

Security Revisited: Enhancing Human Security through Lifelong Learning

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Abstract

This article reviews the current discussion on human security as an alternative approach for the understanding of national security with the emphasis on enhancing the quality of life of individuals, their collectives and communities. It also provides an overview of the changing role of lifelong learning as part of the educational policy instrument to help enhance human security. Apart from its intrinsic value for personal development and fulfilment, lifelong learning is a driving force to promote economic development, social cohesion and a better teaching/learning structure in Europe, East and Southeast Asia. In economic terms, it helps to deliver a better standard of living and productivity by giving people more opportunity to excel in their careers via constant skill and knowledge accumulation. In the social sphere, lifelong learning helps to transform both individuals and the societies in which they live to be more dignified, resourceful and coherent. In terms of teaching and learning itself, people have become the centre of learning and have been assured of equal access and adequate channels of learning. While the economic and social implications as well as teaching and learning structure are evident in countries where lifelong learning has been firmly established, such as those in Europe, Southeast Asian countries are now deploying lifelong learning to cope with the increasing aging population.

Keywords: human security, lifelong learning

Introduction

In the discussion of traditional security and development issues, one would often focus only on material security or military and economic prowess, without paying much attention to non-material factors such as the power of knowledge and the quality of human well-being within the nation. Entering the new millennium, many scholars and policy makers are starting to pose different questions with regard to security and development, such as whether military and economic strengths are the only factors contributing to future growth. Human security is seen as an alternative perspective from which to look at national security and countries' development, with the emphasis on such aspects as personal development, social inclusion and cohesion as well as the enhancement of people's dignity and so on.

Among different policy devices such as welfare, healthcare, economic or social policy to enhance human security, it is argued in this article that lifelong learning policy has quietly emerged in the realm of public policy as one of the educational instruments that can be used to promote personal, social and professional learning experience throughout people's lives. It is one of the important policy processes that focus on the accumulation of knowledge, by which it is believed

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to potentially enhance the quality of life of individuals, their collectives, communities, economies and societies. This article elaborates how lifelong learning has become a driving force for economic development, social cohesion and the transformation of learning structures in the contemporary nation states, especially in Europe, East and Southeast Asia.

The first part of the article discusses the key concepts of human security and lifelong learning-how it is viewed differently from the traditional mode of security and the conventional role of education. As for lifelong learning, concepts and definitions are drawn largely from the European experience, as this region's policy on lifelong learning is most concrete and far more advanced compared to other parts of the world.

The following section further examines the policy implications of lifelong learning on the qualitative aspects of human security, especially economic development, including how it has contributed to changes in a) expectations of workers in industrial sector, b) the role of industrial organisations such as trade unions in promoting self-education and c) the channels of learning through information and communication technology (ICT). The second section also looks at the social implications of lifelong learning policy and its roles as the prime mover for a) individual development and the creation of a learning culture, b) the promotion of social cohesion and c) the re-definition of social structure. In the third section, the policy implications of lifelong learning on teaching and learning methods will be discussed, along with the role of ICT in delivering the new learning experience. It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss how lifelong learning would be used to treat other negative effects such as internal conflicts, hunger, disease, crimes or other disruptions. Finally, this article provides a brief overview of the current stage of development of lifelong learning policy in Southeast Asia in light of its rapidly increasing aging population.

1. Human Security and Lifelong Learning: Key Concepts

1.1 Human Security Concept:

Some scholars in the area of development studies argue that the origin of what is known today as 'human security' can be traced back to the late 1960s or 1970s when the definition of security was broadened to include non-military aspects and the promotion of human development in less-developed countries. According to these scholars, today's earnest attempts among the international community to articulate the thriving concept of the 'human-centred' approach, which emphasises the fulfilment of such 'basic needs' of human development as employment generation, full access to education, greater equity in income distribution and poverty alleviation, is not something extraordinary (Busumtwi-Sam, 2002: 257-258). Contrary to such belief, the term has been coined and substantially developed by political scientists, politicians, policy makers and practitioners only in recent decades. Some countries have even ventured towards the establishment of Ministries of Social Development and Human Security, as in the case in Thailand.

