

Foreword



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‘Learning for Development’ is the overarching theme of the Commonwealth of Learning’s work. The recent *Education for All, Global Monitoring Report 2013* also emphasizes the centrality of teaching and learning for development. Increasingly, development agencies are beginning to recognize that all learning must contribute to development outcomes. Similarly, universities, educational and research institutions, civil society organizations and the private sector have, in their own ways, gained the knowledge and experience of linking learning to development. There is a need to share this vast body of knowledge and experience with the wider community of policy-makers and practitioners.

The *Journal of Learning for Development (JL4D)* will provide the platform for the publication of research with a focus on innovation in learning and its contribution to development. The focus is on applied research in development contexts that has direct relevance to practice. This includes interventions that change social and/or economic relations, especially in terms of improving equity, addressing poverty and unemployment.

Development is a complex phenomenon. Amartya Sen points out that “the process of economic development has to be concerned with what people can or cannot do, e.g., whether they can live long, escape avoidable morbidity, be well-nourished.... It has to do, in Marx’s words with, replacing the domination of circumstances and chances over individuals by the domination of individuals over chances and circumstances’ (1983: 754). Development includes not just economic growth but also improvement in human welfare, quality of life and social well-being. Development becomes sustainable when it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The ‘learning for development’ approach focuses on the role of education and learning and how it adds value to the development process. Prof. Amartya Sen proposes the capability approach, which helps us to see that learning and acquiring skills are not an end in themselves but steps that help individuals and societies achieve development outcomes. This approach encourages us to think beyond outputs, such as acquiring a degree, to outcomes—how this degree will lead to a better quality of life. It also shifts the focus from developing capacity to capability and to the question, now that we have the capacity, What will we do with it? We develop skills or what Prof. Sen calls ‘functionings’—How can these enable us to overcome the constraints of our daily existence and make a change for the better?

What are the capabilities that educational institutions must impart? Walker investigated the capabilities that girls in school in South Africa thought important and came up with three: personal autonomy and independence of thought; ability to enter the world of work and an identity and a voice that would get respect and recognition.

This is what we mean by learning for development. We believe that giving people the opportunity to learn increases their freedoms ‘to be and to do’ and helps accelerate progress towards achieving the international development goals and the Commonwealth values of peace, equality, democracy and good governance.

This journal will showcase the practical dimension of how learning for development works and will provide opportunities for the publication of academic research, as well as case studies and commentary on issues and ideas on the relationship between learning and development. The journal will try to engage a broad audience of researchers, scholars and practitioners and will support and encourage contributors starting their careers, as well as to publish the work of established and senior scholars from the Commonwealth and beyond.

Professor Alan Tait of the Open University, UK is the Editor-in-Chief, and Dr. Mark Bullen, Education Specialist for eLearning at COL, is Associate Editor. Both have a long experience of editing journals and are well-known names in the field. Eminent academics and practitioners from Africa, the Caribbean, the Pacific and Asia have agreed to serve as regional editors and will help identify potential contributions and provide overall guidance. In addition, an Editorial Board with 19 outstanding members will help to set the editorial direction of the journal.

In short, *JL4D*, an open access journal, freely available online, is a collaborative venture meant to stimulate dialogue and discussion about learning for development, an area of interest for all us. I look forward to your active participation and support.

References

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