learning: transforming the existing education system to build the workforce of the future; and developing a comprehensive system for continuing education and training to maintain the competitiveness of its current workforce. In doing so, it focuses on the employability dimension of lifelong learning.

The mission of education in Singapore has always been to mould the future of the nation. This mission has not changed, but the challenges have. Whereas investments by multi-national companies, and hence technical expertise, were crucial during the years of Singapore’s early industrialisation, the future will be one driven not only by its ability to learn and apply new skills, but also to generate new knowledge. In response, they have re-oriented their education system to an ability-driven paradigm or performativity. They are evolving structures, processes and policies to support the development of each individual to his fullest potential.

The Ministry of Education’s vision of "Thinking Schools Learning Nation" (TSLN) was formulated in 1997. Thinking Schools ensure that they equip students with skills, knowledge, values and instincts to face new challenges, while Learning Nation aims to promote a culture of continual learning beyond the school environment. The coming era will be ever more unpredictable. It is only by having a wide range of knowledge and skill-sets that their chances of remaining competitive and succeeding will be maximised. The curricula in Singapore’s schools have also undergone changes with TSLN to encourage students to discover, acquire, apply and create knowledge. The curricula now seek to strike a balance between process skills and content knowledge. In addition, a \$2b information technology programme is being implemented in schools to promote IT as a critical tool for students to seek and acquire knowledge, as well as for teachers to teach more effectively.

While the education system is geared towards building a capable workforce for the future, the immediate task is to enable the lower skilled to upgrade themselves; and the core of the workforce to renew their skills so as to stay relevant. To address this, Singapore has, as the cornerstone of its Manpower 21²² Blueprint, the “School of Lifelong learning” (SoLL). The SoLL is a comprehensive framework for the current workforce to retool themselves with new skills and knowledge, and complements the pre-employment education system. It aims to create an environment that makes LLL accessible, affordable and industry-relevant. The SoLL is geared towards creating opportunities for all to acquire new skills and to move up the manpower value chain. It has five components, namely, Incentives, Learning Infrastructure, Skills Standards and Recognition, Information Provision and Promotion of Lifelong Learning. The SoLL is key to Singapore’s workforce learning effort.

Reacting to the rapid technological development, the Ministry of Education in Malaysia realises the importance of continuous learning. Education and training are lifelong activities, and therefore more flexible systems must be developed, they feel, to enable a greater number of people access to this

²² Manpower 21 was a study undertaken in 1998 to map a comprehensive set of manpower strategies for Singapore’s transition into a knowledge economy.

opportunity. The private sector must act together with the government to achieve these goals. Lifelong learning is the core of education process in Malaysia; it begins in the cradle and ends at the grave. This concept of continuous learning is a complement to the emergence of the knowledge society and the various changes in education and socio-economics. It is a shift in emphasis from learning substances to learning process and allows universal access to learning opportunities and recognition of learning in diverse settings. This approach echoes that expressed by Singapore and others.

Consequently, Malaysia's policy focuses on providing programmes and training education which are more accessible and affordable through the Internet and other ICT-related media so that Malaysians can have the opportunity to acquire new competencies and qualifications for career advancement. Increasing accessibility to education and training also includes the setting up of more IT kiosks and cyber centres, especially in the rural areas. With the establishment of community colleges, open universities and distance education another avenue will be offered to Malaysians to pursue tertiary education and upgrade their skills and qualifications.

Courses offered through the distance and e-learning programmes will be further diversified to cater for the different levels of educational attainment and interest of the public. Public tertiary institutions have also been encouraged to conduct more part-time courses and promote web-based learning. These efforts will complement other services, such as public libraries, especially mobile libraries, which will be built by the government. Local communities are urged to participate in setting up and maintaining libraries within their own localities. At the same time the private sector is also encouraged to participate through their contribution in maintaining the services of these libraries or by adopting them.

Financial institutions have been encouraged to participate in promoting lifelong learning by providing soft loans to individuals who wish to pursue further their education or training. Employers, in co-operation, will provide training and retraining programmes for their workers with new skills and knowledge so that they can keep up with technological advancement.

The revolution in technology in Malaysia also provides for the possibility of extending beyond the classrooms. Distance learning, instruction by interactive videos, the internet, and satellite are all at our disposal, which will reshape higher education in the future. Using this technology, Malaysians can communicate more easily and frequently, regardless of their geographical, cultural and political differences. In addition, a student/learner-centred approach will be adopted to make learning universally accessible over an individual's life. People from the disadvantaged groups and in rural areas will be able to enjoy access to this so-called digital global learning. This concept will generate commonalities between our communities by fostering shared space, shared value, shared experience and shared purpose.

ICT infrastructures at the public higher learning institution will be upgraded to strengthen the facilities and methodologies in teaching, learning, research, management and services in higher learning institutions in Malaysia. Continuous training programmes will be provided to the academic staff of the higher learning institutions. An e-learning concept will also be introduced. The Ministry of Education plans to obtain a ratio 1:4 between computers and students. A Virtual Library will be built to support the e-learning and lifelong learning process. The concept of cyber campus and virtual university will be pursued at all public higher learning institution. Cyber Campus will exploit in totality the use of digital technology in academic, administration, research and development and other services. In addition, the Ministry will formulate a comprehensive curriculum to ensure the quality of the courses.

Revision and assessment of the curriculum will be done continuously involving inputs from the private sector, foreign academician and academic advisory panels of the universities.

The duration of the programmes in the distance learning programmes can be stretched into 5 years for a first degree courses whilst for a full time program, the course is 3 years, except for engineering, medicine and education. The Ministry of Education will implement a strategy whereby the entry qualification to the higher learning institutions is not based entirely on the academic achievement, but also on the working experience. Furthermore, the private sector has been encouraged to expand its capacity and set up new campuses to cater for the increasing numbers of students. The government expected the private sector to intensify its involvement in the provision of education and training, especially in multidisciplinary knowledge and new disciplines.

The National policy for adult education in Greece is being transformed and adapted in the light of the lifelong learning dimension which has percolated into and redefines the aims of formal, non-formal and informal education. Lifelong learning as it is interpreted in Greece aims to empower all citizens for social participation and to enhance their social mobility. The promotion of employability is being conjoined with active citizenship, thus forming the basis for all aspects of adult education such as certification, access, evaluation, teaching methodologies and the formulation of educational programs. Within this framework adult education aims to support citizens in accessing, selecting, evaluating and creating new information.

For the time period 2002-2006 the national strategy involves the development of a comprehensive system for Adult Education which will combine the different aspects of education already existing in this domain or will be created in the future. The main aims of the system are:

- Offering multiple possibilities for learning by creating the adequate learning environments
- Creating alternative educational pathways for the reintroduction of adults in educational system
- Reinforcing the employability of the adult population and particular targeted groups
- Combating social exclusion and discrimination, as well as
- Contributing to a social, cultural, economic and sustainable development

The corresponding action plan involves areas of action concerning National Adult Education Curricula and production of educational materials, training and certification of adult trainers, the creation of infrastructure and supportive networks, the Evaluation and Certification system.

Local Multicenters for adult education have been established recently and perform several coordinating operations such as:

- Designing educational activities
- Promoting the access to lifelong learning programmes
- Providing guidance and counselling to adults
- Creating partnerships with local authorities, enterprises, labour unions, universities
- Implementing monitoring and internal evaluation procedures in cooperation with trainees and trainers
- Collecting and elaborating quantitative and qualitative data

All centers are connected to the documentation centre and General Secretariat for Adult Education. They are members of local networks between municipal authorities, labour unions and enterprises. These partnerships are activated towards goals such as:

- Ascertaining learning needs and wants
- Counselling and support through portfolios
- Cooperation for educational programs tailored to adults' needs and wants
- Diagnostic evaluation of skills and competencies

Greece puts emphasis on the retraining and certification of adult trainers. For instance, a national curriculum framework for basic skills has been elaborated in collaboration with Universities and Pedagogical Institutes. This framework offers the opportunity for validation and certification of skills as it is built at levels corresponding to the national framework for school education.

By the end of 2002 an adequate number of certified adult trainers will be available in regions where the Multicenters operate. The trainers are mainly university graduates (language-math teachers, psychologists, sociologists) who have received a long period of training for teaching and supporting adults. A distance learning centre for adult trainers is designed and it will start operating by the end of the year. Another important action in relation to the training of trainers, is the training of executives in networking skills so that all partners involved in adult education procedures can support the actions at local level.

A framework for the external evaluation of adult education which is structured according to indicators for each area of concern (administration, teaching methodologies, learning achievements, accountability, dissemination procedures). All procedures are supported by quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods. By the end of 2002 a parallel framework of internal self-evaluation is to be applied in all Multicenters so that all partners (centres' employees, trainers, facilitators) involved are able to improve and promote the quality of services in their domain.

Since the beginning of 2000 a large scale action concerning seminars and events aiming at raising awareness of the general population, educators, local authorities and social partners has been launched both locally and centrally. The seminars are publicised in cooperation with local mass media (press, TV and radio). A web site for lifelong learning has been operating, where all implemented events, initiatives and programs are presented. The site also serves as a forum for the submission of opinions and proposals relating to various areas of lifelong learning.

Ireland's policies on lifelong learning and its vision of what it means to society and to the economy are secured in a number of government publications.^{23 24 25} Further contributions are also found in Ireland's contribution to the European memorandum on lifelong learning.²⁶

The *White Paper on Adult Education : Learning for Lifesets*, published in August 2000, sets out a range of recommendations to promote and expand access to adult education in the context of a continuum of educational opportunities on a lifelong basis. The recommendations cover:

- Implementation of a national adult literacy strategy
- Expansion of part time options in Further Education through a major Back to Education Initiative
- A strengthened role for community education
- The enhancement of supporting services such as guidance, counselling and childcare

²³ Ireland's Education Strategy Statement 2001-2004: http://www.gov.ie/educ/pdfs/strategy_statement.pdf

²⁴ White Paper: Early Childhood Education: <http://www.gov.ie/educ/ReadytoLearn/index.html>

²⁵ Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education: <http://www.gov.ie/educ/pdfs/whitepaper.pdf>

- New measures to support adult friendly policies within third level education
- Enhancement of quality through for a for dialogue, staff development, research, and the development of a national framework of qualifications
- Establishment of a National Adult Learning Council and Local Adult Learning Boards for improved co-ordination, integration and planning, nationally and locally

In a complementary initiative, a Task Force on Lifelong Learning was established by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in 2000 to make recommendations focused on adaptation to continuing labour market change. The Task Force is comprised of members of Government Departments, employer bodies, trade unions, the Community & Voluntary pillar and education and training providers. It has identified two broad areas -- the issues of access and barriers to lifelong learning and of workplace learning and upskilling -- which it feels are critical to the development of an overall strategy. At the time of writing, a report by the National Taskforce on Lifelong Learning is due for publishing.

Ireland is concerned about the level of basic skills needed for effective social and economic participation in a knowledge society. In this regard, the question of adult literacy has taken centre stage, with participation on Adult Literacy programmes increasing from 5,000 in 1997 to over 22,730 at end December 2001. An investment of €93.47million in adult literacy has been committed under the National Development Plan. Among the stated objectives of the Government White Paper on Adult Education is an expansion of adult literacy services with a focus on the development of a range of options, including workplace literacy initiatives.

In addition to the expansion of adult literacy services by education providers, the use of TV and Radio for literacy awareness and tuition for adults has been promoted. Two TV series of 12 half hour programmes entitled "READ WRITE NOW" were commissioned by the Department of Education and Science working in collaboration with the National Adult Literacy Agency, the TV production company and RadioTelefis Eireann. Each series was accompanied by a free learner pack and a freephone helpline manned by trained tutors provided by the National Adult Literacy Agency. Videos of the series were distributed free to literacy schemes, education and training centres, public libraries and video outlets. The first series, broadcast in 2000, attracted an average weekly audience of 155,000, and the second series in 2001, shown 3 times each week, attracted an average weekly audience of 235,000. The evaluation report on the first series is available from NALA and shows a high demand for services from independent learners who wish to progress their learning in the privacy of their own homes.

Workplace literacy programmes are also being expanded. The Return to Learning Initiative,²⁷ provided in partnership between the National Adult Literacy Agency, the Local Authorities National partnership Advisory Group (LANPAG), the Department of Education and Science and Vocational Education Committees which provide literacy services, has proven a great success in tackling low literacy in the workplace. Following a successful pilot in 5 areas, agreement has been reached to expand the programme to all local authority areas in the country. An evaluation report has been published by NALA. Building on this success, a national Workplace Literacy Strategy Group, representing education, training, employer and trade union interests, has been established to make recommendations on how best to mainstream the model across the workplace generally.

²⁶ Memorandum on Lifelong Learning: Who gave their views during the consultation.":A comprehensive collection. http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/life/report_en.html

²⁷ "Return to Learning Initiative": No.57

Provision is also made for early school leavers in the form of “Youthreach”.²⁸ The Youthreach programme was set-up in 1989 as a joint initiative by the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment and the Department of Education and Science. It is intended for early school leavers and is delivered by FÁS, the National Training Authority, through a national network of Vocational Education Committees.

The programme focuses on the integration of personal development, literacy, numeracy, communication and IT skills with a range of vocational options and a work experience programme. It is aimed at young people between the ages of 15-20 who have left school with no qualifications, and draws on a number of strands from the education, training and youthwork spheres. Youthreach facilitates stimulating learning courses which aim to enrich and value the current roles these young people play in society and in the workplace. A training allowance ranging from €48 to €118 per week, depending on age, is paid to participants as an incentive to return to learning. The programme has expanded nationally and now caters for some 7000 young annually people in over 140 centres. It operates in an out-of-school setting and staff are from a mix of teaching, vocational and youthwork backgrounds. Childcare, guidance, counselling and psychological supports are provided. Evaluations have shown the programme to be highly successful in addressing the needs of very disadvantaged and alienated young people.

The inadequate ICT in education has been addressed by the introduction of a Schools IT2000 initiative²⁹. Over €78m has been spent on the programme since its inception in 1998 including some €26m from public and private sector partners outside the education field. In addition, a further €109m will be provided over the next 3 years. The plan provides for investment in infrastructure, equipment, internet access and networking, software, teacher training, broadened ICT curriculum integration, and a national support programme. The Department of Education and Science is committed to the development of and ICT infrastructure and has incorporated ICT elements into all educational initiatives.

