

# LIFELONG LEARNING IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

ILO Regional Tripartite Meeting  
Bangkok, Thailand 8–10 December 2003



International Labour Office

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## Preface

The issue of lifelong learning for all has become increasingly important in Asia and the Pacific, as globalization and economic integration are making learning and training policies even more important. It is now widely recognized that a well-trained work force is the key to provide firms with a competitive edge. There is a clear need to equip workers with higher and different skills to enable them to adapt to accelerating technical and market changes. There is, however, a pressing need to separate rhetoric from reality in this challenge. While much has been said about lifelong learning for all, the concept is still a long way from being a reality for most workers. This report examines some of the critical elements related to this challenge.

The main driver behind the move towards lifelong learning is the increasing pace of economic change, in technologies, in product and labour markets, and the presumed increase in the rate of depreciation of knowledge and skills as training systems struggle to keep pace. In this context, the traditional view of initial education and vocational training, as providing most or all of the skills required for an entire lifetime, has become obsolete. In its place, there is a need for individuals to upgrade their skills on a continuous or lifelong basis. There is an associated need for retraining to help workers deal with technical change, promotion and redundancy. A feature of emerging approaches to lifelong learning is the importance attached to learning and skills acquisition that occurs outside formal educational and training institutions. A major challenge, however, is to develop and extend these new approaches to lifelong learning to make it a reality for all. Instead of restricting lifelong learning to a small, elite group, there is now an expectation that it should involve the entire adult population. For this to occur, new alliances and forms of collaboration between different institutions and the social partners will be required.

This report examines the international trends and policy reforms in lifelong learning, and discusses how these experiences relate to the approaches used in Asia and the Pacific. The report then focuses on two major components of lifelong learning systems: recognition of an individual's skills and prior learning to facilitate further learning; and the development of a set of "core work skills" to facilitate employability. The report concludes with perhaps the most pressing challenge of all – how to finance lifelong learning for all and the critical need for greater investment in learning and training.

Many thanks go to Trevor Riordan for leading the preparation of this report, and to his colleagues in IFP/SKILLS in Geneva, and the training specialists in Bangkok and Manila, for their valuable contributions. This report provides an excellent basis for the discussions at the Tripartite Regional Meeting.

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## List of abbreviations

ANTA	Australian National Training Authority
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
AQF	National Qualification Framework (Australia)
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEM	Asia-Europe Meeting
ASTD	American Society for Training and Development
CEC	China Enterprise Confederation
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CFMEU	Construction Forestry Mining and Engineering Union
CHED	Commission on Higher Education
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
CLMS	Centre for Labour Market Studies
CREST	Critical Enabling Skills Training
DfEE	Department of Education and Employment
ETEEAP	Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation Program
FAFPESC	Forest and Forest Products Employment Skills Council
GDP	Gross domestic product
HECS	Higher Education Contribution Scheme
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HPWP	High performance work practices
HRD	Human resources development
HRDC	Human Resources Development Council
HRDF	Human Resources Development Fund
HRM	Hotel and Restaurant Management
ICT	Information and communication technology
IFTDO	International Federation of Training and Development Organizations
ILO	International Labour Organization
INTUC	Indian National Trade Union Congress
ITE	Institute of Technical Education
MDAS	Manpower Development Assistance Scheme
MEXT	Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport, Science and Technology
MIDI	Metal Industries Development Institute
MNC	Multinational company
MOL	Ministry of Labour
MoMRS	Ministry of Manpower Research and Statistics Department
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
NOSS	National Occupational Skill Standards
NQF	National Qualification Framework
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PELS	Postgraduate Education Loans Scheme
RPL	Recognition of prior learning
SDF	Skills Development Fund
SKM	Malaysian Skills Certification
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprises
SoLL	School of lifelong learning

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TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TESDA	Technical Education and Skills Development Authority
TOQS	Technical Occupation Qualification and Certification System
TVET	Technical vocational education and training
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VADP	Vocational Ability Development Programme
VET	Vocational education and training
WER	World employment report

# Lifelong learning in Asia and the Pacific: Policies and practices

## Introduction

Lifelong learning is the new catchword for education and training policies in the twenty-first century. It permeates contemporary policy developments in a growing number of countries. Also international organization (e.g. G8, the ILO, OECD, UNESCO and the World Bank) and regional organizations (e.g. APEC, ASEAN, and the European Union) are developing policies and programmes to make lifelong learning a reality. The lifelong learning framework emphasizes that learning occurs during the entire course of an individual's life. Formal education and training contribute to learning, as do non-formal and informal learning taking place in the home, the workplace, the community and society at large. Its key features are the following: the centrality of the learner, catering to a diversity of learner needs; emphasis on the motivation to learn, e.g. through self-paced, self-directed and increasingly ICT-assisted learning; the multiplicity of educational and training policy objectives and the recognition that an individual's learning objectives may change over the course of his or her lifetime; and that all kinds of learning – formal, non-formal and informal – should be recognized and made visible.

According to the ILO, “lifelong learning ensures that the individual's skills and competencies are maintained and improved as work, technology and skill requirements change, ensures the personal and career development of workers; results in increases in aggregate productivity and income; and improves social equity” (ILO 2000a, para. 5). Lifelong learning is central to the ILO, and its on-going work to revise the Human Resources Development Recommendation (no. 150). A new Recommendation is expected to be adopted by the International Labour Conference in June 2004. A preliminary text, the draft Recommendation prepared by the Office and based on a “first” discussion at ILC in 2003, recognizes that: “education, training and lifelong learning contribute significantly to promoting the interests of people, enterprises, the economy and society as a whole, especially considering the critical challenge of attaining full employment, social inclusivity and sustained economic growth in the global economy” (ILO 2003).

The draft Recommendation further calls on governments, employers and workers “to renew their commitment to lifelong learning: governments by investing to enhance education and training at all levels; the private sector by training employees; and individuals by making use of the education, training and lifelong learning opportunities...”