As often cited by political scientists and government officials, the human security approach was initially introduced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its 1994

Human Development Report. It is clearly stated in the Report that 'human security' should not be equated only with 'human development' (UNDP, 1994: 23-24). The Report distributes the ideas outlining the integrative concept of human security to include the most two fundamental elements of today's popular phrases--'freedom from want' and 'freedom from fear'. Both terms address respectively the importance of safety from chronic threats such as hunger, disease and repression and the significance of the protection of people from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the pattern of their daily lives and self-development activities.

Although the concept is often criticised as expansive and vague because it encompasses everything from physical security to psychological wellbeing, subsequent developments on the concept of human security have been pursued along the UNDP line and have expanded to cover various aspects of the maintenance of peace and security (Paris, 2001: 88). Throughout the years, scholars from different theoretical and professional backgrounds have helped to extend and define the substantive core of human security. For example, Thakur contends that:

'Human security refers to the quality of life of the people of a society or polity. Anything which degrades their quality of life-demographic pressures, diminished access to stock or resources, and so on-is a security threat. Conversely, anything which can upgrade their quality of life-economic growth, improved access to resources, social and political empowerment, and so on-is an enhancement of human security' (Thakur, 1997: 53-54).

Thomas also suggests that:

'Human security describes a condition of existence in which basic material needs are met, and in which human dignity, including meaningful participation in the life of the community, can be realised...' (Thomas, 2001: 161-162)

It is therefore generally agreed that material sufficiency and physical survival are located at the core of human security. However, other qualitative aspects of security, including the achievement of human dignity, personal autonomy, control over one's life and the choice to participate in community activities, are equally important. In other words, the concept of human security encompasses non-material dimensions, in addition to material conditions, to form a qualitative whole.

The use of the term, particularly among policy makers, government officials and practitioners undertaking different missions in both inter-governmental organisations (IGOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), has contributed to a number of theoretical and policy implications for the understanding of state and individual security and how to respond in case of the lack thereof. It is still a matter of some dispute to what extent the newly launched human security approach could replace the existing notion of traditional security, which concerns primarily on the undivided territorial integrity or the protection of people from external physical threats. Despite the traditional view, it has always been suggested that the security consideration from a global perspective or 'common security', rather than from the angle of individual nations' territorial integrity, should be reflected. The most common move, as suggested by King and Murray, is to replace traditional state security with a combination of economic and social development in addition to the existing military security (King and Murray, 2001-2: 585-586; The Commission on Global Governance, 1995: 79).

However, the human security concept is not a mere economic or social extension of state security; nor it is developed around the concept of poverty or economic deprivation alone. Rather, it ultimately challenges the notion of 'state-centred' with a 'people-centred' security system, in which such chronic threats as internal conflicts, lack of education, hunger, disease, drugs, crime or any disruptions that may interfere with normal patterns of people's daily lives are prioritised as threats against national territory. In this sense, the human security concept precisely questions states' sense of duty to 'protect' people from 'internal threats' and to 'enhance', to use Thomas's categorisation above, the 'qualitative aspect' of security through the assurance of people's dignity, autonomy and creativity, especially through education, within their residing communities.

1.2 Lifelong Learning Concept

Similar to the concept of human security, lifelong learning is a term that means different things to different people. It could be discussed exclusively in terms of issues relating to adult learning or it could refer to anything from pre-school to post-retirement activities. It was not until the past decade that the call for a broad definition of lifelong learning among the European countries and key international organisations established a general consensus on what should be included in so-called 'lifelong learning' or 'lifelong education.' This attempt has also been echoed by international organisations and supra-national agencies such as the United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). At its core, as emphasised by the European Commission, lifelong learning encompasses the holistic approach to learning and is defined to include activities from pre-school to post-retirement in formal, non-formal and informal education (European Commission, 2001: 3).