The problem of skills shortage is being addressed in a number of ways. The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs was established in 1997, under the aegis of Forfás³⁰ to carry out an ongoing analysis of the future skill needs of the economy and make recommendations on strategies to address these needs. Membership includes education and training providers, social partners, policy makers, and industrial development agencies. It has made a number of reports to Government on key strategic sectors, leading to concerted investment and implementation plans to tackle emerging issues.

In common with most countries, small and medium sized enterprises in Ireland show lower levels of investment than larger firms in workplace training. In order to address these needs, the company Skillnets Ltd.³¹ was set up by employer organisations, working with trade unions, to develop a pilot enterprise-led training. The Training Networks Programme was launched by Skillnets to support the implementation of enterprise-led training in Irish firms. Within this programme, enterprises have been supported in working together in sectoral, regional and other groupings to develop and deliver training, which is cost effective and meets business needs. It is funded by the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment,³² through the National Training Fund.

²⁸ “Youthreach”: No. 56

²⁹ Schools IT2000: No. 54

³⁰ Forfás: Promoting Enterprise, Science and Technology for Economic and Social Development in Ireland www.forfas.ie

³¹ Skillnets. Ltd: <http://www.skillnets.com/>

³² Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment : <http://www.entemp.ie/>

Ireland has a commitment to inclusiveness and equality of its citizens³³ which is reflected in its policies of lifelong learning. Education provision is being geared to addressing the needs, desires and disparities experienced by such groups in society as Travellers,³⁴ women,³⁵ prisoners,³⁶ people with various disabilities,³⁷ and the elderly.³⁸

Denmark is highly committed to lifelong learning. It is an integrated part in all their policies for education and training. Two years ago, Denmark introduced a major reform of the vocational education and continuing training system; the previous Government adopted 11 Acts of Parliament in May 2000, which tied continuing training and further education programmes together into a single coherent and transparent adult education system.^{39 40}

As emphasised in Lisbon,⁴¹ continued learning - in all age groups and occupational sectors - is a precondition for ensuring growth and employment in the future. The information society and the increasing use of technology make heavy demands on the individual persons' capability to acquire new knowledge, not only as a one-time thing, but, as an ongoing process during one's entire life. This leads to heavy demands upon educational and training institutions and their approach to learning - for children, young persons and adults. In this connection, the most important task of the primary school system is to give the students the possibility to acquire basic knowledge and skills, but, at the same time, also to establish a general foundation, which will motivate and inspire the individual students for continued education throughout their lives.

A main component of the Danish strategy for lifelong learning is based on the need for continued education/training among adults; this is the new reform of the system for adult and continued training. This reform also sets up a new framework for adult vocational training programmes, including, *inter alia*, credit transfers, specifically targeting on formally qualifying education and training programmes, better management and new forms of financing, see also the description in NAP 2000.⁴² The reform, which came into operation on 1 January 2001, has three main objectives:

- To offer relevant continued and further training activities to all adults, from the level of unskilled workers to persons with university degrees
- To pay special attention to the needs of low-skilled adults, and
- To make better use of the resources available

³³ Employment Equality Act, 1998 and the Equal Status Act, 2000

³⁴ Senior Traveller Training Centres: Youthreach

³⁵ National Women's Council of Ireland: <http://www.nwci.ie/>

³⁶ "Bridge", "Pathways" and "Dillon's Cross" Projects No. 63

³⁷ AHEAD : <http://www.ahead.ie/>

³⁸ Age Action Ireland: <http://indigo.ie/~ageact/>

³⁹ Adult Education and Continuing Training in Denmark, September 2000

<http://www.uvm.dk/eng/publications/factsheets/veureform.htm>

⁴⁰ Danish Background Report on OECD Thematic Review on Adult Learning, March 2001, including a Statistical Annex. <http://www1.oecd.org/els/pdfs/EDSALDOCA024.pdf>

⁴¹ Lisbon European Council: http://www.europarl.eu.int/summits/lis1_en.htm also <http://ue.eu.int/presid/conclusions.htm>

⁴² National Action Plan for Employment 2000, 2001 Denmark, July 2001.

http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/empl&esf/naps00/napda_en.pdf

Please refer particularly to Section A.3 and B including Annex C and D.

http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/news/2001/may/naps2001_en.html

Adult and continued training programmes have been incorporated into a competence system (The System for Continued Training for Adults) so that a transparent training structure is established in the field of education / training for adults. The education/training programmes are characterised by:

- Being organised to suit the needs of adults in employment
- By a content of programmes which takes into account the work and life experience of adults, and their flexible organisation

With this reform the Government has embarked upon the introduction of a system which will ensure the balance between the supply of and demand for knowledge, competences and qualifications. The main aim of the reform has been to specifically target the public financing on those groups which did not in their young years undergo formal education and on those education/training programmes which give the participants formal and recognised competences targeted on job functions.

At the same time, the responsibility for the financing of education/ training programmes has been more clearly set out. The basic principle is that it is a coherent and flexible system which is based on well-known and comparable levels and offers possibilities for building a bridge between various types of education and levels of education/ training. It should be possible for adults to undergo formally qualifying education/training at any level which they may find desirable and relevant. The main objective of the Government is that the knowledge-based society should not only be a reality for that part of the population which already has the required educational background for being able to participate in the activities attached to lifelong learning.

Measures to ensure both social growth and welfare as well as the individual's social and economic security will to a high extent be connected to the individual person's ability to learn. This is why a special offer has been developed as an element of the reform for adults who want to improve their basic skills so that they will be in a better position to cope on the labour market and as citizens in a democratic society. This offer is called Preparatory Adult Education. Basic skills have, in this context, been defined as reading, spelling, written presentation and arithmetic and basic mathematics. By strengthening these skills the aim is to motivate adults for participation in formally qualifying education/training programmes. The teaching is organised in a way which will ensure an interplay with the participants' daily lives. This means that many of the activities will take place at the workplaces of the participants rather than in training institutions. The responsibility for the implementation of Preparatory Adult Education has been vested with the municipal administrations, which may either place such education programmes in their own training institutions – the so-called VUC centres - or in other schools or institutions at a contractual basis.

In certain sectors, the social partners have - as an element of the collective agreements concluded in the various sectors - introduced an objective of setting strategic development targets for all employees. It is recommended that the individual enterprises introduce specifically targeted competence development activities, for instance in the form of staff planning for all employees. The parties to these collective agreements recommend that special career development interviews are implemented with the employees once a year in connection with these competence development activities. The scope of continued and further training activities undertaken so far may be illustrated by the labour force surveys which comprise both in-company training and training programmes within the educational/training system.

Denmark has a very broad range of vocational training programmes for adults. They are in the form of short or longer training courses organised for adults in employment and may be targeted on both low-skilled adults and skilled adults. Vocational training programmes normally have a duration of 3-

3½ years and are organised as alternance training, i.e. theoretical instruction in school alternating with periods of practical training in an enterprise.

Today, a vocational training programme for adults may qualify the participants for going into a vocational education programme or may give them recognised competences in relation to specific job functions, for instance a welding certificate or a truck driving certificate.

It will still be possible for all adults who need to strengthen their occupational skills to participate in any vocational training programmes they may need - throughout their working life. But these adult vocational training programmes also play a very important role in the adult education reform. The programmes will constitute an important part of the activities in connection with the new basic education for adults mentioned below. It will therefore be a determinant factor in connection with the implementation of the adult education reform to ensure that there is a good and relevant supply of vocational training programmes for adults which will make it possible for the individual to maintain his or her labour market attachment and to be credited for participation in these programmes as part of a basic education programme for adults.

The UK is also firmly committed to lifelong learning. It is at the heart of all their policies for education and training. They place emphasis on lifelong learning because of the benefits that it brings to individuals, businesses of all sizes, communities and the nation. For individuals, it improves their chances of finding a job and of getting on. For business, lifelong learning is an investment in the future. It helps them to be more successful by adding value, generating ideas and keeping them up to date. For communities, it promotes social cohesion and for the nation it means a strong economy in a global marketplace. The UK Government's role is to help create a framework of opportunities for people to learn which lifts the barriers that might prevent them from taking up those opportunities. Their lifelong learning approach reflects the national, regional and local priorities of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The current priorities for lifelong learning include a review of funding for Adult Learning at all levels, improving Basic Skills in the Adult Population (defined as reading, writing, listening, speaking and numeracy) and support for learning facilitators in non-formal and informal learning. In its policy document on Education and Skills:⁴³ the UK has identified a number of key objectives to be targeted by 2006. They include the general intention to help build a competitive economy and inclusive society by:

- Creating opportunities for everyone to develop their learning
- Releasing potential in people to make the most of themselves
- Achieving excellence in standards of education and levels of skills

Their specific objectives are to:

- Give children an excellent start in education so that they have a better foundation for future learning
- Enable all young people to develop and to equip themselves with the skills, knowledge and personal qualities needed for life and work
- Encourage and enable adults to learn, improve their skills and enrich their lives

⁴³ Education and Skills: Delivering Results A Strategy to 2006 : http://www.dfes.gov.uk/delivering-results/docs/DfES_Strategy_Document.doc

In 1999 they concentrated on two specific measures introduced to develop and stimulate a learning society, namely Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) and University for Industry (Ufi). ILAs aim at enabling individuals to participate (more frequently) in learning. Ufi will be a new national on-line and distributed learning network aimed at both individuals and businesses.

While the French approach to lifelong learning is encapsulated in their response to the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning⁴⁴ (Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality), it has its roots in the historical development of education in that country. Education and, by way of extension, lifelong learning has been secured for the citizen by a legal framework, a system of refined legislature to address developing needs.

A law concerning the organisation of adult vocational training⁴⁵ within a framework of permanent education reviewed the stipulations of the national inter-trade agreement which laid the foundations of vocational training. It contains the principles which are still at the heart of the right to training in France, and in particular that of the mandatory contribution of businesses to the funding of training. It introduced the obligation for businesses employing more than 10 people to make a contribution equivalent to at least 0.8% of their gross wage bill to the funding of further vocational training. It set up Training Insurance Funds (in French, “FAF”) and introduced, for salaried workers, “entitlement to individual training leave throughout their working lives”.

Later legislation concerning apprenticeships⁴⁶ defined the general structure of the provisions governing the training of apprentices, and represented a significant step forward: it gave apprentices a status and made letters of apprenticeship (a work contract) compulsory. Additional measures were introduced later, concerning employers’ contributions to the funding of the first technological and vocational training courses, which fixed the rate of the apprenticeship tax at 0.5% of the wage bill. Again, guidelines for technological education were introduced, in particular, the procedure for ratifying formal qualifications and diplomas.

Regulations of 26 March 1982⁴⁷ (Alternating training for young people) defined the organisation of alternating work - study training for young people aged 16 to 18. It also created specialist structures providing reception, information and guidance services for them: “Local missions” and “Reception, Information and Guidance Points” (in French, “PAIO”). A rider dated 26.10.83 set up “Courses for a First Experience of Working Life” (in French, “SIVP”), “job-qualification contracts” and “job-adaptation contracts”. These two types of contract were to prove increasingly successful, thanks in particular to highly attractive tax incentives introduced in the 1985 national budget law.

One major change in the organisation of education providers hinged on a decentralised policy. ⁴⁸ This concerned the distribution of powers between the regions, the “départements”, the towns and villages and the state. Overall powers in the field of adult vocational training and apprenticeship was transferred to the regions (additional measures to these laws were introduced by the law of 6.01.86 on the organisation of the regions).

The reform of vocational training⁴⁹ constituted a reform of the founding law of 1971:

⁴⁴ http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/life/report_en.html

⁴⁵ Law of 16 July 1971 n° 71-575 concerning the organisation of adult vocational training within a framework of permanent education

⁴⁶ Law n° 71-576 of 16 July 1971 concerning apprenticeships

⁴⁷ Alternating training for young people (Regulations of 26 March 1982)

⁴⁸ Decentralisation laws of 3 March 1982 and 7 January 1983

⁴⁹ Reform of vocational training (Law of 24 February 1984)

“Further vocational training is part of permanent education. Its aim is to help workers to adapt to changes in working techniques and conditions, to help improve their social position by giving them access to different levels of culture and job-qualification and to increase their contribution to cultural, economic and social development”.

It introduced the following main innovations: the extension of individual training leave (in French, “CIF”) to all employees, irrespective of the size of their company; the organisation of alternating courses extended to young people aged 18 to 25; increased monitoring of training organisations; the development of negotiations by trade sector.

Between 1986 and 1992 saw a number of articles introduced to consolidate and promote vocational and workplace learning. In cases of redundancy for economic reasons, the employer now had to provide training for the employee concerned, via a redeployment agreement.⁵⁰ The reform of the apprenticeship law made it possible henceforth to prepare all vocational certificates and diplomas via apprenticeship schemes, from the most basic level (the “CAP”) up to the highest university level.⁵¹ Funding for training legislation⁵² raised the minimum funding contribution made by businesses employing more than 10 people to 1.2% of the gross wage bill, with 0.3% being earmarked to fund alternating training for young people. The introduction of a Training tax credit⁵³ advantage for companies, which was repeated the following years, was to be confirmed durably by the five-year planning law of 20.12.93. It proved to be an effective incentive.

The Policy Statement bill on education⁵⁴ set a target of 80% of school-leavers passing the baccalaureate, and 100% leaving school with at least a “CAP” (first level vocational diploma). It conferred on the state education system a mission of further training for adults, as a complement to its traditional mission of educating school children. “Permanent education forms part of the missions which schools assume; it offers everyone the opportunity to raise their level of training, to adapt to economic and social change and to validate acquired knowledge”. “To carry out their mission of further training and vocational training and insertion, state schools may join forces to form groupings of schools (“GRETAs”) or to make up groupings of public interest (“GIPs”).

The law concerning training credits and the quality and control of further vocational training introduced the principle of entitlement to a job-qualification for all.⁵⁵ Short-term Contracts Law⁵⁶ introduced the right to individual training leave for people working under short-term contracts. Later, Skills analysis⁵⁷ framework introduced the individual’s right to personal and professional skills analysis.