Skills have become increasingly important in determining an individual's ability to secure a job, retain employment and move flexibly in the labour market. Although vocational skills remain important, another category has become crucial for the individual's employability. This category has been variously labelled under key and core skills, key competencies, generic skills, etc. These skills differ both in number and type according to the socio-economic context and time reference. However, there is consensus over the requirement of higher and non-vocational skills that enable the individual to perform at work and in society. In other terms, an individual's employability is the result of a set of vocational and core-work skills that can be transferred between and across occupational sectors.

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## *The report*

This report examines lifelong learning policies and practices in the Asia and Pacific region, while also drawing on experiences elsewhere, particularly in Europe. Chapter I provides various country and other definitions of lifelong learning and gives a succinct, although incomplete quantitative picture of participation by adults in lifelong learning. The chapter also discusses the reasons behind the emerging prominence of lifelong learning in the economic and social policy debate of many countries, referring to both the economic/efficiency arguments and to the equity and social arguments raised. Chapter II dwells on policy reforms to promote lifelong learning, attempting to spell out what policies, institutions and practices go with effective and comprehensive lifelong learning for all. Lifelong learning for all is still a goal rather than a reality in Asia and the Pacific, even in the most developed countries. The chapter discusses the constraints and obstacles to their realisation and discuss how countries are attempting to overcome these constraints. Chapters III and IV will focus on particular subjects that are central to the lifelong learning agenda. Chapter III discusses investments in lifelong learning and the need to mobilize additional resources by all parties: governments, enterprises, civil society and individuals. Chapter IV discusses developments to establish national qualifications frameworks and mechanisms for recognition of skills and prior learning. It also discusses the recent focus of training policies in many countries to develop “core” work skills. The paper ends with some concluding remarks.

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## Chapter I. Lifelong learning: Definitions, rationale and objectives

### 1. Definitions

At the International Labour Conference (June 2003), during a “first discussion” of a new human resources development instrument, the ILO’s constituents agreed upon a number of definitions pertaining to skill, qualifications, employability and lifelong learning. The term “lifelong learning” encompasses all learning activities undertaken throughout life for the development of competencies and qualifications. The term “competencies” covers the knowledge, skills and know-how applied and mastered in a specific context, while the term “qualifications” means a formal expression of the vocational or professional abilities of a worker which is recognized at international, national or sector level. The term “employability” relates to portable competencies and qualifications that enhance an individual’s capacity to make use of the education and training opportunities available in order to secure and retain decent work, progress within the enterprise and between jobs and cope with changes in technology and labour market conditions (ILO, 2003, p.8).

OECD provides a broadest possible definition of lifelong learning: i.e. what people learn across their entire lifespan. A recent report on the financing of lifelong learning defined it as including virtually all learning occurring between cradle and grave, from early childhood to the training of people beyond their retirement. A useful distinction is given by the ILO’s Report *Learning and training for work in the knowledge society*, prepared for the International labour Conference 2003 (ILO, 2002), which distinguishes between initial, or pre-employment training which tends to focus on the young, and continuous training or lifelong learning, which emphasize *adult learning*. Also CEDEFOP (the vocational education and training research arm of the European Union) defines lifelong learning as learning by adults.

### 2. The universality of lifelong learning

Traditional learning practice stereotypically involved the concentration of learning into formal education and training, undertaken while young. The resulting knowledge and skills were expected to suffice throughout adult life. Only a minority learned much while young. Thus, in many countries, post-compulsory education was traditionally the preserve of a small elite, many young males undertook post-compulsory craft apprenticeships, and the majority of young people left school without qualifications and received no formal training thereafter. This has also been a common pattern in many developing countries, particularly in those with a colonial legacy. In Hong Kong, China, for example, it was not until 1988 that the territory’s government changed its higher education policy. The formerly elitist universities and polytechnics then broadened access to higher education among broad segments of the population. Other Asian countries, however, have had a longer tradition of investing heavily in broad-based education, e.g. the Republic of Korea and Japan.

Compared with traditional forms of learning, lifelong learning is different in that it claims to be universal, i.e. covering all citizens across lifecycles and across individuals. The *ultimate* goal (although nowhere achieved so far) is to give each individual the motivation, the financial means and the physical access to learning at any time in his or her life, so that he or she can develop skills, upgrade or learn new skills for work or for his/her own satisfaction and personal

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development. The equity, or social, dimension permeates many country specific definitions of lifelong learning as shown by some examples from the Asian region.

In the Asia region, lifelong learning is enshrined in the constitutions of many countries. In Korea, the Comprehensive Plan for Lifelong Education Promotion was announced in January 2002 to “support lifelong education programmes operated on a local basis to incorporate lifelong education as part of daily routine, provide the undereducated class the resources to participate in society, and offer adults an opportunity to gain access to higher education”. In Japan, “in order to create an enriching and dynamic society in the 21st Century”, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport, Science and Technology (MEXT) considers it “vital to aim towards the realization of a lifelong learning society in which people can freely choose learning opportunities and learn at any time during their lives, and receive proper recognition for their learning achievements” (MEXT, 2003). The Government of the Philippines targets, in narrower terms, specifically the development of middle level manpower. The “vision” of its National Technical Education and Skills Development Plan 2002-4 is the development of world-class, technically skilled and educated workers with positive work values, acting as the vital force in building a prosperous Philippines where citizens enjoy a life of economic security, social well-being and personal dignity”. The quality assured Philippines TESDA system integrates lifelong learning and recognition of prior learning as strategies to reach the Plan’s objectives.

Outside Asia and the Pacific, countries increasingly formulate their human resources development objectives in terms of lifelong learning. For example, in Finland the Government’s development plan for the 1999-2004 period calls for, among other things, helping more young people to apply for upper secondary general or vocational education and complete their studies; developing students’ learning skills in all sectors of the education system; increasing the provision of non-university higher education; expanding opportunities for adults to study for upper secondary and post-secondary vocational qualifications and to pursue other studies that improve their employability and capacity for further learning; and developing methods for recognizing non-formal and informal learning.