The OECD defines lifelong learning as organised learning which is to take place over the whole lifespan and across the different main spheres that make up our lives, or as a life-wide learning system (OECD, 2009: 59). On the aspect of people's inclusion, lifelong learning has been promoted, especially by the UNESCO and its Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), to cover its agenda to provide quality education for all, throughout life. It is clearly stated in the Medium-Term Strategy (2008-2013) that UNESCO's various bodies and the UIL will work to create an environment that is conducive to lifelong learning and provide every citizen with access to a variety of forms of education and learning (Field, 2004: 12). As a major force in promoting global discussions of lifelong learning, UNESCO is a strong advocate for the idea that education should occur universally across the life span, and should not merely be formal education for a privileged few. In simple terms, promoting lifelong learning is a part of the agenda for advancing 'education for all' (UNESCO, 2009: 15-17)

Education, lifelong learning in particular, has become one of the major interests among those involved in the area of human security and human development. It is argued in this paper that lifelong learning has become a driving force for economic development and social cohesion and a factor contributing to changes in teaching and learning methods. In economic terms, it helps to deliver a better standard of living and productivity by giving people more opportunity to excel in their careers via constant skill and knowledge accumulation. In its social aspect, lifelong learning helps to transform both individuals and the societies in which they live to be more

dignified, resourceful and coherent. In terms of teaching and learning itself, people have become the centre of learning and have been assured of equal access and adequate channels of learning.

As regards the objectives of promoting lifelong learning, it varies from country to country and also from region to region. According to the European Union, lifelong learning is promoted with three key objectives of learning to centre on active citizens, personal fulfilment and social cohesion, and employability or adaptability. These objectives are to address the current stage of economic and social transformation into a so-called knowledge-based society. In some other countries, lifelong learning is promoted with the aim to deal with either the force of globalisation or the changing economic or social structure. In other cases, as a result of the rapid turn toward an aging society, in Japan and countries in Asia such as Korea and Thailand, for example, lifelong learning is promoted to tackle the problem and to draw on the potential of the workforce in their post-retirement stage. In some countries like the United Kingdom (UK), lifelong learning is more than an economic investment but also a way in which cultural heritage and the identity of communities can be preserved through self-induced learning processes. The details of these implications will be discussed further in the following section.

Lifelong learning has become one of the policy spotlights since the 1970s. This has led to the inclusion of several actors and players in the promotion of lifelong learning in each country. The main actors involved in promoting lifelong learning consist mainly of: international organisations, the government sector, networks of the private sector and communities, and most important of all, the learners themselves. As mentioned above, international and supranational organisations, including UNESCO, ILO, OECD and the European Union, have been the main advocates for the creation and development of coherent and comprehensive strategies for lifelong learning. This also includes the perpetual integration of lifelong learning into a traditional and formal learning structure. In the European Union, the main strategy is to transform the formal education systems to a more flexible venue for individual learning pathways, which respond to people's needs and interests throughout their lives (European Commission, 2001: 4).

The OECD and UNESCO are the two most important agents contributing to the raising of awareness at the governmental level about the importance of investment in people through lifelong learning. The OECD has disseminated policy research and recommendations by emphasising four main features of lifelong learning. Firstly, the OECD proposes that lifelong learning must be a systemic approach which views the demands for and the supply of learning opportunities as part of a connected system covering the whole lifespan and through all forms of learning. Secondly, lifelong learning should focus on learners. This has implied the shift from teaching arrangements to learning experiences. Thirdly, the method to motivate learners to learn in a self-paced and self-directed way is extremely important. Finally, multiple objectives of lifelong education must revolve around the needs to create personal and knowledge development and to address economic, social and cultural objectives (OECD, 2009: 60).