The Law of 31 December 1991⁵⁸ concerning vocational training and employment reviewed the principal measures covered by the National inter-trade agreement of 3.07.91, concerning vocational training and improvement, which annulled and replaced a large body of legislation on the bipartite management of further vocational training.

The principal innovations included the increase and extension of employer contributions: the mandatory contribution to the funding of vocational training development was extended to

⁵⁰ Redeployment agreement (Law of 30 December 1986)

⁵¹ Reform of the apprenticeship system (Law of 23 July 1987)

⁵² Funding of training (Law of 30 July 1987)

⁵³ Training tax credit (1988 national budget law)

⁵⁴ Policy statement bill on education of 10 July 1989

⁵⁵ Law concerning training credits and the quality and control of further vocational training (4 July 1990)

⁵⁶ Short-term contracts (Law of 12 July 1990)

⁵⁷ Skills analysis (National inter-trade agreement of 3 July 1991)

⁵⁸ Law of 31 December 1991 concerning vocational training and employment

companies employing fewer than 10 people, and the employers' contribution was increased by stages to reach 1.5% as of 1993. This law also introduced "job-orientation contracts" (to replace the "Courses for a First Experience of Working Life" - cf. 26.3.82) and regulated training outside working times (co-investment).

Legislation concerning the apprenticeship system and vocational training ⁵⁹ gave fresh impetus to the apprenticeship system by making the approval procedures for businesses more flexible; it also introduced incentives for the training of apprentice masters.

Validation of acquired vocational skills (Law of 20 July 1992 concerning the "VAP" procedure) ⁶⁰ enables a candidate to be exempted from taking certain examination papers required to obtain a diploma, through the recognition of his acquired experience (with a minimum of 5 years experience in a job connected with the diploma concerned). The acquired skills are validated by a specific examining board, after examination of a freely-compiled application file and, in some cases, an interview. It was introduced progressively by the Ministry of National Education, after publication of the decrees of 26 and 27 March 1993, then by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry for Youth and Sport.

"Technological certificates and diplomas may be acquired via school or university courses, via apprenticeships or by the validation of acquired vocational skills in lieu of some of the examination papers".

As early as 1985, a decree had introduced "VAP" procedures into higher education. These were henceforth extended to apply to all vocational training. Another important reform later extended the scope of "VAP", by transforming it into "VAE" (Validation of skills acquired through experience), as part of the Social Modernisation Law of 17 January 2002.

The five-year planning law ⁶¹ on work, employment and vocational training confirmed the role of the regions in the field of training. It laid down the principle of rationalising the collection of vocational training funds, by reducing the number of bipartite funding organisations to around a hundred: the "FAFs" (Training Insurance Funds) were turned into "OPCAs" (Approved Joint Fund-collecting Agencies). It also provided for a reinforcement of the monitoring of these agencies. It introduced the notion of "training time capital". It also reformed the "alternating work – study contracts". The training tax credit system was confirmed durably.

The five-year planning law opened up the right to vocational training to all young people, whatever their level of achievement at school. New measures which extended the scope, and reinforced the application, of this legislation, were promulgated in a rider of 5.07.94 to the national inter-trade agreement of 3.07.91. Between 1996 and 2002 three important developments have taken place.

- Reform of the funding of the apprenticeship system (Law of 6 May 1996), which aimed to simplify the funding of the apprenticeship system. It also introduced mechanisms to reduce forms of inequality in the distribution of the tax among the regions, and to prevent there being too many disparities in the resources enjoyed by the different Apprentice Training Centres ("CFA"). This legislation also concerned the funding of mentoring and the implementation of the "training time capital" system
- Adjustment and reduction of working times ("ARTT") – Law of 13 June 1998 : The legal duration of the employees' working week was set at 35 hours per week for all, with effect from

⁵⁹ Law of 17 July 1992 concerning the apprenticeship system and vocational training

⁶⁰ From the validation of acquired vocational skills (VAP) to the validation of skills acquired through experience (VAE); No. 67

⁶¹ The five-year planning law of 20 December 1993

1.01.02. Subsequent legislation, including the law of 19.01.00, brought additions to the initial measures

- Validation of skills acquired through experience (“VAE”) – Law of 17 January 2002 : The Social Modernisation Law concerned, in particular, the extension of the “VAP” procedure (law of 20.07.92) to the concept of “VAE”. Validation has become a means of obtaining a diploma in the same way as through high school study, further training and the apprenticeship system. The new legislation gives everyone who has been working for at least 3 years the right to have his experience recognised in order to obtain a diploma, a vocational certificate or a job-qualification certificate awarded by the representatives of a given trade sector. The experience taken into consideration may be the result of work as a company employee or not, but may also be the result of voluntary work

2.2 General Comment on Policies

The foregoing overview of policies and policy approaches contributing to promoting access to lifelong learning is not intended to be exhaustive but to illustrate the areas of concern in this endeavour. Furthermore, they reflect the contributions received from the participating countries. In addition they also mirror the priorities of whichever government ministries are taking part. This of course may yield a skewed perception of the problems encountered in promoting lifelong learning and the attempted resolutions. However, the overview reflects the ASEM initiative as a whole. Further extensive expositions of policies are available at the websites cited in the appendix.

The history of educational provision and the cultural background of the contributing countries influence the various approaches taken to understanding the problems associated with access to lifelong learning. One of the difficulties encountered in synthesising a comprehensive overview is the lack of coherence in the understanding of what is meant by lifelong learning and, consequently, what is understood by promoting access to it. There is no mistaking the conflation of Adult Education and Lifelong learning as concepts, although this is by no means universal. Pursuing this notion leads to the concentration of effort in workplace initiatives. Others see problems pertaining to premature termination of formal learning and secure initiatives to reintroduce to the world of work, young people who have left formal education without qualifications. Alternatively some participating members focus on particular groups who find it difficult to participate in mainstream education provision. However, there is a distinct convergence of thought on being comprehensive and inclusive of all citizens. Some of the recurring key issues of interest to all stakeholders and that impact policy development in relation to lifelong learning, and its access are addressed below. They include:

- Government Support
- Education Provision
- Guidance
- Finance
- Accreditation & Transparency
- Demographic trends & Education Profiles
- Skills Demand
- The Learning-, Knowledge-, Information Society
- Polarisations & Tensions

2.3 Factors Affecting Policy Development

Government Support

As has already been discussed educational policies supportive of lifelong learning must to a large extent rely on government intervention. While this remains so, governments cannot compel their citizens to learn in any specific way. Learning is private and will always remain so in the main. Many of the contributors make the point that their government ministries support lifelong learning by providing suitable learning environments, opportunities and incentives through the development of appropriate initiatives. At first, this seems to relegate government policy to a passive role. But this is not necessarily so. Governments can support lifelong learning in many ways which are proactive and accommodating. Besides producing policies for regulating education (a main prerogative of government ministries), governments provide the learning infrastructures in the form of facilities and educational facilitators etc., guidance and advisory systems, by coordinating procedures of accreditation, qualifications and curricular development, by supporting financially in many ways, and by actively promoting a culture of learning within the community.

Provision

The national education systems for each of the participants can be found at the relevant ministry websites, showing the continuum of education provision.^{62 63} The relatively recent focus on those sectors of community that have to date been neglected in education provision have made Lifelong Learning and Adult Education almost synonymous. However the seamless continuum of learning from the early years to late maturity demands a more equitable approach, one that values all members of the democratic society and their needs and desires with equivalent worth and esteem. Within the stated policies of inclusion, fairness, equality and opportunity, expressed in so many ways by the contributors, is the implied provision and support for the full spectrum of learning throughout life. The table below indicates a generality of phases of learning, collated from the various contributions. The age groups vary from one country to another and those cited below are typical values.

Full Spectrum of Education and Learning : Lifelong Learning

Learning Opportunity	Occasion
1. Preschool and Early Learning	0 - 4 yrs
2. Primary Education	4 - 12 yrs
3. Vocational Education	12 - 18 yrs
4. Secondary Education (lower)	12 - 15 yrs
5. Secondary Education (higher)	15 - 18 yrs
6. Special Needs Education	lifetime
7. School to Work	16 - 20 yrs
8. Professional Inservice & Workplace Learning	20 - ongoing
9. Return to Work Preparation	adult
10. Return to Education	adult
11. Pre Tertiary	18 to adult
12. Tertiary Education	18 to adult
13. Education of Third Age	over 50 yrs
14. Learning for Leisure	any time

⁶² Irish Education System: http://www.ir.gov.ie/educ/pdfs/education_system.pdf

⁶³ Ministries of Education (worldwide) http://www.childresearch.net/LINKS/MINI_E.HTM

Learning is a part of life, which is constantly evolving, and which takes place in all life's situations. It is a continuous lifelong process, going on from birth to the end of life, beginning with learning from within the family, then communities, learning centres, schools, religious institutions and other learning providers, encompassing all endeavors both nationally and globally.

Each of these phases affects the others in many complex ways. It seems insufficient to address only those areas that have been neglected to date, and assume, for instance, that compulsory education will be secure enough to support the continued lifelong learning of future adults. New ways of assessing the whole spectrum of learning within a policy of total inclusion seem to be endorsed by most contributions.

Guidance

The policies on lifelong learning from many of the participants refer frequently to some central system of information dissemination, guidance and even promotion. One key parameter in their makeup is their presence in the community where the prospective learners live and work. The effectiveness of these distributed systems relies on their ability to make contact locally.

These centres reside in various configurations among the participant countries. For instance the Korean initiative KERIS⁶⁴ has established local education information centres in each of the 16 metropolitan & regional offices of education, to connect major libraries and research institutes across Korea. In a similar fashion the UK has established an information service under the brand name "Learndirect",⁶⁵ with an integrated advice line. The learndirect national learning advice line responds to callers from England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It offers information and impartial advice on all learning opportunities, and also provides information on career opportunities, funding, and related issues such as childcare. It helps people decide what, where and how they want to learn. The website has recorded over 5 million hits since it was established in May 2000.

Likewise, in Singapore, the Ministry of Manpower has set up a Career Centre to deliver the information in an integrated manner. Besides providing labour market and training information to individuals and employers, the Centre also draws upon such information to offer career counselling and career advice to individuals. The government has also worked with community-based organisations, unions and employers to provide similar services at other locations across the island through the Distributed CareerLink Network.⁶⁶ To reach out to an even wider audience, the core information and services available at the Career Centre are also available over the Internet.

The key feature of the Danish guidance and counselling system is, that services take place in a decentralised structure regulated by a number of different authorities. The key objective in Danish guidance and counselling provision is: "Educational and vocational guidance shall serve the purpose of the individual person's preparation for and choice of education or occupation"⁶⁷. The goals of the different guidance and counselling services are embedded in policies concerning different sectors either in labour market administration or in the education system.

These guidance centres are largely committed to training and retraining of the workforce and rely heavily on job seekers approaching or accessing the centres. Job seeking presupposes some form of motivation on the part of the learner and one's knowledge of the centres themselves. However, the

⁶⁴ KERIS: No. 24 www.keris.or.kr

⁶⁵ Learndirect: No. 31 www.learndirect.co.uk

⁶⁶ Distributed CareerLink Network: <http://www.employmenttown.gov.sg/ecareer/careerlink/0,1066,,00.html>

⁶⁷ r-u-e.dk/english/act.htm

participant countries seem to suggest extending the role of the centres to being more proactive in promoting and advertising their helpfulness to potential customers. LearnDirect, for instance is currently involved in a mass media promotion of a host of opportunities for learning for everybody.

In Singapore, the Ministry of Education's vision of "Thinking Schools Learning Nation" ⁶⁸ (TSLN) ensure that they equip students with skills, knowledge, values and instincts to face new challenges, and aims to promote a culture of continual learning beyond the school environment. Due to the unpredictability of the future and its skills requirements, it tries to ensure that students have a wide range of knowledge and skill-sets. The curricula in Singapore's schools have also undergone changes with TSLN to encourage students to own their knowledge in many ways.

The introduction of on-line services as virtual offices enable learners to access this information from their home or IT kiosks, creating a secure and private browse paradigm, which can be less threatening for some.

Finance

Decisions regarding the financing of lifelong learning involve a range of considerations. Investment, particularly public investment, must be determined by the state's priorities at any particular time. These may include the challenge of tackling unemployment; increasing competitiveness; promoting social cohesion and the extent to which returns on the investment are of a public as opposed to a private nature.

In any case, Investment in Human Capital and Social Capital is a risky business for any financial institution, in that unlike other forms of capital, it is inseparable from the borrower. Once again within the realm of lifelong learning where there is virtually no control over the output except in measures for delimiting the learning experience, the return on investment is very uncertain. This applies to government ministries, employers and to individuals considering a commitment to a programme of learning. Consequently, direct intervention by the state is imperative to offset any differential in interest rates accruing from that perception of risk. It appears from many examples provided, that the provision of financial support may be best managed by conducting business by means of partnerships, where all stakeholders participate and lessen the risk to any one sector.

In Denmark, as in the Nordic countries in general, it has always been seen as an important public task to finance education and training, including continuing education and training. As regards education and training, the social partners play a crucial role, through their membership of the board of the body which has been set up: "The Labour Market Institution for Financing of Education and Training".⁶⁹ The board has the possibility of making recommendations to the Minister of Education concerning a number of matters of importance to the financing and organisation of adult education and continuing training.

We have seen that in Malaysia, financial institutions are be encouraged to participate in promoting lifelong learning by providing soft loans to individuals who wish to further pursue their education or training. Employers must provide training and retraining programmes to their workers with new skills and knowledge so that they can keep up with technological advancement. A similar feature occurs in France and Korea.

⁶⁸ Thinking Schools Learning Nation: <http://www.contactsingapore.org.sg>

⁶⁹ Adult Education and Continuing Training in Denmark :
<http://eng.uvm.dk/publications/factsheets/veureform.htm>

To redress inequalities experienced in the continuum of educational provision, governments intercede in a supportive manner. State educational support for adults (SESA) in Denmark ⁷⁰ is a case in point. Participants in continued and advanced training programmes receive public financial support to cover their costs of living. There will be two possibilities: State educational support for adults (SESA) or the special allowance paid mainly to low-skilled workers under the Labour Market Institution for Financing of Education and Training. SESA is to ensure that adults who participate in education at the levels of primary school, lower secondary school, upper secondary school and in higher education may obtain financial support.