In Britain, the Green Paper “The Learning Age - A renaissance for a new Britain” (DfEE, 1999) - spells out an ambitious vision on lifelong learning. “To continue to compete, we must equip ourselves to cope with the enormous economic and social change we face, to make sense of the rapid transformation in the world, and to encourage imagination and innovation. We will succeed by transforming inventions into new wealth, just as we did a hundred years ago. But unlike then, everyone must have the opportunity to innovate and to gain reward – not just in research laboratories, but on the production line, design studios, in retail outlets, and in providing services.” The paper continues by saying that “the most productive investment will be linked to the best educated and best trained workforces, and the most effective way of getting and keeping a job will be to have the skills needed by employers.”

Statements on lifelong learning have also been made by various international and regional bodies or organizations. According to APEC:

“A skilled and adaptable labour force is vital for sustained economic growth in the new economy. Collective efforts by all stakeholders are required to promote human resources development by increasing individual participation in lifelong learning and skills upgrading in response to the rising skills demands of the new economy... High levels of skill development will require economies to implement appropriate, comprehensive labour market policies, which must respond, in particular, to the imperative of narrowing the digital divide... Access to quality basic education and the development of basic literacy and numeracy skills are an

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essential foundation for further learning and skill acquisition. Individuals must engage in lifelong learning to promote sustained employability. Equally, workers and employers should be encouraged to invest in skill development and skill upgrading” (APEC, 2001).

On a more practical level, the ASEAN group of countries has encouraged regional cooperation on lifelong learning by promoting a network of regional skills training institutions, the mutual recognition of skills, using information and communication technology (ICT) to promote networking opportunities between ASEAN education and training centres, and by establishing shared labour market monitoring systems.

At the European Union level, the White Paper on Education and Training (EU, 1995) already identified the need of *all* citizens to develop a knowledge base that will help them find their way in the information society. It warned against the danger of social exclusion among some groups in society based on lack of knowledge. The Presidency Conclusions of the Lisbon European Council (March, 2000) called for “Europe’s education and training systems... to adapt both to the demands of the knowledge society and to the need for an improved level and quality of employment”. They will have to develop individuals’ learning abilities by offering opportunities for learning and training that are tailored to target groups at different stages of their lives: young people, unemployed adults and workers who are at risk of seeing their skills overtaken by rapid change. This new approach will include three main components: the development of local learning centres; the promotion of new basic skills, in particular in information technologies; and increased transparency of qualifications.

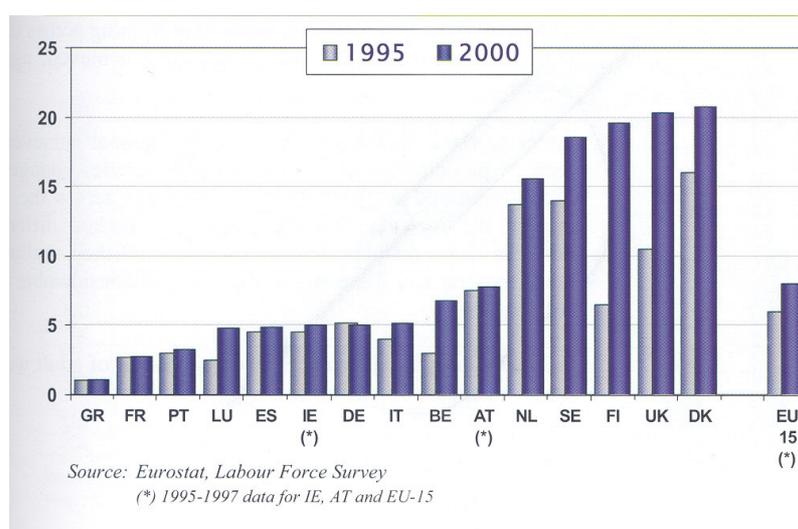
### **3. Participation in lifelong learning**

Against this background of lofty statements and ambitions, what is the reality in terms of actual participation in lifelong learning programmes? The scale of adult learning can be gauged in terms of both flows and stocks. Flows show the share of individuals that undertake learning during a defined period. Stocks depict the share of individuals who have attained a particular skill level at a particular time.

Ensuring “lifelong learning for all” remains an elusive goal; no country has come close to it so far. A number of factors - “structural adjustment programmes, restrictive fiscal policies, low wages, debt repayment obligations, decline of development assistance flows, competitive price pressures on enterprises and lack of resources of large sections of the population” often induce governments, enterprises and individuals to under-invest in education and training. In addition, “market uncertainties, poaching of skills by other enterprises and the growth of insecure forms of work and consequential high turnover of staff may reduce enterprises’ incentives to invest in training” (ILO 2000, para. 10).

Data on participation, although limited by types of learning covered by different surveys, suggest considerable under-investment – in relation to needs - in education, training and lifelong learning. The 2000 Labour Force Survey found only 8 per cent of EU 25-64 year olds participating in education and training during the 4 weeks prior to the survey (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. European Union: Share of population aged 25-64 participating in education and training**



To take the particular case of the UK, at one extreme only one in five adults aged over 25 years is found to have participated in learning during the previous four weeks; at the other, around two in three 16-69 year olds, to have undertaken some active learning during the previous three years. A core of around one in four adults has done no learning during the past three years, and around one in eight is indifferent or averse to further learning. In stock terms, slightly less than one in two British adults are qualified at upper secondary or craft level. Around one in seven adults holds no qualification at all. More than one in five adults has low literacy and numeracy skills. Both the flow and the stock measures suggest therefore that adult learning in Britain currently falls well short of the universal (Ryan, 2003).

In all countries, participation is particularly low among older people, among those with low initial education, and among low skilled, low paid and female workers. In Singapore, for example, 43 per cent of the population aged 15-34 acquired some form of structured training, compared to 32 per cent of those aged 35-44 and 23 per cent of those aged 45-64 as reported by the Adult Training Survey 2000. Adults with tertiary education had the highest participation rate at 56 per cent. The incidence dropped to 37 per cent for adults with secondary or post-secondary education and plummeted further to 12 per cent for adults with less than secondary education.