As for the UNESCO, its main organ—the UIL—is the main agent to advance the lifelong learning agenda through advocacy, research, capacity building and networking. Its main functions are to encourage national governments to improve education development policies with lifelong learning perspective, conduct research addressing the synergy between non-formal and formal education practices, develop frameworks and tools to promote and institutionalise

lifelong learning and finally to establish more informed practitioner networks (UNESCO, 2009: 14). In 2005, the ILO also adopted its new instrument for resource development with a strong focus on education, training and lifelong learning, called 'Recommendation 195', as part of an integrated set of policies for economic growth and employability. The ILO largely focuses on the development of 'competencies' and 'qualifications'. While the former covers the knowledge, skills and know-how applied in a specific context, the latter means a formal expression of the professional abilities of workers, which are to be recognised at both national and international or sector levels (ILO, 2006: 40).

The Government sector plays an important part in investing time and money in lifelong learning. In Europe, member states are called to increase their investment and funding in education and training. While the OECD has promoted its flagship 'Lifelong Learning for All' programme, national governments in the UK, Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden, Ireland and Denmark have also produced the same national lifelong learning plans (Longworth, 2003: 9). Most importantly, governments are urged to transform the traditional learning focus to be more on 'new' basic skills and to ensure that lifelong education is accessible to all citizens at all stages of life and in all forms of education. Although it is difficult to generalise the policy towards lifelong learning and the role of the government in each country, it is not too much to assert that national governments are to have a well-coordinated policy to integrate lifelong learning into the existing national education structure. National governments must also provide facilities such as integrated IT systems or programmes that increase access and opportunities for learning, as well as adequate and transparent financial resources. This also includes the established mechanism between the government, the education sector and the private sector to enable the workplace to become another learning arena and to increase private sector spending on education, especially the workplace-based programmes. The network of the private sector and the support of learning communities or centres are also equally important, as this is the main factor bringing learning and learners together (European Commission, 2001: 5).

Finally, the most vital players, who are integral to the sustainability of lifelong learning, are the learners themselves. To achieve that end, a culture of learning that emphasises self-paced and self-directing learning experiences can materialise only if there are increased learning opportunities, stimulating demand as well as a decent environment for learning. Apart from cultivating a culture of learning among the populace, learning activities, both formal/informal and non-formal, must be learner-centred and focus on developing learners' competence and not only on acquiring knowledge. In other words, the new integrated system of lifelong and traditional learning must truly address the needs of learners.

2. Economic, Social and Structural Implications of Lifelong Learning

2.1 Lifelong Learning and Economic Implications

The urge to respond to the force of globalisation and the need to stay competitive has compelled many countries to shift their emphasis towards investment on knowledge creation, transmission and dissemination. Western countries, mostly Europe and Scandinavian countries, are convinced that the only sustainable source of national growth is the promotion of economic activities through the use of a knowledgeable workforce. The economic dimension of lifelong learning

policy, then, has become the question of how to increase the employability and adaptability of citizens. This is not only addressed through formal and traditional education. It is also reiterated in policy discussions and statements that the most important aspect of economic development and sustainability is the extent to which citizens are able to acquire new knowledge and competencies necessary to add value to their existing skills in order to advance their careers throughout their lives. Lifelong learning, as an agenda to serve economic growth and the sustainability of the knowledge-based economy, has contributed to the changes in mainstream learning and economic activities, including: a) the expectations of workers in the industrial sector; b) the involvement of industrial organisations such as trade unions to promote self-education; and c) the use of ICTs and creativity in promoting productivity.

a) The expectations of workers in the industrial sector

The challenges of the knowledge-based economy nowadays include, for example, the ability of workers to reduce knowledge gaps by focusing on 're-skilling', 'training' and 'adapting' to new knowledge and innovations. In Europe, this vision has been repeatedly echoed since the launch of the Lisbon Strategy in 2000, which was designed to promote competitiveness and dynamics within the European economy through the offering of learning opportunities to individual citizens at any stage of life. In other words, Europe is trying to use education and training systems to build up its citizens' capacity to adapt to the demands of the knowledge society and to the need for an improved level and quality of employment (Holford, 2008: 3).