Some companies promote employment and competence development through the investment in a variety of resources. For instance, Volkswagen in Germany ⁷¹ established a collective agreement called “5,000 x 5,000”. This agreement foresees that 5,000 employees will be hired by Volkswagen, 3,500 of which are currently unemployed, and will be paid DM 5,000 /month. Once the staff has been selected, would-be employees will be trained by public training institutions to acquire key skills. In a second phase, the 5000 new employees will be employed with a six month fixed-term contract, during which a training period in the company is organised (employees are only paid DM 4,000 at this stage). If they are successful during this period, they will be offered an unlimited contract. See also OECD ⁷²

Accreditation & Transparency

It is now common belief that recognition and reward are both powerful motivators in education and learning. Recognising achievement in learning is, by no means, an easy task. However, it is deemed almost essential by many learners and educators. To this end many of the participating countries mention it as a strong motivator and potent incentive. The nature, transparency, portability and credibility of diplomas and degrees are essential characteristics of recognition and award. It has been the tradition in many countries for these awards to be given by the state, the universities and now by the larger companies. For the learner there is always the question of mobility and the way accreditation assists in this. Global or regional recognition of awards is becoming an active area of discussion and dialogue.

Ireland, in attempting to address the concerns relating to accreditation and portable qualifications, has enacted the qualification act,⁷³ under which it has established the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland and the Further and Higher Education and Training Awards Councils⁷⁴. The task of the Authority is to establish and maintain a framework of qualifications, to oversee standards of awards across further and higher education and training outside the university system, and to promote and facilitate access, transfer and progression through the continuum of lifelong learning. The National Qualifications Authority has published a number of policy documents and has set out the principles and policies which will underpin future developments. These provide for

- Valuing all learning, irrespective of the learning site, so that the system will apply in education, training, workplace, community or other settings, formal and non-formal
- Providing for the accumulation of credits towards a full award
- A focus on pre-defining the learning outcomes which must be achieved for accreditation

⁷⁰ SESA: No. 21

⁷¹ Volkswagen: No. 11

⁷² <http://www1.worldbank.org/education/adultoutreach/cost.htm>

⁷³ Qualifications Act, 1999 (Education and Training): <http://www.gov.ie/educ/pdfs/act26-99.pdf>

⁷⁴ NQAI: <http://www.nqai.ie/>

- Mechanisms for accreditation of prior and work based learning

The Authority will publish a framework of levels of qualification in the summer of 2002.

The National Vocational training Council in Malaysia (MLVK) for instance, has accredited 585 training centres, including 401 private training institutions to conduct 2,824 training programmes of the Malaysian Skill Certificate (SKM) Level 1 to Level 5. Thus far, 110,000 certificates have been awarded under this competency-based scheme. Currently, there are 14 Industrial Training Institutes, four Advanced Technology Centres, a Japan-Malaysia Technical Institute and a Centre for Instructor and Advanced Skills Training. More Malaysians will, therefore, be provided with the opportunity to acquire industrial skills as well as higher order cognitive skills continuously.

The European social partners regard the recognition and validation of competencies as essential, in order that: each employee is aware of and encouraged to develop her/his competencies in the course of her/his occupational life and that each enterprise has the tools to better identify and manage the competencies in the company. The social partners consider it necessary to deepen dialogue with the aim of improving transparency and transferability, both for the employee and for the enterprise, in order to facilitate geographical and occupational mobility and to increase the efficiency of labour markets. This, they suggest, will be accomplished by promoting the development of means of recognition and validation of competencies, by providing a system for transferable qualifications and by identifying the possible links and complementarities with recognised diplomas. In terms of policy development at European level, social partners will contribute to on going discussions on transparency and recognition of competencies and qualifications.

In Greece, a framework for the external evaluation of adult education is structured according to indicators for each area of concern (administration, teaching methodologies, learning achievements, accountability, dissemination procedures). All procedures are supported by quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods. By the end of 2002 a parallel framework of internal-self evaluation is to be applied in all multicenters so that all partners (centres' employees, trainers, facilitators) involved are able to improve and promote the quality of services in their domain.

Demographic Trends & Education Profiles

The ageing trends in population and rising social expectations, which have resulted from higher levels of education of younger generations require a new way of approaching learning systems, ensuring that there are opportunities for all age groups, both women and men, skilled and unskilled, if significant increases in competencies and qualification levels are to be achieved. Lifelong learning contributes to the development of an inclusive society and the promotion of equal opportunities. One of the more inexorable pressures on education policy development is the constant change in the educational and age profile of the population. Demographic trends like these expose learning lacunae and vulnerabilities in society. Two examples are given below which show a number of needs. There is the relatively large cohort in their later years who are struggling with "basic" literacy skills and with relatively inadequate qualifications. There is also a significant group who have dropped-out of mainstream education with only a basic qualification. These points are illustrated by some examples below. While this is not intended as a comparative study, the examples point up the changing profiles of the working population, for instance.

Denmark ⁷⁵ is in a favourable position in the field of education/training. 83 per cent of a youth class today complete youth education which either gives vocational competences or study competence and about 40 per cent of a youth class complete higher education. But for one third of the labour force, basic schooling continues to be the highest education level. There is a need for strengthening the basic and occupational skills and qualifications of this group in the labour market. There are several reasons for this:

- In order to ensure a well-functioning labour market
- In order to be able to meet the needs of the enterprises for qualified labour and
- In order to give the individual adult persons better opportunities for continuing to learn and develop competences on the basis of the work and life experience they already possess

In Ireland,⁷⁶ more than 55% of the adult population aged between 15 and 64 have attained levels of education higher than upper secondary. A further breakdown of the figures shows the high proportion of adults in the older age groups who had not had the opportunity to access education beyond the primary level. The favourable situation for younger generations is dramatically illustrated by the fact that roughly 75% of those aged between 25 and 34 have attained upper secondary level education or higher as compared to the overall education attainment of 55% for all adults. There is little disparity between the educational attainment levels based on gender with the educational attainment levels of young women being slightly ahead of their male counterparts. As regards persons in the 15 to 24 year age group, with less than upper second level education, some 216,300, or 71%, are shown as participating in education.

A rapidly changing demographic profile with an ageing population and smaller youth cohorts entering the labour market, the pressure for provision in new conurbations as well as greater concern about regional balance, with a greater choice, flexibility in learning opportunities and pathways and patterns of learning throughout life, are creating an impact on educational provision.⁷⁷

The qualification levels of the adult population (25-59 year olds) in Portugal are very far from the average level in the EU, despite the positive evolution that can be observed. Whereas in Portugal, in 1999, approximately 78% of the population in this age group had completed the 3rd level of basic education⁷⁸, 12% secondary education⁷⁹ and 10% higher education, the EU average was 35.8%, 43% and 21%, respectively.

However, when considering the young people, the situation is completely different and closer to that of the Community average. Youth participation rate in the educational system was, in 1998, 52.9% (50.3% males and 55.4% females), whereas this indicator attained 60.6% in the EU in 1997.

Despite this favourable evolution in schooling as compared to the situation in previous decades, the following vulnerabilities in the Portuguese educational situation still persisted at the end of the 1990s:

- Dropping out of the educational system by most youngsters (which usually occurs at the age of 15-20) with no occupational preparation/qualification

⁷⁵ The Adult Education and Continuing Training Reform:
<http://eng.uvm.dk/publications/factsheets/veureform.htm>

⁷⁶ "Ireland's National Employment Action Plan 2001"

⁷⁷ "Education Strategy Statement 2001-2004 http://www.gov.ie/educ/pdfs/strategy_statement.pdf

⁷⁸ "Lower secondary" in the terminology of the International Classification by Type of Education CITE 97

⁷⁹ "Upper secondary" in the terminology of the International Classification by Type of Education CITE 97

- A decreased representation of secondary level education (or level III occupational qualification) in the qualification structure of the Portuguese working population (see chart above)

The results of the National Study on Literacy⁸⁰ show a concentration of nearly half the population (47.3%) in the two lowest levels of the scale that correspond to difficulties in using written information in everyday life. Although these two levels concentrate non-schooled individuals, the contribution of individuals with 1st, 2nd or 3rd level of basic or higher education levels is important, which indicates high levels of functional illiteracy, a factor aggravating the unfavourable qualification situation described above.

The proportion of low qualifications in the unemployment structure is very similar to that of the employment structure. Indeed, in 1999, approximately 76.8% of the unemployed people (78.7% males and 71.3% females) have qualification levels lower than 3rd level of basic education. More worrying is the fact that, in the youngest unemployed groups (15-24 year olds), approximately 67.2% (69.9% males and 56.0% females) have an education level equal to or lower than 3rd level of basic education, which denotes that many youngsters drop out from school.

When the opportunity arises many prospective learners of all age groups now seek to improve their situation through higher and further education. Consequently, more adult and mature students are partaking of various incentives to further their aspirations. Attendant on this development is a new demand for quality of service, value for money or personal investment in time, and at the convenience of the student.

Skills Demand

It is clear from the reviews of general policy on lifelong learning, submitted by the participating countries, that the concentration of energy is very much centred around adult learning and workplace learning. This is frequently reflected in the financing of provision for lifelong learning and in the formal documentation underwriting these efforts. Indeed, the policies of inclusion and cohesion so often mentioned, seek, *inter alia*, to entice and encourage many hitherto marginalised groups of people to participate in the workforce. Furthermore, due to the changing nature of the workplace, many policies give consideration to the future skills requirements (see Skillnets, Ireland).⁸¹ The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare in Thailand, in increasing competence of Thai labour force within the labour market has advanced the creation of a “Labour College” and the the Sukothai-thammatirat University (open university).⁸² This is managed by Department of Skill Development in order to provide training not only in various industrial skills and services but focusing on languages, computers, information technologies, technical literacy, and so on, for preparing them to be qualified workforce to be accepted by foreign investors in Thailand and being suitably qualified to work abroad.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare cooperates with the Sukothai-thammatirat University (open university) to organize courses to degree level through lifelong learning for the Thai workforce who are working abroad. The project started in Hong Kong which is the area for many Thai women workers. The Thai government expects to expand this learning opportunity to Thai overseas workforces (355,000 persons) who are working around the world.

⁸⁰ “Estudo Nacional de Literacia – Relatório Preliminar”, October 1995.

⁸¹ Skillnets. Ltd : <http://www.skillnets.com/>

⁸² Labour College & the Sukothai-thammatirat University (open university): No.60

The Learning/Information/Knowledge Society

The provision of learning opportunities has for the most part been in settings where communities of some description are involved. These communities may be the workplace, a local women's group, a select or marginalised community, formal compulsory education (schools) or institutes of higher education etc. What they all have in common is the community setting, connecting as they do to the larger society. Connecting such communities of learning in a dynamically active network contributes to the formulation of the Knowledge Society. Whether we call it the Information-, Learning-, or Knowledge Society, largely depends on the emphasis we place on the working of the neural configuration. These are not synonymous, but reflect different ideologies. The Knowledge Society metaphor induces the concept of an empowered society capable of sustainable growth. The Learning Society invokes images of self empowerment, while the Information Society carries with it the impression of an instrumental foundation. All three aspects of society are needed to participate effectively in the K-economy and underscores the part played by lifelong learning within the community to bring it about a profound development in Social Capital.

For instance, The Learning Cities Project in Greece ⁸³ has empowered four cities to build partnerships at local level aiming at promoting lifelong learning among their citizens. Private training providers offer free ICT courses to adults, and universities are involved in training young unemployed adults, who already speak foreign languages, so that they can guide tourists in museums and ancient monuments of their region. The General Secretariat for Adult Education intends to develop this initiative in large scale and organizes a national seminar in April for this purpose.

Denmark has a high educational level. With the adult education reform, the framework has been set for a good and flexible system for continuing and advanced education and training; a system which will give all adults opportunities for continuing education and training and develop competences on the basis of the work and life experience they already possess. This development of competences is a *sine qua non* for the future creative knowledge-based society.

In establishing the Information Society infrastructure many attempts at "wiring" the community are in progress. The UK Government is committed to closing the digital divide between the technological "haves" and "have-nots", which threatens to make it increasingly difficult for disadvantaged areas to overcome barriers to economic regeneration. The Wired up Communities initiative ⁸⁴ aims to test ways of supporting education and delivering work and leisure services by linking households to a local community website, the Internet and Government services. Schools in the area will also be wired up through the provision of technology such as laptops and electronic whiteboards. The initiative is being piloted in 7 communities across the country, covering 14,000 homes, 33 schools and 12,000 schoolchildren. Furthermore, In 1999 ⁸⁵ they concentrated on two specific measures introduced to develop and stimulate a learning society, namely Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) and University for Industry (UfI). ILAs aim at enabling individuals to participate (more frequently) in learning. UfI will be a new national on-line and distributed learning network aimed at both individuals and businesses.

Similarly, in Ireland, ⁸⁶ the importance of the ICT infrastructure is also deemed an important factor in creating the Knowledge Society.

⁸³ Learning Cities Project : No. 59

⁸⁴ Wired up Communities <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/wired/>

⁸⁵ Stimulation of lifelong learning: Individual Learning Accounts and University for Industry: the British Review : http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/whats_happening/research/pdf_res_papers/rp00-08.pdf

⁸⁶ Schools IT2000 : <http://www.irlgov.ie/educ/it2000/it2000.htm>

Digital literacy is an essential element to workers' employability and permanent adaptability to organisational changes at the level of the productive system. Therefore, the development of skills related to the new information and communication technologies will necessarily be an essential factor for the strategy of lifelong learning in most countries and, in particular, of the continuing vocational training.

Vietnam, among others, is concerned about the digital divide that can emanate from the uneven distribution of ITC skills and access to the technologies. This often parallels other educational divides.⁸⁷ The new technologies have great potential as training instruments. The dissemination and utilisation of the ICT as a support to the training development, namely among training institutions, has been boosted in particular by establishing instruments of support for e-learning initiatives and other forms of distance learning.

In Portugal, within the scope of the National Action Plan for Employment⁸⁸ a goal has been set to include ICT in 50% of the continuing vocational training actions, with a minimum of 20 hours, and with a duration of at least 10%, in which it is important to promote the balanced participation of men and women, in order to promote the dissemination of the general utilisation of the ICT.