Those who advocate lifelong often hope that adult learning can compensate for deficiencies in initial learning. But the prospects for such compensatory effects are limited. Across countries, as across individuals, more initial learning tends to be associated with more adult learning (Ryan, 2003).

Many developing countries are also reforming their training systems and policies in order to face the challenge of increasing access and provision of training to all, on a continuous basis, for enhanced productivity and employability in a rapidly changing environment. A major thrust is to increase participation rates in vocational education and training (VET). Table 1 shows the percentage of the adult population engaged in VET activities in several non-OECD countries in 2000.

**Table 1. Share of population aged 15-64 participating in VET in selected countries (2000)**

<i>Country (year)</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Men (%)</i>	<i>Women (%)</i>	<i>Age group</i>
Singapore (06/2001)	33.4	52.3	47.7	15-64
Jamaica (2001)	21.0	42.0	58.0	
South Africa	16.0	58.0	42.0	15-65
Hong Kong, China	14.6	56.8	43.2	
Brazil	14.0	45.0	55.0	15-65
Chile	10.2	73.5	26.5	15-65
Mauritius	9.5	69.0	31.0	12-65
Costa Rica	7.7	49.4	50.6	15-65
Korea	5.9	n.a	n.a	15-64
Colombia	4.8	52.1	47.9	15-65
Guatemala	3.8	52.6	47.4	15-64
Peru (2001)	1.9	49.9	50.1	15-64
Philippines	1.9	n.a	n.a	15-64

Source: ILO survey on "Statistics on Investment in Training", Galhardi and Mangozho, 2003.

In Singapore, 33.4 per cent of residents aged 15-64 were engaged in some form of job-related structured training in 2000 and slightly less in 2001. In Hong Kong, China 14.6 per cent of 15-50 year olds had attended job-related training arranged by employers and/or on their own initiative during the year 2000; 57 per cent were male and 43 per cent female. In the Republic of Korea, data for the Vocational Ability Development Programme (VADP) suggest that 4.4 per cent of the 15-64 age group received training in 1999 and 7.0 per cent in 2001. During this period, the number of participants increased by 60 per cent. The number of establishments providing training under this programme increased more than twice, i.e. from 43.844 to 94.404 (ibid, 2003).

The figures presented above suggest that all countries are still far from ensuring universal access to lifelong learning. To meet the challenges of a knowledge-based society, barriers to lifelong learning must be overcome and the proportion of the workers participating in further education and training must be increased substantially. The steps required include ensuring effective access of all to further training measures, the provision of adequate learning and training opportunities and raising investment in lifelong learning programmes.

#### **4. Lifelong learning for efficiency and economic return, or learning for equity and personal development**

##### **4.1 The economic and efficiency argument**

Visions of lifelong learning often have different underlying objectives. Sometimes lifelong learning is emphasized for its presumed effectiveness outcomes, for example as a means of making labour markets operate more efficiently, improving productivity by assisting workers develop skills and adapt to change in the work place and seize opportunities that globalization and more open markets may offer. Other visions and statements see lifelong learning as emphasizing equity objectives: giving vulnerable groups a chance to improve their labour market prospects and act as a vehicle of social inclusion, helping people come out of dependency and low expectations, and overcoming the wastage of potential talent in a vicious circle of under-achievement, self-deprecation, and petty crime. It is claimed that learning can overcome these negative phenomena by building self-confidence and independence (DfEE, 1999).

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By efficiency is meant the economic value created by a policy in relation to the costs of the policy. Efficiency is potentially important, both as a justification for more extensive learning and as a restraint on economically excessive learning. Some learning may cost the economy more than the value it creates. For example, a purely effectiveness consideration may preclude extensive investment in training older workers, since the time that a return can be made on that investment would be too short. A high priority to efficiency may be implicit in the OECD's exclusion of post-retirement learning (for example, University of Third Age) from its otherwise comprehensive approach. However, egalitarian ideals of social justice may justify policies whose expected efficiency effects may prove less certain. For example, a weak efficiency case for training older workers may not preclude learning for social and equity reasons, as long as programmes target older workers with low skills and incomes.

#### *4.1.2 Demographic trends.*

However, possible efficiency arguments against training older workers should be set against major demographic trends in industrialized and also some countries in the Asia and Pacific. These countries' workforces are ageing rapidly and retired people are assuming a growing share of the population. Higher life expectancy and pre-retirement schemes have further increased the period of non-economic activity in many countries. In systems where access to learning opportunities is heavily conditioned by access to paid jobs, and where retired people have less access to learning opportunities, the realization of lifelong learning for all becomes more difficult. In the light of these developments, the European Union, for example, is committed to raise employment rates by 2010, especially among older workers and by deferring retirement. At present, raising the pension age, although highly controversial, is on the agenda in most European countries.

The demography of Asian and Pacific countries still requires major investments in educating and training the young. However, countries like Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore must soon confront the need for redistribution of education and training efforts towards lifelong learning and training of established and older workers.

#### *4.1.3 Increasing labour market participation through lifelong learning*

Combining both economic and social (equity) considerations, lifelong learning is often touted as one means of increasing the participation of various populations groups, for example, women, young people, vulnerable groups, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities and migrants, in the active labour force. Higher participation, it is claimed, will lighten the economic (tax) burden of a gradually smaller share of population that is economically active, increase total output, and reduce (passive) welfare payments, while also contributing to social objectives by combating poverty and social exclusion. These are the aims of the European Union's Council Recommendation on the Broad Guidelines of the Economic Policies of the member States and the Community (2001/483/EC).