Among industrialised countries like Europe, changes to the concept of industrial work have been evident. In the knowledge-based economy, workers are not only expected to perform routine and constant tasks. Workers in the rapidly changing economic environment are also expected to acquire new skills. As pointed out in a World Bank Report, the industrial sector nowadays can no longer rely solely on new graduates or new labour market entrants as the primary source of new skills and knowledge. Instead, it needs workers who are willing and able to brush up their skills and competences throughout their careers (World Bank, 2003: xviii).

b) The involvement of industrial organisations to promote self-education

Millions of workers nowadays have been making use of industrial organisations such as trade unions to further their education. The general patterns of the involvement of trade unions in providing education, especially lifelong learning, can be seen in several forms. Trade unions might engage in offering knowledge and skills necessary for workers to survive in their industrial environment, as seen in most industrial countries. In other parts of the world where there are still political complications, lifelong learning could be provided for the workforce just to help them survive, challenge the existing regimes or even defend their rights, as in the case of post-colonial African or post-communist countries (Forrester 2005: 963).

Despite several patterns of industrial organisations' engagement in providing lifelong learning for workers, the major education-related activity of industrial organisations in most industrial countries is the strengthening of skills and competencies of the workforce through the provision of courses or other mobilizing activities. Many industrial countries are now discussing how to eradicate low skills and increase intermediate and higher skills levels by engaging the active roles of the trade unions. These principles include, for example: a) the shared responsibility of employers, individuals and the government in investing in people; b) the focus on

economically valuable skills that are portable and mobile in the labour market for individuals and employers; c) demand-led skills that meet the needs of individuals and employers; and d) the ability to adapt and respond to the future market needs (Jarvis, 2008: 140-148).

c) The use of ICT and creativity to promote productivity

The new knowledge-based economy and the evolving production process do require different types of labour. In most cases, wage and production activities have direct correlation with the ability to use ICTs among the workforce. It is argued that education that is based on the use and training of ICTs usually creates so-called 'learning effects' by which productivity gains will be significantly increased. Skilled workers with knowledge of ICTs are usually at an advantage and in demand, especially in the industrial sector. This is specifically happening in most middle-income countries, such as Malaysia and India (World Bank, 2003: 12). Lifelong learning comes to centre stage by giving learners more opportunities to acquire knowledge through different ICT channels, especially at their own pace, in addition to the traditional learning system. In Singapore, for example, the 'Learning Schools, Thinking Nation' framework was designed to encourage and prepare students to be more equipped with creativity and the skills necessary to stay relevant in the knowledge-based society. The framework relies on such skills as: focusing, information gathering, remembering, organising, analysing, generating, integrating and evaluating (Ministry of Education, Singapore, 2005).

2.2 Lifelong Learning and Social Implications

The excessive emphasis on the use of lifelong learning to promote economic interests is balanced by attention to the impacts of lifelong learning on social and personal development. Europe, for example, has re-prioritised this underlying problem by providing a space for the 'social agenda' in the EU lifelong learning policy (LLP). Overall, the issues of the social dimension of lifelong learning can be divided into discussion about: a) the driving force for individual development and the creation of a learning culture; b) tools to promote social cohesion and solidarity; and c) tools to redefine the social structure.

a) The driving force for individual development and the creation of a learning culture

Learning is essentially a driving force in human living because it is one of the means by which people become themselves and which make them truly human. In this sense, lifelong learning can be seen as a private and personal matter in which the educational discourse gives meaning of life and spirit to the whole human being (Jarvis, 2008: 14). In some countries, like the UK and Japan, lifelong learning is especially emphasised in the context of 'informal and adult learning'. Therefore, it is taken up for its own intrinsic value. In Japan, the concept of lifelong learning was introduced to stress the importance of adult education in the changing society and to lay emphasis on individuals as agents of their own learning. Lifelong learning in Japan is viewed as a means to preserve and foster Japanese cultural practices that have diminished in importance with growing modernisation. Therefore, learning activities are usually provided through community education centres or *Kominkan*. (Young and Rosenberg, 2006: 79).