Polarisations & Tensions

Policies vary from time to time and from region to region. Implied in this is that there must exist a matrix of possibilities through which policy makers trace their development of current policies. Formerly, this matrix has tended to be described as a set of binary oppositions, most commonly articulated in the education/training divide. As stated earlier, however, in policy terms in particular, the tendency is to emphasise the commonalities and convergence in these former dichotomies, a process best described perhaps by the concept of 'agency'.

Policy is, of course, merely the mobilisation of a society's resources towards a shared objective of a 'good society'. Lifelong learning is, therefore, subject to a level of contestation between different elements or forces in a society commensurate with the respective intent of these forces to achieve their particular image of the good society.

However, the dynamic tension between these poles of thought contributes significantly to policy proposals, and in so doing impinges upon the choice of initiatives and incentives publicly provided to promote access to lifelong learning.

Human capital, embracing the knowledge and skills of all members of society, is critical for most contributing countries' continued economic growth. While manpower development has always been an important part of economic strategy, the new business environment demands that we build upon this approach to harness more fully human capital as a competitive advantage. In response, participants have adopted the strategy of lifelong learning, and have put in place the systems and programmes to operationalise it. While the outcome of these efforts has been encouraging so far, the momentum generated must be sustained into the future. Success in this regard will depend on the commitment and collective efforts of our public, private and people stakeholders.

⁸⁷ Annual Meeting 2002: Global Digital Divide Initiative: Steering Committee on Education: <http://www.weforum.org/pdf/DigitalDivide/Vietnam.pdf>

⁸⁸ National Action Plan for Employment: http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/news/2001/may/naps2001_en.html

2.4 Approaches

Partnerships

Whilst lifelong learning encompasses all learning activity undertaken throughout life, the focus of this initiative by the European social partners, for instance, is

- To make an effective and specific contribution to the realisation of lifelong learning in the context of the strategic objectives established at the European Councils of Lisbon and Feira⁸⁹ on employment, social cohesion and competitiveness
- To give impetus so that the development of competencies and the acquisition of qualifications are perceived as a shared interest by both enterprises and employees in each Member State
- To affirm the joint responsibility of social partners at all levels with regard to competencies development and promote their cooperation; and to acknowledge the broader dimension of the challenge, which calls for a close concertation with public authorities as well as education and training institutions at all levels

In addition to social dialogue, the success of this initiative depends on

- Each enterprise making the development of its employees' competencies crucial for its success
- Each employee making her/his own competencies development crucial for the management of her/his working life
- And on the State and local communities fostering learning opportunities in the interest of competitiveness and social cohesion

The social partners call for the creation, within the institutional framework of each Member State, of conditions, which will further encourage the concerted development of competencies and qualifications, in addition to existing unilateral approaches to learning. The lifelong development of competencies depends on the existence of a solid foundation⁹⁰, with which individuals are equipped during their initial education. This solid foundation should be jointly defined and updated by the national education systems and the social partners. It is necessary to reflect further on the subject, in order to specify the content and the conditions needed for each young person to obtain this solid foundation. The social partners, it is contended, should be associated with this reflection.

The successful implementation of many initiatives such as the "School of Lifelong Learning" (SoLL)⁹¹ in Singapore, hinges on such partnerships. At the national level, the partnership between government, employers, trade unions and the community sector is critical in mobilising employers and Singaporeans to build up the collective capability of the workforce. At the industry level, the responsiveness of the SoLL to changing skills needs depends on the partnership between the industry and training providers. Programmes like the SRP and NSRS leverage extensively on these partnerships to enhance their effectiveness.

Where the government is involved, it usually plays the role of a catalyst, taking on a more pro-active role where there are market failures or when there are strong positive externalities associated with intervention. It performs this role in two ways. First, it helps to bring stakeholders together and

⁸⁹ European Councils: <http://ue.eu.int/presid/conclusions.htm>

⁹⁰ The following elements have been identified as forming part of the solid foundation: reading, writing, numeracy and at least a second language, problem-solving ability, creativity and teamwork, computing skills, ability to communicate, including in a multi-cultural context, and the ability to learn how to learn, etc.

⁹¹ School of Lifelong Learning SoLL: No.64

facilitates the forging of partnerships that are critical to the success of the SoLL. Secondly, it provides funding to encourage the development and implementation of joint initiatives. For financial incentives, a co-funding approach is usually taken to encourage stakeholder ownership, and to ensure minimal wastage. The focus is also on developmental funding for initiatives that would eventually be self-sufficient.

By using partnerships to promote lifelong learning, the ensuing initiatives reflect the interests of the stakeholders and call into question the selection of the relevant bodies to participate in such partnerships.

Integrated Approach

Using the partnership arrangements, many initiatives to promote and encourage access to lifelong learning do so in an integrated fashion. These arrangements seem to be the most popular and effective. They address the desired outcomes of the education providers such as the state, the competitiveness and other requirements of companies, the needs and wants of individual learners and the community wherein they live and work. They may also call upon guidance centres, child support facilities, the use of ICT, transport arrangements, financial incentives for some of the stakeholders and other ancillary demands. The initiatives promulgated under these pacts address the complex nature of barriers and disincentives to engage in lifelong learning. This topic is addressed in full by the working group 2 of this initiative.

Flexible & Adaptable Approaches

Arrangements that work in a particular situation at a specific time do not necessarily translate to other situations. Some countries express the need to be readily adaptable and innovative to meet the unforeseen challenges presented by the vagaries of corporate globalisation.⁹² Centrally controlled systems of operation can often be too brittle in these situations with protracted response times and demand constant revision. Parallel distributed systems of organisation tend to be more flexible, adaptable and responsive to their fluctuating environments. The GRETA⁹³ system of providers in France uses this model to address ever changing needs and exigencies of its clients.

⁹² All-Wales rapid Response to Redundancy: No. 29

⁹³ GRETA – Groupement d'ETablissements: A group of French schools located in the same area, which pool their human and material resources to carry out their public service mission in further education as part of their mission for lifelong learning. They operate totally within their own resources in a competitive market.

Barriers to Lifelong Learning

Incentives, Needs, Desires & Motivation

It is almost a truism to suggest that incentives provide the motivation to meet one's needs and desires. Satisfying these needs is central to the problem of motivation and underscores the need to provide appropriate incentives. This has already been well documented elsewhere.^{94 95 96} Learners' needs and aspirations are complex and call for a synergism involving multiple incentives, which take into account the many facets of human motivation.

What do we understand by motivation within the framework of lifelong learning? Both Barriers and Incentives can be seen as powerful motivators in the approach to choosing one's actions. This is of course reflected in the concept of consumerism and one's right to choose in a democratic society.

Motivation and access to lifelong learning has many dimensions. It entails motivating a prospective learner to focus on the possibility of learning, applying for a course of study, enrolling in the same, continuing and persisting in that course and finally retaining a positive view of learning after completion. Inherent in all these phases is the basic tenet of meeting one's needs and supplying their wants. The fear of failure, a sense of isolation, a dread of the unknown or the unfamiliar as well as the loss of social life are among the strong motivators preventing learners from attaining their educational goals. When learners learn to identify their learning goals, they are more likely to succeed in attainment. This often needs assistance and guidance. The motivation to engage in directed learning must take into account the provision of a safe and secure environment as perceived by the learner. In the case of adult learning, appropriate adult centres should be provided to reduce unnecessary anxiety. Centres like the Greek Local Multicentres, already discussed, are examples of such secure places. The sense of belonging is always a powerful positive motivator, and learners need to experience a sense of community while learning.

On the other hand, the question of motivation and the underlining incentives can be cast in terms of consumer attitudes. In relatively affluent societies, consumerism is considered policy despite our too often negative understanding of the term. This version of consumerism and lifestyle is not so much concerned about goods and services as it has to do with signs, symbols and signifiers. Many individuals create identities from the suite of consumer signifiers they employ. It may be fashionable to hold a masters degree in science, for instance, simply because it helps to create an identity that marks one as being different. Consequently, policies concerned with promoting access to learning, must address the consumers' needs and desires, and encourage the individualism that consumerism inculcates. Lifelong learning can be actively and enthusiastically promoted as a powerful identifier and signifier in society.

Policies, therefore, relating to motivation and to engaging in learning, as has already been discussed, are highly problematic.

The barriers to self-actualisation (in the modernist sense) for the learner in the framework of Lifelong Learning are many. Some of these are obstacles outside the person which need outside assistance; others come from within and are more related to questions of motivation and lifestyle. The working

⁹⁴ Abraham Maslow Understanding Human Motivation: <http://www.utoledo.edu/~ddavis/maslow.htm>

⁹⁵ A Theory of Human Motivation : A. H. Maslow (1943) *Psychological Review*, 50, 370-396:
<http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Maslow/motivation.htm>

⁹⁶ Motivation: <http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Maslow/motivation.htm>

group has comprehensively identified thirteen such categories of barriers or disincentives. They reflect and complement other studies in this regard.^{97 98} They include:

- Lack of information on the availability, nature and quality of courses offered
- Time constraints
- Lack of collateral support systems
- Financial barriers
- Inadequate learning infrastructure
- Lack of recognition of learning
- Social or work settings that do not value learning
- Lack of motivation
- Lack of basic skills
- Disabilities
- Lack of access to ICT
- Social group exclusion / discrimination and
- Consumer lifestyle, leisure and competing interests

On the supply side, common barriers to participation in lifelong learning include: Rigid access arrangements, inappropriate assessment methodologies and approaches, timing and sequencing arrangements which are unsuitable to the family, work and life-cycle stage of the learner, poor inter-institutional credit transfer or recognition arrangements, unwillingness to recognise experiential learning in the accreditation process, poor cultural fit between the courses and the learner, courses may be too expensive, thereby, forcing lifelong learning into a socially regressive position wherein those who are already most advantaged accrue additional advantage. These barriers can easily be removed, but require a conviction and a change of mindset in how we appreciate the learning process.

The main barriers outlined are further developed below with examples of incentives and/or initiatives to illustrate approaches to combating these problems. It will be pointed out that many potential learners encounter situations where they are faced with more than one type of barrier. In order to promote access to Lifelong Learning it would be insufficient to remove the single most difficult one while others remain inhibiting.

The groupings have served as models or templates for the main core work of the group i.e. identifying good practice among the incentives to promote access to Lifelong Learning and to overcome these barriers.

The use of incentives to promote access to learning within one's lifetime amounts to the removal of sufficient barriers at each stage of development. Consequently, it is understood that it would not be sufficient to address these barriers individually. Good practice as illustrated by the examples proffered, appears to hinge around the more creative and inventive initiatives, which address multiple barriers albeit intuitively or implied.

⁹⁷ Adult Learning in England: a Review. <http://www.niace.org.uk/Publications/A/ALEngland.htm>

⁹⁸ OECD Thematic Review on Adult Learning – Denmark : <http://www.oecd.org/pdf/M00002000/M00002605.pdf>

3.1 Lack of information on courses offered or available

- Adult learning is facilitated by many providers who typically operate in isolation from one another and at different levels. There is often a lack of adequate and accessible advice and guidance on the possible choices, courses or general schemes available or offered
- Even if diverse and flexible learning processes are implemented, (see section 3.5), it is important that individuals are made aware of the quality of the surfeit of services on offer. The lack of such information deters potential entrants from participating in the training market
- Policies and incentives underpinning the establishment of a One-Stop-Shop Guidance Agency (on-line) are not always available. A culture where learning for life and lifelong learning are not valorised (see section 3.7), puts the onus on education providers to be proactive in advertising and promoting access to the same
- Ultimately, in a client-centred or learner-centred society where the learner chooses, there is an urgent demand for a restructuring of education provision to accommodate consumer choice, where advertising and marketing have common currency (see sections 3.2 & 3.6)

Incentives

The establishment of a well-informed and active Information and Guidance Agency at a national or regional level to promote access to learning at all stages is seen as essential by many contributors, if prospective learners are to be aware of the availability of courses and be encouraged to apply. The European Commission recommends, for instance, open dialogue between guidance systems, lifelong learning provision at all levels and labour market actors.⁹⁹

Various incentives cited in the annex support some form of guidance. They differ in their approach and emphasis. For instance, Deutsche Telekom in Germany¹⁰⁰ in partnership with the trade unions identify company skills shortage and advise and encourage and provide guidance to employees through a mentoring system. Again in partnership with the trade unions, Radiometer in Denmark¹⁰¹ embarks on a skills audit with each employee early in their career, in order to identify competence needs. As many of the employees in this company are “blue-collar” workers, many of whom are immigrants with Danish language problems and a low level of IT skills.

The agency could also coordinate support arrangements as explained in section 3.3. Greece has introduced a number of Employment Promotion centres.¹⁰² They aim at the prevention of long and short-term unemployment through individualised guidance counselling and intervention. Adults are guided to seek the proper job or training programs and they are informed about the job vacancies at local level. A personal action plan is elaborated in cooperation with the officials of the centre. The close cooperation between the center and the social partners facilitates the efforts for the inclusion of unemployed in training/educational programs.

Information, guidance and counselling in Denmark¹⁰³ is offered in 27 different services linked together in a unique decentralised structure and each referring to specified target groups.¹⁰⁴ All these

⁹⁹ "Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality". (3.2) :

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/life/index.html>

¹⁰⁰ Deutsche Telekom: No. 3

¹⁰¹ Radiometer: No. 5

¹⁰² Employment Promotion Centre: No. 18

¹⁰³ The booklet "Fodfæste – Dansk uddannelses- og erhvervsvejledning 1886 – 1996", by Peter Plant presents the historical development of guidance and counselling services in Denmark (R.U.E., 1996)

¹⁰⁴ Policies for Information, Guidance and Counselling Services in Denmark: No. 20

guidance services have individual codes of practice closely linked to the different settings. As with the Greek system, the Danish guidance and counselling system, is largely rooted in services connected to the employment service system.

The key feature of the Danish guidance and counselling system is, that services take place in a decentralised structure regulated by a number of different authorities. The key objective in Danish guidance and counselling provision is: "Educational and vocational guidance shall serve the purpose of the individual person's preparation for and choice of education or occupation" ¹⁰⁵. The goals of the different guidance and counselling services are embedded in policies concerning different sectors either in labour market administration or in the education system.

