Achieving Lifelong Learning in the Digital Age: the role of Open Universities

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The Commonwealth

54 developed and developing nations around the world
To help Commonwealth governments and institutions use technologies to improve and expand access to education and training
Plan

- Understanding Lifelong Learning
- Where are we?
- Digital Age: COL experience
- Role of Open Universities
Understanding Lifelong Learning
From Lifelong ‘Education’
 to Lifelong ‘Learning’

Holistic approach to education not limited to age or socio-economic groups
Edgar Faure Report

Learning throughout life
Learning to know; learning to do, learning to be; learning to live together
Delors Report, UNESCO
LIFELONG AND LIFEWIDE LEARNING

9.25%

18.5%

7.7%

5.1%

0-5 K  GR 1-12  UG GRAD  WORK  RETIREMENT

FORMAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

INFORMAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Source: LIFE Center: Stevens, R. Bransford, J. & Stevens, A., 2005
When?
Life phases: from cradle to grave; life-wide

How?
Modality of delivery: formal, non-formal, informal

What?
Learning domains: personal, social, cultural, developmental

Source: UIL, 2014, p. 12
Lifelong Learning essential for SDGs

GOAL 4

ENSURE INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE QUALITY EDUCATION AND PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS
More at sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgsproposal
Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

• Where is Lifelong Learning in the targets and indicators?
• What are the mechanisms for integrating formal, non-formal and informal learning?
• More focus on didactic approaches and formal education

Source: https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/follow-money-tracking-education-spending-reinforce-accountability
What truly separates developed from less developed countries is not just a gap in resources or output but a gap in knowledge….”

National development (by 2030)

- 220 million Chinese may need to transition between occupations
- Demand for physical, manual cognitive skills could fall by 18-11%
- Demand for social, emotional, technological skills could rise by 18-51%
- Need to help 331 million migrant workers

Source: ‘Reskilling China: Transforming the world’s largest workforce into lifelong learners’ (2021) McKinsey Global Institute
Where are we?
Lifelong Learning in 3 countries
Australia

**Aim:** Develop skills, upskill and reskill citizens for a dynamic economy

**Focus:** Strong economic and industrial orientation

**Programmes/Mechanisms:**
- National Foundation Skills Strategy (for adults)
- Open Access College

**Challenges:** No comprehensive national policy
Good Practice: AQF & Recognition of Prior Learning

• The AQF a national framework for formal and vocational education and training
• Includes Recognition of Prior Learning
• Review of AQF in 2019 recognized that credit recognition of micro-credentials is a preferred way for promoting lifelong learning
Singapore

**Aim:** To build a competitive economy by investing in Singaporeans to develop their fullest potential throughout life

**Focus:** Skilling and reskilling the workforce

**Programmes/Mechanisms:**
- Government subsidies on training
- Support for career guidance, job searches, placements

**Challenges:** Lack of ownership of government schemes by employers
Good Practice: Incentivising Lifelong Learning

- **S$1 billion**
  - Annual SkillsFuture funding per year from 2015-2020

- **S$500**
  - Initial credit per citizen to be used for agency-approved courses

- **90%**
  - Subsidy for training costs of Singaporeans aged 40+
Aim: To contribute to economic growth and address inequity resulting from apartheid

Focus: Skills development and learner mobility

Programmes/Mechanisms:
- National Policy and Strategy
- NQF
- Khetha: career advice portal

Challenges:
Tension between learning for social equality vs. economic growth
Good Practice: Open & Distance Learning

“to meet the challenge of lifelong learning successfully, we need to reorganize the delivery of education and training within an open learning framework.”

African National Congress, 1995: 77
To sum up…

• Countries develop policies/strategies within a visionary framework, but adopt a utilitarian approach
• Strategies: QF, Incentives, ODL
• Lifelong learning is understood differently in different contexts
• More emphasis on formal education and training
• Governments play an active role
• Need for coordination between different ministries and stakeholders
Digital Age:
COL Experience
Technology: Trends and Practices

- Artificial intelligence
- Blended and hybrid course models
- Learning analytics
- Micro-credentialing
- Open educational resources
- Quality online learning

Rise of self-directed learning: boost for Lifelong Learning

- Learning to learn online
- Creating an ecosystem for lifelong learning
- Providing just-in-time training for livelihoods

| Source: https://www.classcentral.com/report/the-second-year-of-the-mooc/ |
|---|---|---|---|
| New Registered Users | 2019 | 2020 | Total |
| coursera | 8M | 31M | 76M |
| edX | 5M | 10M | 35M |
| Future Learn | 1.3M | 5M | 15M |
| class central | 350k | 800k | 2.3M |
WORKFORCE
Recovery Programme

Skilling and re-skilling
MOOC4D

Online learning (agMOOCs) - Food and Agriculture sector underserved.
A consortium conceptualised by COL, supported by NPTEL
Every Rs1 invested in Lifelong Learning project resulted in Rs 9 worth of income and assets.