This model, which places a lot of emphasis on local learning centres, is also adopted worldwide. The same method is also applied in the UK, France, Korea, and Thailand and so on, with a lot

of community networks and learning societies providing venues for private learning. Taking the UK, for example, these learning organisations, such as the Museums Association and the Open University, are committed to creating 'open spaces' and establishing a culture of learning in which learning is promoted for its own sake and provided for people to design their own self-organised learning processes (DIUS, 2008: 157-160 and DIUS, 2009: 6-7).

b) A tool to promote social cohesion and solidarity

Lifelong learning does not only benefit individual development but also the progress of social cohesion and solidarity, especially at the regional level. This is the case in Europe, where economic aims began to be complemented by more integrated social and cultural objectives (Holford, 2008: 2). Lifelong learning has gained a spotlight position in the overall higher education reforms in Europe because it imposes a challenge to both the governments and higher education institutions HEIs to be more open in providing courses for students and adults at later stages in life. The universities in Europe are now very active in taking part in several flagship programmes such as Erasmus, Erasmus Mondus, Grundtvig and Jean Monnet to promote advanced knowledge societies, with sustainable levels of enrolment from all sections of the population, not only students from schools.

The inter-governmental process to promote a more structured lifelong learning programme (LLP) in Europe was initiated in 2007 and is due to run until 2013, aiming to foster interaction, cooperation and mobility as well as increased access and equity to higher education activities, from basic to post-university education. Most importantly, the trans-European dimensions of these programmes are the key contributions to building regional identity and citizenship. To a large extent, LLP has been perceived as the crucial link to fill the void separating the traditional system of education, the community and the labour market. The programme is believed to be the tool to connect people in the region through education at various stages of life.

c) A tool to re-define social structure

Lifelong learning is also seen as the catalyst for the process of redefining social structure by transforming experience into knowledge and skills. Through this process, individuals can improve their social status, especially less opportune adults and the elderly. This is particularly the case in countries experiencing rapid expansion of their elderly population. Lifelong learning has become an instrument to transform economic and educational systems that favour the young and disadvantage the old by restricting their opportunities to maintain and update their skills, creating systems that are open for all.

In Japan and the US, where the issue of an aging population is rather serious, there have been increasing calls for greater diversity of learning opportunities for adults and the elderly. In Japan, for example, three types of education for the elderly-education for the elderly; education about the elderly and education by the elderly-are usually provided by the local community. In the US, educational programmes targeted older adults are also provided by host organisations at the local level, and by community colleges and universities (Young and Rosenberg, 2006: 79-80).

2.3 Lifelong Learning and Structural Implications

Lifelong learning is also a result of a major shift in teaching and learning structure. Nowadays, the emphasis is placed on 'competence' rather than 'knowledge', 'learning' instead of 'teaching' and 'learner-centred' rather than 'teacher-centred' approaches. The importance of the innovative pedagogy and mode of learning are therefore focal points of the contemporary learning experience. New teaching and learning methods within the context of lifelong learning directly challenge the traditional ways of teaching and learning. Through the promotion of lifelong learning, learners can organise their own learning agendas and design their own settings, whether project-oriented or work-oriented, anywhere from community centres to their own living rooms. The responsibilities of teachers, trainers and facilitators are also considerably changed, as these actors are required to develop their own teaching methods.

ICT comes into play in this new learning alternative. Countries promoting lifelong learning also campaign for ICT-based learning systems. It is generally recognised in the European and East Asian countries that ICT-supported learning offers great potential for rethinking and redesigning learning processes. Such programmes as the eLearning initiative and the eLearning Action Plan address a number of issues regarding the efforts to adapt education and training systems to the information society. Europe has even developed ICT-based learning with a European dimension through the setting up of transitional virtual study circles (European Commission, 2001: 23-25). Other examples of technology-based lifelong learning programmes are ELNET (Educators' Learning Network) and the University of the Air launched in Japan. These programmes are aimed at bringing lifelong learning to a wider audience and both use satellite communications to transmit open lectures from universities to local public halls across the country (Young and Rosenberg, 2006: 79).