The major public service providers working synergistically, are the educational institutions, monitored by the Ministry of Education, the employment-service system, monitored by the Ministry of Employment and responsible for the services targeted at union-organised unemployed people, and adults in general and finally the social system, monitored by the Ministry of Social Affairs, but provided by the municipalities in the guidance and counselling services targeting unemployed people outside the trade unions.

The most important issues in guidance and counselling provision facing policy makers in Denmark can be described as follows: Cross-sectoral coordination, quality, efficiency and neutrality in guidance and counselling, access and transparency, adults and the goals in the "Lifelong Learning" scheme & qualifications of guidance and counselling professionals.

KERIS¹⁰⁶ is a government-funded organisation in Korea, established by the KERIS Act. Its mission is to establish a comprehensive education and research information service network, which allows every citizen to gain free access to information they need anytime and anywhere. It does this by constructing the best portal system for educational information, by setting up a comprehensive service which provides both domestic and overseas information on education and research and by forming the biggest cyber education community which provides an open forum for active information exchanges. Among its aims for the present year is to collect basic information and data necessary for school education activities, establish nationwide educational information networks - establishing local education information centres in each of the 16 metropolitan & regional offices of education, to connect major libraries and research institutes across Korea and to increase the number of EDUNET users up to 5 million.

In a similar fashion in the UK, the Ufi Charitable Trust has established an information service under the brand name "Learndirect",¹⁰⁷ with an integrated advice line. The learndirect national learning advice line responds to callers from England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It offers information and impartial advice on all learning opportunities, and also provides information on career opportunities, funding, and related issues such as childcare. It is available free to all adults across the UK and helps people decide what, where and how they want to learn. The information and advice service is also available on-line ¹⁰⁸ where enquirers can search the learndirect database of over 500,000 learning opportunities or visit the learndirect advice centre for information on careers, job profiles and diagnostics, which incorporates a pilot for a career package, called learndirect futures (available at a cost, but currently being offered free for a limited period). Details of over 1580 learndirect centres can also be found at the website. It has recorded over 5 million hits since it was established in May 2000.

¹⁰⁵ <http://www.r-u-e.dk/english/act.htm>

¹⁰⁶ KERIS: No.24

¹⁰⁷ Learndirect: No. 31

¹⁰⁸ <http://www.learndirect.co.uk>

Similarly, in Singapore, the Ministry of Manpower has set up a Career Centre to deliver the information in an integrated manner. Besides providing labour market and training information to individuals and employers, the Centre also draws upon such information to offer career counselling and career advice to individuals. The government has also worked with community-based organisations, unions and employers to provide similar services at other locations across the island through the Distributed CareerLink Network. To reach out to an even wider audience, the core information and services available at the Career Centre are also available over the Internet.

Within the transnational region, the Leonardo de Vinci¹⁰⁹ project has developed a multimedia software program for vocational guidance for young people. It fosters youth mobility and blurs cultural, vocational and training divides as it facilitates exchanges in the field of vocational training at European level by providing a database on the skill profiles to be acquired for the chosen occupations and the corresponding training. The impact on national guidance systems has been very positive. The project allows a careers advisory service provider to respond to requests for information from young people about occupational profiles on a truly transnational basis. The advice can be tailored exactly to the requirements of the trainee and will aid them in making an informed decision about transnational mobility.

The European social partners argue that in order for both employees and enterprises to pursue a strategy for competencies development, it is necessary to enable each employee and each enterprise to access all the necessary information and advice to provide SMEs with suitable information and to assist their managers through the creation of customised support. With this aim in mind, they call for:

- The development of facilities allowing employees and enterprises to be supported in their choices of learning, and to tailor the content according to competencies they have already developed, for example through a one-stop-shop facility in Member States, including a database on lifelong learning possibilities and opportunities for career evaluation
- These facilities to be easily accessible and relevant with regard to labour market developments

To promote a lifelong learning culture, both trade union and employer organisations have a key role to play in informing, supporting and advising their members and need to develop in house expertise to perform this role.

Greece has made use of the mass media approach to inform and encourage prospective learners. A large scale action concerning seminars and events aiming at raising awareness of general population, educators, local authorities and social partners has been launched, locally and centrally, since the beginning of 2000. The seminars are publicised in cooperation with local mass media (press, tv and radio). A web site for lifelong learning has been operating where all events, initiatives and programs implemented are presented. The site also serves as a forum for the submission of opinions and proposals related to various areas of lifelong learning.

3.2 Time constraints

- As is true for everyone, there is a limit on the amount of freely available time that learners can rely on. Such individuals can be hindered from embarking on lifelong learning by time

¹⁰⁹ Leonardo da Vinci: No. 38

constraints that arise from their commitment to their jobs, family or to prior financial obligations. As suggested in section 3.1 above, the realisation of a learner centred paradigm, which endorses flexi-time, circumvents this problem to some extent

- Time can be parceled into blocks for learner release or learning may be accommodated by a greater degree of time flexibility to suit learners' needs and desires
- The pace of course delivery is not always suitable or convenient to many learners. In today's society, the requirement to learn more and more in a shorter space of time has for many been a contributory factor in non-completion
- Leisure time may be discounted as wastage. However, for many, it is seen as an essential part of life. The time allocated to learning may often be debited from leisure, which in turn may be perceived as making education/learning an end in itself (see section 3.13)

Incentives

The provision of learning packages of such a size as to encourage completion in a relatively short period of time, would facilitate and accommodate the learner. Such packages may be delivered by ICT or distance learning regimes, and be of such a variety to encourage and motivate the learner. Some, if not all, of these aspirations have been addressed by education providers, a selection of which is given below.

Time management, by the learner, is seen as an incentive in some companies. In the case of Bird's Eye Wall¹¹⁰, learning routes in the food and drinks sector, facilitate employees pursuing national vocational qualification (NVQ) at their own pace. Even the assessment procedure takes into account the learner's means and availability of time. In Thailand, the Somboon Group¹¹¹, has concentrated on upgrading basic knowledge and skills for employees who already have a lower secondary background, to obtain a vocational certificate of higher standing in machinery. The training has been organised by the factory employer and the employees are allowed one hour of work per day for training time in the workplace. A representative employee committee works closely in upgrading knowledge and skill of the workforce in the company.

While companies allow time for workplace learning others facilitate longer-term leave to study. Some north European countries like Norway, Sweden and the Netherlands¹¹² have secured flexible arrangements for leave. Sweden and Norway have introduced a statutory right to leave work in pursuit of adult education. The latter have a legal right to one year of study after two years of employment in certain circumstances. The Dutch, in contrast, make use of part time work to allow industries to combine both learning and working.

In order to address issues of timing, and provide opportunities for combining a flexible return to learning with work and family responsibilities, a Back to Education Initiative is being introduced in Ireland which will provide for a major expansion of part-time options across the Further Education sector, beginning in 2002 with 6000 additional places. This will increase on a phased basis with a view to providing 20,000 additional places each year by 2006. The initiative is targeted particularly at young people and adults with less than upper secondary education, including those in the workplace. Participants may study for individual or multiple modules which are nationally certified by the Further Education and Training Awards Council, in the mornings, evenings, night time, week end, block release or sandwich courses in line with local demand. An adult ICT skills programme forms part of the initiative. Tuition is free for medical card holders, or holders of an unemployment payment or means-tested welfare payment and their dependants. The impact of the initiative on participation of

¹¹⁰ Bird's Eye Wall: No. 1

¹¹¹ Somboon Group: No. 26

¹¹² Legal Right to Leave: No. 39

particular groups will be monitored. 10% of all expansion under the initiative will be earmarked exclusively for community education providers.

Open and Virtual Universities.

As has already been mentioned, many learners are prepared to engage in long term commitments in education provided they can be accommodated within an ever-restricting time frame. The notion of flexi-time and flexible access to accredited courses makes sense and is espoused by many open or virtual universities.

Since 1999 the Greek Open University offers long distance courses leading to bachelor/master degree and certificate in post-graduate training. It also awards scholarships for students who meet certain criteria. In the near future, Institutes for Lifelong Education will be established in Greek Universities offering flexible courses for studies in tertiary level, leading either to certificates for continuing training or a degree depending on the number and the combination of the selected modules.

Denmark's Virtual University¹¹³ is a joint venture between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of IT and Research. It makes use of flexible internet based distance learning in order to provide education and training. The target groups are fulltime students and the working population who demand continuing education and training at a high level, as well as public and private enterprises. Further and higher education institutions who wish to supply and use the tools that Denmark's Virtual University places at their disposal for the development of flexible net based distance learning are also invited to engage in the initiative. DKK 40 million has been set aside for the establishment of Denmark's Virtual University. This will be used for the establishment of a common internet portal to courses offered on the internet as well as the launching of 6-8 major developmental projects till the end of 2003.

Malaysia has established a strategy regarding the flexibility of learning. The duration of the programmes in the distance learning, for instance, can be stretched into 5 years for first degree courses while, for a full time program, the course is typically 3 years, except for engineering, medicine and education, as has already been mentioned.

3.3 Lack of collateral support systems

- Many problems regarding access to lifelong Learning centre very often on questions of the provision of services responding to childcare, eldercare, disability needs etc
- For many parents, caring for children consumes, *inter alia*, most of their time (section 3.2). A similar argument may be made for those caring for aged parents or dependants with disabilities. As Lifelong Learning begins "from the cradle" and continues on into senior years, and should furthermore facilitate those within the various categories of disabilities (see section 3.10), many people caring for dependants would need to be assisted accordingly
- Families need to be made aware of what is available in an integrated way (see section 3.1), and which would support the establishment of learning communities, based on the families' needs.
- Those families situated away from centralised areas where education providers are at hand, either require for instance, assistance in travel, access to local ICT ports (see section 3.12), or encouragement to participate in community based learning centres

¹¹³ Denmark's Virtual University: No. 40

Incentives

The provision of distributed learning centres, under the heading of distance education, has been adopted by some countries to facilitate access to learning for the general population.

In Vietnam,¹¹⁴ distance education centres are the basic unit of the distance education system at the local level. These centres are in charge of providing education and training, to meet the diversified learning needs of those who want to raise their intellectual level, develop their capacity, better their understanding, and update their knowledge in order to make it easier to get a job or change their profession. The distance education centres at different levels must operate in accordance with the regulation of the Ministry of Education and Training. The main task of these provincial distance education centres is to cultivate and maintain links with universities, colleges and secondary vocational schools as well as with experts in different fields, in order to organise undergraduate and secondary vocational training at the local level. The main task of the district distance education centres is to organise literacy and post literacy education courses, complementary education, irregular vocational training, and seminars to update the general knowledge and raise the intellectual level of the community.

Distance education is controlled and managed by national, provincial district authorities. However, at the national level, distance education is under the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), which approves the teaching programs of secondary level; inspects the actual performance of the program; approves the list of graduates to be awarded a degree; pays the salaries of personnel. At the provincial and district levels, the provincial and district governments, and the union of factories organise and manage the local distance education centres by providing facilities like, houses, lecture halls, campus, motor vehicles, and expenses needed for the courses offered at the local study centres, as well as pay staff members of the Distance Education Centres (DEC). They select and recommend graduates to gain entry at local places of employment, and supply students with education fees, room and board.

The whole system of distance education in Vietnam is essentially directed by University of Open Learning in designing and producing video and audio teaching tapes to be sent to provincial DEC'S, students, and the central and local radio and television stations, by compiling, writing and printing of bulk self-teaching materials, by offering staff development courses to teachers, administrators and managers of distance education centres and by conducting research into theories of world distance education, and introducing its experience in distance education to the distance education institutions of Vietnam.

Distance Learning Programme in Malaysia, a consortium of public universities, offers various courses as part of lifelong learning programme. These programmes provide opportunities to workers who are unable to leave their work places to pursue higher education on part time basis. As a result, Open University of Malaysia has been established to manage and supervise the distance learning programme effectively. Private higher education institutions have also been established to complement the Government's efforts in providing quality education to its population. Currently, there are 9 private higher education institutions, which have been awarded university status and which allows them to award their own degrees.

¹¹⁴ A Country Report on Open and Distance Learning in Vietnam. http://gdenet.idln.or.id/country/ar_vietnam/CRVietnam.htm

3.4 Financial barriers

- Finance can also cause problems, both for the education providers and for the consumer/learner. For the learner, one's private resources are small and often fixed. Expenditure on learning may not always be acknowledged as high priority by the learner
- The prospective Lifelong Learner may often feel required to invest in materials, transport, caring facilities, job replacement, fees and perhaps basic ICT equipment
- For the providers, the expenditure on provision often necessitates prioritising. This, in turn and of necessity, establishes new and relatively insurmountable barriers. Accordingly, some sectors of provision are valorised while others are relegated as inconsequential

Incentives

While some financial commitment on the part of the learner is essential as a sign of dedication, lack of finance should not be a barrier to access. Various strategies have been devised to finance directly or indirectly access to workplace learning.

Financial incentives serve the purpose of making learning affordable to more employers and workers, and are applied in various ways in Singapore. The Skills Development Fund (SDF) was set up in 1979 to encourage employers to upgrade the skills of lower skilled workers. Comprising funds collected through the Skills Development Levy, the SDF is used primarily to co-fund the costs of company-based training for lower skilled workers. Over the years, the SDF has developed into an effective and well-accepted incentive mechanism to encourage company-based training. The size of SDF assistance, which is reflective of the co-funded amount by employers and the number of training places supported, has increased steadily over the years.

The government of Singapore has also set aside funds to support training for selected sectors of the economy. Examples of such funds include the Initiatives in New Technology (INTECH) Scheme to develop a pool of specialists in new technology areas; the Critical Infocommunications Technology Resource Programme (CITREP) for the info-communications industry, and the Financial Sector Development Fund (FSDF). Together with the SDF, these funds provide financial support for the development of cutting edge capabilities, and have raised the skills base of their workforce.