#### *4.1.4 Lifelong learning to adapt to globalization and continuous changes in technology, work organization and practices*

A common case for lifelong learning goes along strictly utilitarian grounds based on the stringent laws of contemporary product and labour markets. Due to competitive pressures triggered by the onslaught of free financial, capital and product markets, enterprises and

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individuals are forced to adapt to continuous change at work, in technology, work organization and work practices. Enterprises demand increasingly higher skills, and different skills than hitherto. Rapid skills obsolescence necessitates learning new skills on a continuous, lifelong learning basis. In the knowledge economy, in addition to up-to-date technical skills, workers need to display non-technical work skills so that they can adapt, on a continuous basis, to the rapid pace of labour market and workplace change. Jobs in the knowledge economy are said to require flexibility, literacy, numeracy, problem solving skills, the capacity to apply new ideas, creativity and learning to learn-skills. These skills are said to be the foundation for employability in the knowledge economy and on which further skills development and training can be built. Box 1 illustrates how technological change in the ICT- and ICT-related sectors in India has mobilized the trade union movement to become proactive as jobs, skills demand and learning needs are changing.

**Box 1: Trade unions, technological change and retraining in India**

India's rapidly growing ICT and ICT-related sectors are demanding new job profiles and forcing the trade union movement to modify their traditionally defensive strategies to emphasize the importance of retraining and adopting new skills. The All India Trade Union Congress for example, is making a serious effort to retrain workers to take up jobs in the new economy. The Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) recognizes that it cannot "oppose new technology or new machinery". INTUC says "the workforce has to rise up to the new expectations" and has initiated continuous training sessions for its members.

Source: B. Manju, 2000

#### 4.1.5 Core work skills development

Many countries' education and training policies give increased prominence to core work skills, which are considered a foundation for lifelong learning. These skills, alternatively called "basic skills" (European Union), "key skills" (United Kingdom), "critical enabling skills" (Singapore), and "essential skills" (Egypt), are the non-technical skills that everybody will need in order to perform satisfactorily at work and in society, irrespective of where they work and live. Singapore's critical enabling skills include learning-to-learn skills, literacy and numeracy (reading, writing and computation skills), listening and oral communication skills, problem-solving skills and creativity, personal effectiveness (self-esteem, goal-setting and motivation, skills for personal and career development), group effectiveness (interpersonal, teamwork and negotiation skills) and organizational effectiveness and leadership skills. Core work skills can also be considered to include what are called labour market "navigation" skills. These include job-search skills, knowing how to present one self to prospective employers, how to identify one's career options and opportunities, and how to find and evaluate job and education and training opportunities; they also include familiarity with the Internet, as many jobs, career opportunities and guidance services are increasingly available online. Chapter IV discusses in more detail core work skills development in relation to lifelong learning.

#### 4.2 Equity and social arguments for lifelong learning

Most policies and statements on lifelong learning give prominence to equity considerations and criteria. Statistics invariably show a disproportionate share of more skilled people participating in adult education and learning, which is interpreted as evidence of unequal access and considered unfair. The existing learning divide runs the danger of becoming even wider, as

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access to lifelong learning opportunities and technologies, particularly ICTs, is unequally distributed. In post-compulsory youth education and training, the minority entering higher education are the group who benefit most from very large public subsidies. The least advantaged can avail themselves of little more than labour market programmes, which are often poorly funded and give little subsequent job and income benefits (Ryan, 2003). Fairer arrangement would give people who missed out earlier a “second chance” and reduce the gap in opportunity and access.

Pursuing its traditional mandate to promote social justice, the ILO stresses a two-pronged approach to education, training and lifelong learning. The first prong, associated with efficiency, addresses the challenge of developing knowledge and skills necessary for competition in an increasingly integrated world economy. The second prong envisions education, training and lifelong learning to address the growing vulnerability of many population groups – for example, women, young people and low-skilled workers – who, for lack of education and skills, have become poor or run the danger of falling into a poverty trap. The focus should be on developing their basic skills, including basic literacy and numeracy. Supported by other economic and social measures, skills development will enhance their employability, help them develop productive income-generating activities in either wage or self-employment, and promote their integration into mainstream economic and social life.

#### *4.2.1 Personal development*

Lifelong learning is also advocated on the grounds that it promotes personal and social development, which is prized for its own sake, not simply as a means to higher output or lower inequality. Personal development is the central objective of liberal education, with its emphasis on personal autonomy and independent, critical thinking. Liberal values historically fuelled the adult education movement, with its emphasis on general (non-vocational) studies and participation in groups. Such values are at present on the defensive, sometimes criticized for masking elitist educational practices, and, more influentially, for their low vocational relevance in an era of intensified economic change. Indeed, it could be claimed that the lifelong learning agenda has at one level abandoned the liberal ideal of intellectual development through learning, in favour of such instrumental, work-related objectives as ‘employability’ (Ryan, 2003). In Asia, these liberal ideals appear to be on the retreat (see section below).

#### *4.2.2 Social development*

There is also recognition that lifelong learning can contribute to socio-political participation of people, democratic government and political stability. The ILO’s Conclusions (ILO, 2000a, para.1) confirmed recently that human resources development, training and lifelong learning also underpin “the fundamental values of society – equity, justice, gender equality, non-discrimination, social responsibility and participation.”

#### *4.2.3 Community regeneration and development*

Community decay is prominent in several advanced economies, and is associated with low skills, unemployment, benefit dependency, drug abuse and crime. Lifelong learning advocates have been encouraged by evidence that adult learners tend to be more active in their communities than are non-learners (Ryan, 2003). The hope is that lifelong learning will galvanize not only disadvantaged individuals but also their communities, and thereby generate more neighbourly and safer social relations (‘the oil of community development’). Somewhat

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on these lines, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport, Science and Technology (MEXT) in Japan works to provide learning opportunities to all strata of society, including young people, adults and women, providing support for a range of regional and volunteer activities that help to deepen the sense of community among local residents, and promote the social participation of people, such as the elderly (MEXT, Japan, 2003 drawn from ILO: Human Resources Development and Training Data Base). In Greece, the existing school infrastructure is being used to establish so-called Second Chance Schools. These provide lifelong learning opportunities for people in the communities in which they serve (ASEM, 2002).