3. Lifelong learning in Southeast Asia and the Aging Population

Similar to other Asian countries, Southeast Asia is now facing challenges in trying to stay relevant in the knowledge-based economy and to cope with the inevitable aging society. The latter problem has become the dominant factor signalling governments in Asia to consider the way in which their economies and societies could sustain growth rates given the aging population. All over the region, the number of people above 65 is estimated to increase considerably by 2050. According to statistics provided by the United Nation, Asia had about 206 million people in this age group at the start of the 21st century. This number will be almost quadrupled in 50 years. It is estimated that in 2050, Asia will have about 857 million people belonging to the 'aged' group.

An aging population and a declining birth rate are not problematic only in East Asian societies, but also in countries in Southeast Asia. In 2000, about 24 million people were over 65. This number is estimated to reach the 125 million mark in 2050 (Jaijagcome, 2008: 11). However, research from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) suggests that while the demographic shift is more evident in developed countries like Japan, Hong Kong, China and Singapore, many developing countries in the region are aging at an even faster pace (ADB, 2009: 1). With the increasing aging population, the workforce will be diminished and, hence, productivity will

decline. Acknowledging that the senior population will finally be one of the main sectors of the workforce in the future, many countries are therefore committed to a more concrete lifelong learning policy to enhance their skills and to encourage the elderly to remain in the workforce, in addition to other public programmes such as healthcare or pension systems.

In Singapore, for example, lifelong learning policy is constructed to enhance employability. Singapore's lifelong and adult education policies are aimed at raising the skill levels of the workforce, building the capacity of organisations to cope with changes and preparing active citizens for the globalised community. In 1999, Singapore has launched a comprehensive plan called 'Manpower 21' for the development of workforce capabilities in the knowledge age. The plan aims to develop a globally competitive workforce to gear Singapore into a knowledge-based economy. The plan has been accompanied by the 'Singapore 21 Vision', which has served to rally public, private and people collaboration in training and development, especially in the areas of developing communication and thinking skills among adults and manpower (Onn, n.d.: 4). Singapore is one such example where the government sector is actively generating awareness among the public about the significance of lifelong learning for the economy and showcasing the diversity of learning opportunities.

Malaysia shares the same concern about the relevance of the education system in the rapid economic and social change. The country has specifically emphasised the importance of human resource development through the reform of higher education, the restructuring of formal and non-formal education and the integration of lifelong learning systems. Malaysia has made it clear in its plan to achieve the status of a developed country by 2020 that the skills and knowledge of human resources must be learned and re-learned on an ongoing basis throughout life. In materialising this vision, Malaysia is determined to emphasise one of the development strategies to equip its workforce with training in the latest technological and industrial processes as well as retraining and upgrading the skills of the present workforce through lifelong learning and the restructuring of basic education and delivery methods to focus on learners at the level of higher education (Leong, 1997: 130-131).

In the Philippines, although there is no national vision for lifelong learning, it is usually referred to as continuing education, adult education, extension work and company or workplace training in various settings. Without a comprehensive policy towards lifelong learning, three main government agencies in the Philippines have designed its policy framework to accommodate lifelong learning. These are the Technical Education and Skill Development Authority (TESDA) in terms of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET), the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in terms of Distance Education and the Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation Program (ETTEAP) in terms of an accreditation and educational equivalency scheme that recognises the knowledge, skills, and prior learning obtained by individuals from non-formal and informal educational experiences (Macaranas, 2007: 5-6). Discussion about the development of a comprehensive lifelong learning programme has been going on since 2007 to establish the Coordinating Council for Lifelong Learning in the Philippines and to reform several areas ranging from institutional foundations to resource mobilisation, learning to learn skills, collaborations among various stakeholders, recognition of all forms of learning and effective lifelong learning policy delivery.