Following the launch of the "School of Lifelong Learning" (SoLL) in 1999, the Manpower Development Assistance Scheme (MDAS), representing a commitment of \$200m over 5 years, was set up to encourage the building of capabilities at the industry level. While the SDF and sector specific training schemes provide financial assistance for company level training, MDAS provides support for industry level projects that enhance industries' capabilities as a whole. These include the setting up of the National Skills Recognition System and the development of Industry Training Centres and Corporate Training Institutes. MDAS also provides support for strategic skills training programmes, such as the Skills Redevelopment Programme (SRP) for older and less educated workers, and the Strategic Manpower Conversion Programme (SMCP) for professionals and executives switching from the sectors they are in to strategic growth sectors.

A Lifelong Learning Endowment Fund was set up in January 2001 to provide a steady funding stream for lifelong learning initiatives in Singapore. With a target size of \$5 billion, this fund complements the existing schemes and support the long-term development of the SoLL. It will cover new areas like the promotion of community-based lifelong learning, as well as emerging employability skills like IT Literacy and labour market skills

In Malaysia, financial institutions are encouraged to participate in promoting lifelong learning by providing soft loans to individuals who wish to further pursue their education or training while employers are to provide training and retraining programmes to their workers with new skills and knowledge so that they can keep up with technological advancement.

The Danish ¹¹⁵ ¹¹⁶ approach is also very supportive in that participants in continued and advanced training programmes will continue to receive public financial support to cover their costs of living. There will be two possibilities: State educational support for adults (SESA) or the special allowance paid mainly to low-skilled workers under the Labour Market Institution for Financing of Education and Training.

State educational support for adults (SESA) in Denmark is to ensure that adults who participate in education at the levels of primary school, lower secondary school, upper secondary school and in higher education may obtain financial support.

SESA falls into two parts. The first concerns support to participation in PAE-programmes and in general education at the levels of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary school. Support for this type of general education can only be granted to persons with a low level of educational attainment. The second concerns support for participation in advanced education at short, medium-term or long higher education levels. This means that SESA covers education at the level under and the level over the allowance to vocationally oriented adult education and continuing training.

The support for participation in vocational adult and further education aims at ensuring that adults participating in such education will get compensation for lost earnings or for lost opportunities of earnings. It is possible to obtain education support for 52 weeks during a period of maximum 5 years. For the unemployed, it is only possible to obtain support for 6 weeks. Support for participation in training beyond 6 weeks is granted within the framework of the law on active labour market policy.

In the future, there will be two options for support to students in connection with further education activities: State educational support for adults (Statens Voksenuddannelsesstøtte, SVU) and the allowance (VEU-godtgørelse), paid in connection with participation in adult vocational education and training up to and including the level of vocationally oriented youth education (including CVT). The Labour Market Institution will administer this allowance for Financing of Education and Training.

The allowance in connection with participation in vocationally oriented adult education and continuing training (the VEU-godtgørelse) aims to ensure that adults who participate in such programmes up to the level of vocational education may receive financial support to do so. The allowance is given as compensation for loss of earnings or loss of a job opportunity.

In view of the importance of continuing and adult education within the vision of lifelong learning perhaps it is time to revisit the concept of the funding of all part-time students, irrespective of the course of study.

3.5 Inadequate learning infrastructure

- A common problem faced by many countries in their pursuit of lifelong learning is the lack of suitably trained teachers in adult education as well as the lack of appropriate teaching facilities

¹¹⁵ State Education Support for Adults (SESA): No. 21

¹¹⁶ See also Folkeoplysning: No. 22

- Inappropriate and outmoded content, pedagogy, methods of delivery and assessment along with inflexible learning programmes, which are generally content-driven, and delivered at inconvenient times, can also serve as barriers and disincentives to the access to and participation in lifelong learning

Incentives

The barriers obtaining to adult education within the context of lifelong learning have been addressed by the National Agency for Adult Education and Training in Portugal (ANEFA) ¹¹⁷ which is a public institute under the joint superintendence and tutelage of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Solidarity. Its aims are:

- To build a System of Recognition, Validation and School (and Professional) Certification of Skills and Knowledge acquired by adults as part of their professional and private lives, through formal, non-formal and informal processes
- To develop and circulate new curricula, models, methods and teaching materials specially tailored to adult education and training and providing double (school and professional) certification
- To support adult education and training projects and initiatives, particularly open and distance learning
- To support the specialised training of professionals, namely those working in adult education and training and in the recognition, validation and certification of skills
- To disseminate an initiative-oriented culture, entrepreneurship and openness to innovation
- To conduct studies and promote research in the field of adult education and training, and to encourage the circulation of the work produced

Local Multicenters ¹¹⁸ for adult education have been established recently in Greece, and perform several coordinating operations. All centers are connected to the documentation centre and General Secretariat for Adult Education. They are members of local partnership networks between municipal authorities, labour unions and enterprises. Greece puts emphasis on the retraining and certification of adult trainers. For instance, a national curriculum framework for basic skills has been elaborated in collaboration with Universities and Pedagogical Institutes. This framework offers the opportunity for validation and certification of skills as it is built at levels corresponding to the national framework for school education.

3.6 Lack of recognition of learning

Lack of recognition of prior learning experiences in continuing education

- Individuals who lack formal education but have experience in their scope of work may find it difficult to gain entrance into retraining schemes or higher education programmes that do not recognise prior learning as part of the admittance criteria
- This has been addressed in great detail by Working Group 2

Lack of certification and accreditation

- The lack of a systematic approach to allow for the recognition and accreditation of learning experiences could make individuals less motivated to seek training and learning experiences
- Very often those with prior learning in a non-formal or informal environment could benefit from a “bridging” course/facility to mainstream their skills and knowledge. These facilities are seldom available

¹¹⁷ ANEFA Portugal : No.13 <http://www.anefa.pt/>

¹¹⁸ Multicentres, Greece:

- On the other hand the linking of accreditation and certification to inappropriately validated learning regime assessments have often lead to a simple “paper chase”, precipitating a mediocrity with low self-satisfaction for the learner

Incentives

Within the European context much has been done to mutually recognise formal qualifications with the issue of directives to guarantee this recognition particularly within the context of the regulated professions. Further recommendations have been made to develop instruments for valuing learning and the portability of qualifications and competences within the region.¹¹⁹

Likewise, the Bologna Declaration,¹²⁰ which is a declaration of 19 June 1999 by European Ministers of Education convened in Bologna, agreed to construct a "European Higher Education Area" based on fundamental principles of university independence and autonomy to ensure that higher education and research in Europe adapt to the changing needs of society. It also agreed to work together to adopt a system of comparable degrees in order to promote European citizenship. Furthermore, it sought to adopt a dual cycle system of undergraduate and postgraduate alignment. In terms of regional cohesion and mobility, it agreed to establish a system of academic credits (e.g. European Credit Transfer System) that would be easily transferable to promote widespread student mobility, improve access for students and training opportunities.

In Singapore, the National Skills Recognition System (NSRS) under the “School of Lifelong Learning” (SoLL), allows for the positive results from learning to be recognised. Launched in 2000, NSRS enables industries to develop workplace skills standards and accord industry recognition for training that meets these standards. To facilitate skills progression for workers without formal education qualifications, NSRS not only has flexible entry requirements for training courses, but also allows industries to develop skills standards pegged at different levels. To make learning more manageable for adult learners, training programmes have also been modularised to allow for bite-sized learning that can be offered part time or on the job (see section 3.2). As a whole, NSRS creates a framework for companies within industries to enhance their skills profile. It also creates new skills pathways for workers not just within the company, but also within the industry.

3.7 Social or work settings that do not value learning

- In some societies, the notion of lifelong learning has not been very well established. While governments may recognise its useful impact on the economy, and on society as a whole, individual people and communities may not be very responsive to the idea. Hence, it is important to promote the wide-ranging purpose of lifelong learning to all sectors of the population in order to ensure they fully comprehend the importance and advantages of lifelong learning for them
- For many in society, schooling has not lived up to its implied promises. Learning for them has been devalued. In many cases this results in relatively high and alarming dropout rates. Reclaiming these to engage lifelong learning is no small task
- Studies have also shown that certain work environments do not favour training. In fact, surveys have shown a close correlation between the size of the firm and the participation rates of it

¹¹⁹ “Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality”. (3.1)
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/life/index.html>

¹²⁰ “The Bologna Declaration on the European Space for higher education: an explanation”
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/socrates/erasmus/bologna.pdf>

workers. In general, while big corporations are keen to get involved in job related training, SMEs tend to be more reluctant

- This set of barriers is in many ways coupled to those in section 3.6 and 3.13 and the lack of accreditation

3.8 Lack of motivation

- The question of motivation is intrinsically linked to one's needs and desires, which are well documented¹²¹ ¹²² ¹²³. Many of the proposed incentives hinge around these needs or perceived needs. The lack of motivation to engage in Lifelong Learning can be attributed to the perception that Lifelong Learning does not meet the prospective learner's needs
- Some of these needs include, a sense of belonging, of self worth, self esteem, the esteem of others as well as the need to know, understand and systematise the universe, and to be creative
- It is because these needs are so powerful that education providers need to address the learning environment as well as the outcomes of their programmes
- Negative attitudes to learning arising from poor school experience, such as lack of confidence in one's own ability, leading to a fear of failure, low self worth / self esteem, history of underachieving, education / learning never experienced as fulfilling one's needs (See sections 3.6 & 3.7)
- Addressing individual needs alone is unlikely to succeed as incentives if other more pressing needs are not met

Incentives

Many of the incentives involve travelling to a centre where a community of shared interests is experienced. A sense of belonging and appreciation is paramount for all learners irrespective of age. In many cases it is essential to change the teaching paradigms to accommodate new learner-centred education. Much of today's dissatisfaction with learning is the outcome of unpleasant experiences in compulsory education. Creating flourishing local communities committed to learning is essential to achieving any change in education policy in this regard.

The Shanty ¹²⁴ (adult education for people in the local community) has been central in defining the character of Community Education in Ireland and merits particular recognition for its contribution in this regard. It was self starting and self-motivating and sought government finance after its proven record of inclusiveness and success. The Shanty now reflects the Government's objectives for Adult Education by reaching large numbers from a marginalised community, pioneering new approaches to teaching and learning, developing a curricular response to community needs, forming accreditation partnerships with third level institutions and providing routes of progression for participants.

3.9 Lack of Basic skills

- While another work group is addressing "Basic Skills", it is important to perceive the lack of these skills as contributing to barriers to accessing lifelong learning

¹²¹ Abraham Maslow Understanding Human Motivation: <http://www.utoledo.edu/~ddavis/maslow.htm>

¹²² A Theory of Human Motivation :A. H. Maslow (1943) *Psychological Review*, 50, 370-396:

<http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Maslow/motivation.htm>

¹²³ Motivation: <http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Maslow/motivation.htm>

¹²⁴ Shanty: No. 12 <http://culture.coe.fr/postsummit/citizenship/index.html>
Irish Site of Citizenship Study Visit Tallaght, Dublin (Ireland).htm

- Whatever these basics are, we are faced with the problem of motivating individuals to achieve them. As mentioned in section 3.8 above, individuals have to see these basics as fulfilling their needs and desires within a relatively short period of time
- As shown in the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALs) and a number of other studies on the distribution of participation rates among different members of the workforce, access to lifelong learning is skewed heavily towards the already well educated and more highly skilled individuals. In addition, older workers are also less likely to participate in any form of training than the younger workers are

Incentives

Working Group 1 has addressed this topic in great depth. However, within the context of incentives to promote access to lifelong learning, the term “Basic Skills” is intended to mean “Prerequisite Skills” or “Autonomy Skills”. In other words these sets of attributes are required to successfully engage in a course of choice and may mean moving beyond basic literacy, numeracy, ICT skills etc.

3.10 Disabilities

- Barriers associated with disabilities vary considerably. Consequently it is not often appropriate to group disabilities into one category. Solutions to barrier problems attendant on disability must be honed to meet the respective challenges. General policies seldom succeed in meeting the learning needs of the disabled. It is important to address the specific learning and other needs of each of the groupings below, particularly within the context and invitation of LLL
 - Chronic / Persistent Health Problems
 - Physical Disability
 - Sensory Disability - Visually Impaired, Hearing Impaired
 - Learning Disability - ADD/ADHD, dyslexia, dysphagia, dyspraxia, apraxia
 - Intellectual Disability - Mild, Moderate

Incentives

Special education in Singapore ¹²⁵ encompasses a range of specialised teaching programmes in special education schools, which cater for children with autism, or intellectual, sensory, physical or multiple disabilities. Depending on the degree of the disability, some of these children may still be able to cope with parts of the mainstream school curriculum with some support, while others may benefit more from special curricula taught by suitably qualified teachers. SPED schools are operated by voluntary welfare organisations with the support of the Ministry of Education and the National Council of Social Service. The aim of all SPED schools is to develop each child's capacity to its fullest potential, with the long-term objective of enhancing his/her prospects of integration into mainstream society. The education curriculum is supplemented with rehabilitative and therapy services which provide for the child's physiological and psychological well-being as well as all-round development.

3.11 Social Group Exclusion / Discrimination

- Many social groups in society such as refugees, asylum seekers, ¹²⁶ local ethnic and religious minorities, travellers, women, prisoners, ex-offenders, homeless, find themselves outside the general mainstream of education and directed learning

¹²⁵ Special Education – Singapore: No. 52

¹²⁶ Refugee Education and Integration: <http://www.refugeenet.org>

- Whatever is the accepted aetiology, these groups may be less inclined to engage in lifelong learning. It may be the case that the culture of lifelong learning most often presented, is perceived as being alien and / or associated with the dominant group in society. These barriers call upon and challenge the principle of learner driven and learner centred education
- Older people appear to have the fewest opportunities, but the unemployed, people with disabilities, refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, those who left school without qualifications, people with caring responsibilities and those living in remote or disadvantaged areas also face significant barriers to develop old and new basic skills. They are also likely to have less disposable income to pay for learning activities¹²⁷

Incentives

The Shanty¹²⁸ (adult education for people in the local community) has been central in defining the character of Community Education in Ireland and merit particular recognition for their contribution in this regard. Established in 1986, the Centre provides second chance community-based education to the women of Tallaght West, Dublin. Its goal is to tackle poverty through education. The Shanty reflects the Government's objectives for Adult Education by reaching large numbers from a marginalised community, pioneering new approaches to teaching and learning, developing a curricular response to community need, forming accreditation partnerships with third level institutions and providing routes of progression for participants. Since 1986 over 4,000 adults on low income have received education and training in the Centre. Courses are held in the mornings and include: Personal Development, Community Leadership, Drama, Community Drugs Problems, Womens Studies, Parenting, Spirituality etc, allowing women catch up on educational opportunities missed in their teenage years.