## **5. Asia: Shift towards economic and efficiency objectives of lifelong learning**

As the importance attached to these differing goals varies in different countries and different regions, so does the content of the lifelong learning agenda. In the EU, the Italian, Swedish and Spanish governments explicitly give more weight to equity and personal development, relative to efficiency, than do their British and Dutch counterparts. In Britain, the current government gives greater weight to equity and developmental concerns while sharing the previous government's prioritization of efficiency. However, educationists criticise the economic and instrumental orientation of much lifelong learning advocacy, and emphasize instead the power of learning to build confidence and even transform consciousness (Ryan, 2003).

In Asia there has been an apparent gradual shift from active labour market policies towards active lifelong learning policies (Han, 2001). Adult education and lifelong learning are increasingly considered a strategic investment with strong labour market orientation. Job-related career orientation of adult learning is in the ascendancy at the expense of "liberal" and "free" adult education, i.e. learning for democracy, culture, quality of life and general welfare. In Japan, two contrasting laws (*Social Education Law* and the *Lifelong Learning Law*) demonstrate a shift from social (liberal and community-oriented) education to (manpower development- and job-related) lifelong learning. Also in Korea, adult education in the humanities is making room for lifelong job training. In Thailand, the New Education Law is gradually de-emphasizing the role of traditional non-formal education in favour of cutting edge manpower training (ibid).

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## Chapter II. Policy reforms to promote lifelong learning

A fundamental change in education and training policies and development is necessary in order to ensure that all citizens have access to, and make effective use of, opportunities for lifelong learning. Building a lifelong learning system is not “adding” adult and continuous training at the top of the existing education and training system, but rather a fundamental process of structural adjustment of the entire system of education and training.” What goes with effective lifelong learning? The present chapter will discuss some of the policy and institutional prerequisites for lifelong learning. Countries, both internationally, and in the Asia and Pacific region, are at different stages of reforming their systems of education and training to make them meet the challenging ambition of ensuring lifelong learning opportunities for all. The review that follows will outline some of the necessary reforms that will further countries’ progress in this area. Reforms will include:

- building the legal, policy and institutional basis for ensuring equity in access, particularly of disadvantaged groups, to lifelong learning opportunities. A multi-pronged strategy, including offering financial incentives and more opportunities that are better tailored to individuals’ needs, is necessary in order to encourage wider and more equitable participation in lifelong learning;
- mobilizing the necessary resources for making lifelong learning opportunities more widely available. All the parties concerned, including the State, the enterprise and individuals, will have to contribute to increased investment in lifelong learning institutions and programmes. This is the topic of Chapter III;
- building the foundations for lifelong learning by emphasizing learning-to-learn skills in particular. With the massive increase in information available today, people must learn to access, select and use information that is relevant to their needs and transform it into knowledge. Learning - to - learn skills are among the core work skills that every worker will be expected to possess;
- ensuring collaboration among a wide range of partners and stakeholders. Partnerships have important advantages: as an outcome of social dialogue, partnerships are the means to engage the widest possible participation of various institutions, enterprises, civil society and individuals in lifelong learning. Partnerships promote programmes that are relevant to economic and social needs. They are also a means to increase the resource base available for investment in human resources development and lifelong learning;
- developing policies and institutions for the recognition of all forms of learning, even informal learning. Recognition of individuals’ skills and knowledge acts as a powerful incentive for them to learn, and improves their job and income prospects. It also promotes labour market mobility and transparency and guides employers in recruitment. This topic will be discussed in Chapter IV; and
- designing guidance and counselling for lifelong learning. People need assistance in “navigating” and choosing between alternatives in a vast array of learning and training opportunities that can enhance their careers.

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## **1. Building the legal, policy and institutional framework for lifelong learning**

In recent years, a tenet of many education and training policy reforms has been to engage the widest possible participation of various actors in formulating lifelong learning policies. As the ILO draft Human Resources Development Recommendation recognizes, “lifelong learning should be based on the explicit commitment: by governments to invest in enhancing education and training at all levels; by the private sector in training employees; and by individuals in developing their own abilities and careers” (ILO, 2003, p.8). It further states that governments should “recognize that lifelong learning and training are a right for all and, in cooperation with the social partners, work towards ensuring access for all to lifelong learning” (ibid, p.9). According to the ILO, social dialogue is the necessary driving force behind the legal, policy and institutional developments in the lifelong learning area.

### **1.1 Social dialogue and lifelong learning**

Lifelong learning has entered the centre stage of social dialogue in many countries, particularly in Europe and also in Australia and New Zealand. These developments reflect these countries’ strong tradition of social dialogue on labour and training matters, and secondly the realization that the private sector – enterprises and individuals in particular - will have to assume increased responsibility for training and lifelong learning. Governments’ budgets are often limited and finance for education and training, and lifelong learning in particular, has to be generated from new sources, in particular the private sector. However, the scope and effectiveness of social dialogue and partnerships in training is currently limited by the capacity and resources of actors. It varies between countries, sectors, and large and small enterprises. In many Asian countries, for example, central governments have continued to play the key role in recent developments to promote lifelong learning, again reflecting their history and traditions.

Bipartite and tripartite approaches to employment and training policy development have gained ground in many countries. Partnerships within the private sector and between the private sector and the public authorities have been pursued at different levels. Improving and maintaining the employability and quality of the workforce are central themes of social dialogue on human resources development. Learning and training issues are often also part of negotiations on other employment issues, particularly when enterprises are restructuring and unemployment is growing. Collective bargaining topics include increasing and sharing investments in lifelong learning and training, identifying skills needed for maintaining internal or external employability, and establishing qualifications frameworks, including mechanisms for skills recognition and certification.

Equal opportunities and access to lifelong learning and training are becoming a recurrent, cross-cutting theme in negotiations and collective agreements on training. However, equity targets which have been agreed upon by the social partners and set up in many countries have not yet been achieved. The equity dimension and accessibility to lifelong learning concern, in particular, women, workers with little education, workers at risk of being laid off, workers in small enterprises and those engaged in informal activities. These workers often account for a large proportion of the working population, but are generally poorly represented in collective bargaining and seldom benefit from it. Sector agreements sometimes also take account of their needs. However, active labour market programmes and other remedial measures, taken mainly by the public authorities, often provide their only opportunity to gain access to training.