Thailand is another country in Southeast Asia that has given priority to lifelong learning through adult and non-formal education. The system provides opportunities for the so-called 'out-of-school' population to re-enter the education system from primary to secondary and vocational levels and also to re-skill for the benefit of career development. Under the National Education Act of B.E. 2542 (1999) and the Promotion of Non-Formal and Informal Education Act, B.E. 2551 (2008), lifelong learning in Thailand has been focused on key strategic areas to develop a range of life skills through workplace and community learning centres as well as to promote the joint sharing of resources with the formal school sector. Informal education is also emphasised as one of the strategies to develop a learning society in Thailand. The promotion of lifelong learning through an informal education system is also enhanced by educational television and radio programmes, which are broadcast nationwide through satellite transmitted channels under the Royal Sponsored Project and the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education, Thailand, 2008: 4). Lifelong learning in Thailand has been implemented through several programmes by government agencies and community learning centres. Some government agencies, such as the Office of the Prime Minister and the Department of Labour's Skill Development, Ministry of Labour, have been the main advocates for the programme called '*Ton Kla Archeep*' (budding stage for career development) which focuses on strengthening the workforce by upgrading their professional skills through various educational activities and trainings.

Conclusion

It has been commonly agreed by most scholars and policy makers that lifelong learning in the 21st century encompasses the holistic idea of learning to include activities from pre-school to post-retirement in formal, non-formal and informal education. Apart from its own intrinsic value for enhancing human security and self development, lifelong learning has been perceived as a tool to deal with the challenges of globalisation, as it helps to ripen the potential of the workforce, build up social cohesion and lengthen the work-span of aging population. The government sector, international agencies and the industrial sector, as well as local organisations, are the main players promoting the growth of lifelong learning. Many countries, especially European and Scandinavian ones, have promoted 'lifelong learning for all' as their flagship policies. In some other countries, the industrial sector and local communities are the key players raising awareness among the workforce and citizens for active knowledge accumulation. These movements to promote lifelong learning have gained momentum around the world over the past decade. The issue of the aging population, which is progressing at a soaring speed in many countries, calls for the establishment and enhancement the system of lifelong learning.

In countries where lifelong learning has been firmly founded, it has been considered as one of the national strategies to promote economic development and social cohesion as well as contributing to the change in teaching and learning structures in various ways. In economic terms, the expectation of and on workers has changed as this generation of the workforce is trying to 're-skill' themselves, 'acquire' new knowledge and innovation and also to 'adapt' to competency-based career development. Organisations in the industrial sector also play a much more important role in supporting this knowledge acquisition and development as well as integrating ICT to increase productivity. With the lifelong learning system, the workforce is expected to be well-rounded in their knowledge and working approach. Although it is seen as

subordinate to economic reasons, many countries have begun to promote lifelong learning for social cohesion and solidarity.

Lifelong learning is also seen as the driving force for individual development and the creation of a learning culture, and to a lesser extent, a force for rearranging social structure. In this case, lifelong learning helps to create the process of transforming experience into knowledge and skills and, therefore, is essential for individual growth and development. To put it simply, lifelong learning is a driving force for professional continuing education that might result in a better social status or help to strengthen personal dignity. In terms of teaching and learning implications, new innovative pedagogy which centres on 'learners' rather than 'teachers', 'learning' rather than 'teaching' and 'competencies' rather than 'knowledge or information' is the focal point of contemporary learning experience and directly challenges the traditional way of teaching and learning.

While lifelong learning in Europe and some other developed countries in East Asia, such as Japan, has been well established as part of the culture, lifelong learning in Southeast Asia is a policy manoeuvre to tackle the transition into the knowledge-based economy and the aging society. Similar to other advanced countries, lifelong learning in Southeast Asia is launched to enhance employability by raising the skill levels of workforce and building capacities of organisations to cope with changes and prepare active citizens for the globalised community. Some countries, such as Singapore and Thailand, have comprehensive strategies to raise awareness and promote lifelong learning among their populations, ranging from the release of national visions and plans to the launch of activities through government agencies in both regular non-formal and informal learning programmes or special programmes for new graduates and the employed workforce by certain ministries. To counter the trend of low birth rate and the aging population, lifelong learning seems to be one of the most effective instruments to ensure the sustainability and employability of the national workforce.

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