3.12 Lack of Access to ICT

- Access to ICT, an essential tool in lifelong learning, can be denied to many prospective learners. The basic technology itself is too expensive for many and contributes to the privileged benefiting most from its introduction. Furthermore, the skills needed to profit from it may be taken for granted. Quality information is not always affordable or immediate. Without free and adequate access to useful information, it is likely that social discrimination and exclusion in this regard will be endorsed rather than alleviated

Incentives

Malaysian ICT infrastructures at the public higher learning institution are being upgraded to strengthen the facilities and methodologies in teaching, learning, research, management and services in higher learning institutions in Malaysia. Continuous training programmes are being provided to the academic staffs of the higher learning institutions. E-learning concept is being introduced. The Ministry of Education intends to obtain a ratio 1:4 between computers and students. A virtual library will be built to support the e-learning and lifelong learning process. The concept of Cyber Campus and virtual university will be pursued at all public higher learning institutions. Cyber Campus will exploit in totality the use of digital technology in academic, administration, research and development and other services. (See also Schools IT2000, Ireland¹²⁹ and Wired up Communities, UK¹³⁰)

¹²⁷ EAEA Comments on the Memorandum for Lifelong Learning. <http://www.eaea.org/lifelong/>

¹²⁸ Shanty: No.12 <http://culture.coe.fr/postsummit/citizenship/index.html>

Irish Site of Citizenship Study Visit Tallaght, Dublin (Ireland).htm

¹²⁹ Schools IT2000 : <http://www.irgov.ie/educ/it2000/it2000.htm>

¹³⁰ Wired up Communities <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/wired/>

3.13 Consumer Lifestyle, Leisure and Competing Interests

- With the notion of globalisation and the culture of late capitalism comes that of consumerism. This latter, in many respects, is what drives the economy. However, when it comes to education and lifelong learning these are often perceived as just another consumer choice
- Consumers tend to choose what is perceived as fulfilling their needs, wants and desires at the time. Indeed the very passivity engendered by both traditional schooling and the culture of consumerism itself, can militate against an active, self-driven learning programme

Incentives

Unless individuals and employers are convinced of the need for lifelong learning, our investments in creating the infrastructure for workforce training will be put to waste. The Singapore Learning Initiative was launched in 2000 to create greater awareness of the need and value of lifelong learning among employers and all levels of the workforce. It is also aimed at encouraging the use of available incentives and tools offered under the SoLL. The key thrust of the Singapore Learning Initiative is the Singapore Learning Festival (SLF), which was held for the first time in 2000 and was organised again in 2001. Intense learning activities were held over a 2week period for the SLF. Organised in partnership by the public, private and people sectors, the main events under the SLF included the Learning Exposition, which showcased learning opportunities in the public and private sector; the Singapore Learning Symposium, which brought organisations together to discuss issues related to learning; and the Learning Web, which consisted of a myriad of learning activities at the community level.

Recommendations for Further Development on the Issue of LLL

4.1 Interculturalism – Celebrating Cultural Diversity

Within the evolution of a globalised economy, considerable disquiet is often voiced concerning cultural hegemony expressed as it is in the form of international cultural homogeneity. This has given rise to a renewed impetus to explore the discourse of interculturalism. If this is not addressed it may simply become a new strategy of cultural domination, which tolerates, controls, and demobilises difference. It is better, therefore to celebrate, alterity rather than bemoan negation.

Some of the areas considered worth pursuing within the framework promoting access to lifelong learning include: Interculturalism; Human Rights Education; Cultural Studies; Ethnomusicology; Theatre; Conflict Management/ Resolution; Global Ethics; Global Citizenship; Minorities.

4.2 The Question of Migrant Education

Neo-liberalisation has sought and acquired with impunity the free movement of capital across borders. Unfortunately for many, this has not been paralleled with an unimpeded and consenting movement of human capital. However, within the regions embraced by the ASEM initiative there is considerable movement of peoples, immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers or internally displaced populations. Some of the contributing countries make a point of addressing some of the educational needs of these people. Nevertheless, an Asia-Europe programme of learning provision to cater for the needs and desires of disenfranchised communities, such as these, may be desirable.

4.3 Confronting Passivity / Consumerism / Inculcating Love of Learning

When reviewing the various tensions that appear during the process of lifelong learning, we discussed at length the difficulty of reconciling Employability and Active Citizenship. We have also encountered the passivity engendered by the content-driven curricula of formal learning. Learners make choices. However, when viewed from a consumer point of view, the learner may for instance, consume knowledge or accredited courses, where their mere acquisition and not their enabling effect, is of prime importance. In relatively affluent societies, consumerism is considered policy despite our too often negative understanding of the term. This version of consumerism and the attendant lifestyle is not so much concerned about the consumption of goods and services as it has to do with signs, symbols and signifiers. Many individuals create identities from the suite of consumer signifiers they employ. It may be fashionable to hold a degree in science, or anthropology or a diploma in anything, for instance, simply because it helps to create an identity that marks one as being different. The educational and learning choices that assist in this creation are of immediate concern here. Prescriptive knowledge usually originating outside the learner, may or may not be the consumer choice that identifies an individual; but it is the learner who decides. The teleological drive of the employability pole endorses consumer knowledge to the detriment of active learning and knowledge creation. Active citizenship must be predicated on creativity and free choice. This trend, as it appears in the contributions and because it is at the core of lifelong learning, requires further in-depth analysis and study.

4.4 Establishing Learning Communities

It has already been pointed out above that the goal driven prescriptive knowledge, usually originating outside the learner, raises questions concerning policies for promoting lifelong learning. The true voyage of discovery for learners in contemporary society may be to see our educational establishments (virtual or otherwise) not so much as repositories of true knowledge handed down through the hierarchies of academia, but as communities wherein students and facilitators alike, inquire together about the nature of life and the world. Within these learning communities, all participants share more or less equally in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding. Building sustainable K-communities, contributes to the underwriting of Social Capital on a local, national and regional basis.

Policy Recommendations

This overview of policy and practice in lifelong learning in a number of ASEM countries has sought to identify the main barriers to participation and the kinds of incentives which have been operationalised to help overcome these barriers.

The report has identified two key target groups in government policy for lifelong learning in the countries looked at; older adults who did not benefit from mass second level education; early school leavers who, in sizeable minorities, fail to complete second level.

In terms of the overall social purpose of lifelong learning, two concerns are pre-eminent. Chief among them is the concern by governments in rapidly globalising economies to maintain the competitiveness of their respective workforces. While there are differences in emphasis in terms of the approach here, ranging from one which focuses on basic learning to learn skills, to a much more instrumental tightly focused vocational orientation, the purpose of human capital development remains paramount.

A second policy goal, but one which is less evident than the former, is that of social cohesion. While many policies identify cohesion as an aspiration, it is not always clear if their impact is one of enhancing cohesion. Indeed, there is some evidence that the advantages to be gained from participation in lifelong learning accrue to those who have already been most advantaged in their early life education.

5.1 Inter- Intra- Ministry Communication & Cooperation

This review has sought to collate and analyse policies and incentives from the ministries within the ASEM initiative. However, there has been a noticeable bias in the contributions as they reflect the mandate and legitimate interests of contributing ministries. Attempts have been made to represent each country's complete policies on lifelong learning in this regard, as far as was possible.

In view of the concerted effort needed to progress this initiative, it would seem strategically desirable to ensure that the various departments and ministries work co-operatively if not synergistically in similar undertakings. An attempt has been made in Ireland in this regard with the recent establishment of the National Adult Learning Council (NALC)¹³¹.

5.2 Right to Learn

Recent years have seen a major governmental thrust in several countries in the direction of lifelong learning. While comprehensive, primary and second level systems are in place in all the countries looked at, and most also have a well developed third level sector, 'out of school' provision is not so systematised.

It is recommended, therefore, that governments set targets for learning for their respective out of school population and that these are carefully monitored. It is best that such targets are set within a

¹³¹ <http://www.gov.ie/educ/press/press160102a.htm>

http://www.accs.ie/documents/new_april_2002/Nat_Adult_Learning_Council.htm

NALC has a specific remit to progress such issues as workplace learning, community education, an equality strategy and to establish an advisory group on the integration of people with physical and learning disabilities into adult education

broadly, and internationally agreed, right to learn declaration, which would recognise the significance of learning in underwriting and sustaining democratic institutions and strong economies. A Guarantee of Learning progresses the right to learn. The recently adopted Programme for Government in Ireland, ¹³² for instance, makes an explicit 'guarantee' to all citizens of complete second level education.

"Over the next five years we will progressively develop adult education services to a stage where we will offer a "Second-Chance Guarantee". Under the guarantee every person who left school without completing the junior-cycle at second level will be offered the chance to participate on an adult education course."

This is a highly significant new departure.

5.3 Finance

The overview has drawn attention to various models of financing lifelong learning. Arguably the key issue here is that of learning as a private/public good. A concern with learning as a public good would prioritise public funding on:

- Those who are socially/economically or educationally disadvantaged
- Those from whom a 'multiplier effect' of the education investment can be expected

In this regard, the advantages of concentrating education investment on mothers in terms of its positive spin-off for the education of children should be noted.

If governments are to guard against the regressive tendencies of participation in adult education in particular, investment must positively discriminate in favour of those who have benefited least from early life education. This means that not only must such students not be expected to pay fees for such courses, but they may need other financial rewards in order to reduce the opportunity costs of participation. The Back to Education Allowance, in operation in Ireland, is a good illustration of one such approach.

For those for whom fees may be less of a concern and/or for whom the returns on investment are likely to reside more in the private than in the public domain, there is less justification for government investment and a stronger case for the employer and/or participant to bear the cost of the programme. The review has instanced a number of useful models such as loans, individual learning accounts and training leave from work which have the potential for wider application.

5.4 Accessibility and Flexibility

The review has drawn attention to several examples of attempts to deal with barriers to participation by addressing the issue of access and flexible modes of delivery.

Generally a credentialist education system relies primarily on limiting access to courses in guaranteeing quality, and only secondarily on supervising the exit from such courses. A policy for widening access

¹³² An Agreed Programme for Government, Section 23: <http://www.irigov.ie/taoiseach/press/current/04-06-02a.htm>

would fundamentally shift the locus of quality control from the entry point to the exit point. It would also change the focus of assessment from standard, end of term, terminal examinations to a more flexible, less time specific and criteria referenced model. On the basis of the cases explored in this review, it would appear essential that policies for lifelong learning move in this direction at the supply side if generalised access is to be provided for.

Considerable progress is being made in many countries looked at in putting in place comprehensive credit transfer and progression arrangements within the overall education and training systems of each individual country, albeit this is less evident between countries. Such comprehensive, relatively seamless qualifications and accreditation frameworks are an essential element of a comprehensive lifelong learning system.

Flexible access criteria must also be reflected in flexible, more differentiated delivery systems. The expansion in self directed learning; the increasing utilisation of ICT in supporting distance and e learning and the increasing modularisation of provision were all in evidence in the countries looked at, and clearly illustrate the ever-widening modalities of participation in lifelong learning.

There may well be a particular case here for public/private partnerships in funding the articulation of courses for distance education delivery. The University for Industry in Britain, as well as some interesting Asian examples, most particularly Singapore and Malaysia, show the potential of national co-ordinated, centrally driven and broadly based distance learning initiatives undertaken by such partnerships.

5.5 Guidance and Counselling

Consistent with widely shared ideologies of lifelong learning, government policy should be underpinned by a commitment to supporting its individual citizens to take responsibility for their own learning. The provision of a comprehensive adult guidance and counselling service is an essential component of such a commitment. A service such as this has been developed in some of the countries looked at, e.g. the Local Learning Centres in Greece. This particular service is predicated on close community engagement and clearly sees its role as embracing a 'capacity building' dimension as well as one of pure information and counselling. The capacity building function of such a service is particularly important in contexts where motivation to participate may be low and where the returns on such participation may not be evident or are not the most pressing priority.

Surprisingly, the material reviewed paid little attention to the 'training of trainers' issue. Nonetheless, a number of official reports have cogently argued the case for the necessity for highly skilled educators in underpinning a comprehensive lifelong learning provision. This is particularly so, for instance, in the case of Ireland. The Government White Paper, Learning for Life (2000) ¹³³ proposes to:

- Provide an opportunity for the exchange of ideas and the sharing of good practice
- Provide a mechanism for new thinking and innovation in the field
- Enable practitioners to inform policy development
- Contribute to the development of solidarity and peer support amongst practitioners

¹³³ Government White Paper, Learning for Life (2000): <http://www.irigov.ie/educ/pdts/whitepaper.pdf>

In addition, educational institutions should consider themselves primarily as learning facilitators and not merely as repositories of established standardised knowledge. There is a perceived need for a paradigm shift in outlook from “education” to “learning”, within these institutions. This also calls for a reappraisal of teacher training with the appropriate emphasis on promoting reflective facilitated learning and a range of appropriate methodologies, with the ability to adapt curricula flexibly as needed.

Government ministries should counsel and encourage those they represent to adopt and adapt to the new paradigm of lifelong learning and to take the responsibility for their own learning. Furthermore, during the period of state compulsory education, learning facilitators should inculcate in their charges both a love of learning and a personal responsibility for the same and encourage these values throughout this period.

5.6 Inter-Culturalism

In a period of rapid globalisation and increasing patterns of population movement, the objective of inter-culturalism is less prominent than might have been expected. As recent world events have shown, the challenge of cultural co-existence, and the possibility of serious inter-cultural friction, are greatly increased by globalisation. It is recommended, therefore, that this issue be prioritised in lifelong learning policy at national and international levels.

Furthermore, with the advent of transnational provision of learning opportunities via the internet and other electronic arrangements, there is the growing concern at the possible convergence to a dominant monocultural point of view.

Moreover, as the process of individuation as well as self and community identity are linked to a consumer attitude to learning (whether content, process or finished product), consumers must be afforded appropriate consumer protection, while facility providers in the global market should be subject to the same producer obligations as obtain for other goods and services.