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The *organization* of lifelong learning and training is also a subject of social dialogue. Negotiations generally focus on financing, resource management, establishing qualifications frameworks, skills recognition and certification, managing programme quality and effectiveness and meeting equity objectives of training. Training provision is less an issue of collective bargaining, as training providers have multiplied, competitive training markets have emerged in many countries, and learner-centred modes of training, often using ICT, have spread rapidly. Generally, quality and equity criteria of training are established through social dialogue and are applied and managed through procedures for financing training. Recently, dialogue has developed around new topics such as workplace learning, the role of ICT in this process, and lifelong learning and training in high performance work organizations.

*Bipartite and tripartite agreements* on lifelong learning and training have multiplied recently, particularly in industrialized countries, as governments and employers' and workers' organizations have engaged in collective bargaining at the enterprise, sector or national level. The agreements lay down workers' rights and certain regulatory conditions. They have also contributed to institutional frameworks at sector or national levels, often with the financial partnership of the government. Collective bargaining and dialogue with governments have, in many countries, led to the establishment of training funds that finance lifelong learning and training for example in Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden. Examples from Asia and the Pacific include Malaysia and Singapore. Other arrangements provide for national qualification frameworks as the basis for skills recognition and certification. Australia and New Zealand are the prominent examples for the Asia and Pacific region.

Governments are assuming a different role than hitherto, particularly in countries that have a well-established culture of collective bargaining and social dialogue. Devolution and decentralization of lifelong learning policy development have been the rule. There, rules on lifelong learning and training are the outcome of continuous interaction between legislation and agreements. The legislator often recognizes the existence of a substantial body of agreed rules formulated through the bargaining process and enforces their general application. In other cases the government imposes its rules on the social partners by means of clauses that encourage the private sector to assume greater social responsibility for investing in, and implementing lifelong learning programmes.

Social dialogue and collective bargaining on lifelong learning and training therefore establish two sources of rights: the law and collective agreements. Characteristics of systems that emerge from the collective bargaining process include the following: recognition of the need for lifelong learning for the employee; joint management of resources by the social partners; and a set of guidelines and operational frameworks necessary for providing lifelong learning and training programmes. Governments increasingly encourage the social partners to engage in collective bargaining, while concentrating their efforts on providing training opportunities for the most vulnerable groups – women, people with disabilities and other groups with special needs – by means of active labour market and equity-oriented programmes. By means of incentives, they encourage regional and local partnerships, as well as public education and training institutions, to deliver training programmes for these groups.

In Australia, social dialogue has been decisive in promoting policy developments and building up effective partnerships in the area of human resources development and training. The Australian National Training Authority (ANTA), established by the federal and state authorities, engages the trade union movement in social dialogue on VET. The Authority has embarked on an ambitious plan to develop new accreditation procedures for institutions,

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training providers, courses and skills learned; to encourage private providers to expand and improve the quality of their training supply; and to develop a nationwide system of competency standards on an industry-by-industry basis. There is a growing trend in Australia to transfer learning and training from the suppliers of skilled workers, hitherto mainly government institutions, to those actually demanding these skills, i.e. industry.

In the Philippines, the government seeks actively private sector assistance in formulating TVET policies in the country. As the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority's (TESDA) highest policy-making body, the TESDA Board formulates continuous, coordinated and fully integrated technical education and skills development policies, plans and programmes. The Board's composition reflects public-private partnership in training. Having twenty (20) members, the majority (12) represent the private sector: four (4) from industry, six (6) from labour and two (2) from private technical vocational institutions. Its relatively large participation in the TESDA Board is testimony to the important role that the private sector plays in training and skills development. TESDA Board membership also ensures that gender-equality concerns are well articulated in TVET policies. At least one member of each of the private sector representations shall be a woman.

## 1.2 Institutional developments for lifelong learning in Asia and the Pacific

In Australia, under the auspices of ANTA and the state governments, a formal system called the Australian Quality Training Framework has been put in place to provide VET qualifications to Australians. In conjunction with the Australian Qualifications Framework that applies to all education and training, this nationally consistent system promotes lifelong learning. Its flexible and responsive training and assessment services help companies compete internationally, while it provides individuals opportunity to maximise their potential. The Training and Qualifications Frameworks emphasize seamless learning pathways, qualifications linkages and cross-sector collaboration as a way of breaking down artificial boundaries between education and training sectors. Whereas the qualifications framework applies to all three formal education sectors, the Quality Training Framework applies only to VET (Stanwick, 2002).

The emphasis of the Australian Quality Training Framework is, through a set of nationally agreed standards, to provide quality VET throughout the country. In relation to previous arrangements, it clarifies the rights and responsibilities of all responsible parties. It raises, and clearly specifies the requirements of registered training organizations; improves auditing arrangements; and introduces standards and agreed processes for State and Territory registering/courses accrediting bodies. An important element of the Australian VET system is the training packages. These are "an integrated set of nationally endorsed standards, guidelines and qualifications for training, assessing and recognising people's skills, developed by industry to meet the training needs of an industry or group of industries." Central features of training packages are that they are output rather than curriculum focussed, and based on competency standards. These standards focus on the skills and knowledge employees need to function effectively in the workplace. Packages consist of units that can be combined to build a nationally recognized qualification. As of September 2002, seventy-five training packages had been approved, eight of which address the needs of particular enterprises. A major benefit of these packages is that they allow learners to move between Registered Training Organizations in order to complete their qualifications.

In the Asia region, it is the governments that have been have been in the lead, pursuing a centralised approach to adult and lifelong learning governance and policy and support infrastructure development. In the immediate aftermath of the recent financial crisis and economic recessions, governments took the lead in developing a system for promoting lifelong learning, as enterprises and the private sector could not afford to expand their education, training and lifelong learning programmes.