Source: http://oasis.col.org/bitstream/handle/11599/214/InvestmentsCommercialBanks_Rural.pdf?sequence=1
Using Aptus for Financial Literacy

Low-cost device that allows educators and learners to connect to digital learning platforms and content without the need for grid electricity or Internet access.
Reaching the Bottom Billion

• Use technologies that are appropriate and affordable
• Content designed for delivery in low bandwidth situations
• Open Content in local languages ie. OER
• Social media integration
• Online peer-to-peer interactions supplemented with blended approaches
Role of Open Universities
“To widen **access** to **quality** education and provide **lifelong learning** opportunities by leveraging on technology...providing a conducive...learning environment at ...**affordable cost**”

Source: www.oum.edu.my
Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University aims to be a world-class open university utilizing a distance education system to provide lifelong learning for all.
“To provide lifelong learning opportunities through Open, Distance and Flexible Education with a commitment to excellence in teaching and research”
Smart learning:
• Community Education
• Senior Education
• Club Activities

“Build a big scene for community education in the future, Zhejiang Open University launches “Zhe Xuetong”

Source: Zhejiang Daily; Authors Ji Yuya, Xia Xianwei; Editor: Zheng Haiyun
Open Universities in Lifelong Learning

- **Pedagogy** (Formal)
  - Teacher Guided
  - Structured Learning

- **Andragogy** (Non-Formal)
  - Teacher facilitated Self-Directed Learning

- **Heutagogy** (Informal)
  - Learner’s Self-Determined Learning

- MORE
- LESS
- NONE
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formal</strong></td>
<td>- Teacher Led</td>
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<td>- Sequential</td>
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<td>- Evaluated</td>
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<td><strong>Informal</strong></td>
<td>- Learner led</td>
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<td><strong>Non-Formal</strong></td>
<td>- Structured</td>
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<td>- Not usually evaluated</td>
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Integrate formal, informal and non-formal learning
Lifelong Learning: Integrate three Approaches

Heutagogy in Practice

- Nursing, engineering and education professions have found heutagogy to be a credible response to the critical issues that the learners are faced with.
- The University of Western Sydney has implemented the heutagogical approach in its teacher education programme.
- Heutagogical approach in three HEIs in the UK have led to reflective learning with learners demonstrating capacity and capability.
Focus on the social justice agenda

Can Open Universities reach them with formal structured education alone?

- More than 6 workers among 10 and 4 enterprises among 5 in the world operate in the informal economy…

- Informal sector contributes 41% of the GDP globally

- Agricultural sector alone employs more than a billion people, representing a third of all workers worldwide
  Source: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14480220.2019.1629722
Ideal Approach towards Lifelong Learning

• Move beyond acquiring skills and competencies and focus on Transformative Learning
• Not just adapting to changing circumstances but acquiring ability to change circumstances
Outcomes in Lifelong Learning

**Typical Approach**
- Acquisition of Skills and Competencies
- Employability and Entrepreneurship

**Transformative Approach**
- Empowerment
- Environmental Conservation
- Social Cohesion/Peace
Four levers for transformation

Digital technologies
Engaging, multi-channel hybrid model
>900m reached through tech-enabled learning platforms and more than 2m people deliver microcurricula

Collaborative ecosystem
Partnerships among educators, employers, and government
300,000 school-industry partnerships

Enhanced vocational track
Competitive and flexible pathways for students and adults, higher quality teachers
>80% of teachers have industry experience

Shift in mindset and incentives
Culture of lifelong learning for individuals and employers
All eligible for skills development subsidy

Implementing a new system needs a national leading group, local delivery units, and deeper engagement from employers, including those in the private sector

Governments

- Implement and monitor lifelong learning policies
- Develop accreditation and recognition frameworks
- Promote inclusive lifelong learning
- Strengthen ICT infrastructure and governance
- Provide incentives for lifelong learning
Open Universities must…

- Provide seamless pathways between formal, non-formal, informal learning
- Integrate pedagogy, andragogy and heutagogy
- Adopt flexible recognition and credentialing
- Mainstream the use of OER
Thank you