Lifelong learning in a group of countries - Japan, the Republic of Korea, Hong Kong, China, Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines has been promoted through legislation or through government policies that have implied major changes to the education system. Hong Kong, China and Singapore are using national strategic banners like “Educational Blueprint for the 21st Century” and “Manpower 21”, respectively. Thailand and the Philippines remain still heavily dependent on restricted national networks of non-formal education.

With the emerging lifelong learning agenda and new legislation in Japan, the Republic of Korea and Hong Kong, China, has come a shift in the ministerial responsibilities for education, training and lifelong learning. The call for efficient and effective education and training - and, likewise, the shift from “liberal” to “utilitarian”, job related lifelong education and training - has triggered a “rapprochement” between the Ministries of Education and Labour. In Japan, for example, lifelong learning is a joint responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Ministry of Trade and Industry. In Singapore, the Ministry of Manpower has entered partnership with the Ministry of Education. In Korea the brief of the Ministry of Education has been expanded to meet new demands and has consequently been transformed into a Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development. The emerging governance structures in selected countries (Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, China, Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines) are summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2. Governance structures for lifelong learning in Asia**

	<b>Japan</b>	<b>Rep. Korea</b>	<b>Hong Kong, China</b>	<b>Singapore</b>	<b>Thailand</b>	<b>Philippines</b>
<b>Government structure</b>	MEXT & MITI	Min. of Education and HRD	Education & Labour Departments	Ministries of Education & Manpower	Ministry of Education, Religion and Culture	Dep. of Educ., Culture & sports
Specific bureau	Lifelong Learning Bureau	HRD Bureau	Education Bureau (adult education unit) +VTCs	Training & Development Division	Department of Non-Formal Education	Bureau of Non-Formal Education
Legal structure	Lifelong Learning Promotion Law	Lifelong education Law	“Education Blueprint for 21 <sup>st</sup> Century” + “Investing in our human capital”	“Manpower 21”		Constitution
Agencies for local implementation	LLCs/Kominkan	LLCs/Credit Bank Systems	Polytechnic, Open University	ITE, Community clubs	Non-formal Education Centres	Local non-formal Education Centres

Source: Han, 2001, p.90.

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## **2. Lifelong learning for work: Some recent reform trends**

While governments in many Asian countries have reasserted their primary governance and policy-making role in promoting lifelong learning policies and programmes, actual programme and course provision is increasingly done by the private and enterprise sectors. The Conclusions (ILO, 2000a, para. 12) recognized that “enterprises have a critical role to play in investment in training” In a large number of countries the private sector is responsible for skills development and lifelong learning on a substantial scale. The State may have dominated the provision of high-profile institutional training. However, the private sector, through innumerable types of learning and training activities, many of them informal and discernible only to those directly involved, may well be making the greater contribution overall. As the Conclusions (ibid, para. 11) observed, private sector responsibilities in lifelong learning and training are best discharged through partnerships between government and the social partners, or between the social partners.

Against this general background, significant trends in the region include the following:

- *Expanding access to lifelong learning opportunities* is a major concern in most countries in the region. Access to lifelong learning remains limited for various reasons. The opportunities for lifelong learning may not be available; people may lack physical access or the financial means to pay for learning opportunities. Others may be blocked from further learning for lack of recognition of the skills they have gained earlier, formally or informally. People may also lack information about existing courses, programmes and opportunities for learning.
- *Many private enterprises are investing more and more in lifelong learning* and training programmes for their employees. Much of this investment is triggered less by government incentives or support than by enterprises’ realization that by investing in new skills, upgrading and continuous or lifelong learning of their employees, they are most likely to improve performance and competitiveness. Enterprises are often disillusioned by the (poor) quality of training provided by public institutions. Markets, technologies and work organization undergo continuous change. Goods and services production is becoming increasingly knowledge intensive. In this environment, enterprises increasingly invest more in the skills, knowledge and lifelong learning of their staff than in physical capital. Some firms, particularly in competitive high-technology sectors, spend significant shares of their operating expenses on training staff. For example, Singapore Telecommunications Ltd. spent 4 per cent of payroll on training in 1998.
- *Modern ICTs are revolutionizing learning and training, internationally and in the Asia and Pacific region.* From a passive, teacher or trainer-centred approach to gaining knowledge and skills, there is a shift towards learning for work and life, centred around the individual. ICTs are used by an increasing number of people as learning tools, since access to them is expanding rapidly in high- and many middle-income countries and free courses are becoming available on the Internet.
- *Partnership approaches to training and lifelong learning* have grown as the pressures of rapid change call for programmes that are current and aligned with the needs of industry and individuals. The private sector has often been the initiator of partnerships

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with training institutions, local governments, development agencies and others. Trade unions have recognized the importance of lifelong learning for maintaining employability and have become involved in the process of managing change (See Chapter I on trade unions in India). Sometimes partnerships are established at national level to promote training efforts for improved competitiveness of enterprises across sectors. Skill development activities are often combined with other practices for improved enterprise performance and better conditions in the workplace. They can also be given an equity dimension by targeting particular groups of workers, for example low-paid and poorly educated workers who need basic skills to boost their employability and income-earning prospects. Learning programmes can range from basic literacy and numeracy to professional training. The majority of learning and training partnerships tend to have a sector, industry or “cluster” focus. Many partnerships address the lifelong learning needs of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

- *The workplace is becoming a major source of lifelong learning.* Workplace learning is expanding rapidly in enterprises, boosted by online learning opportunities made accessible to employees. In addition, many new “soft skills” such as team-working, initiative, communication skills, etc., that are increasingly demanded in today’s flatter organizational structures are better learned at work, often informally, than in formal education and training settings. The rise of workplace learning challenges some entrenched practices in traditional training systems. Several countries have recognized the implications for trainers and curricula. Using competency-based assessment techniques, countries like Australia and New Zealand are establishing systems of “formally” recognizing these informal skills irrespective of where and how they were acquired. Endorsed by the social partners, workplace learning is now the acknowledged domain and responsibility of enterprises and organizations.
- Rather than engaging in training provision themselves, governments increasingly focus their efforts on creating an environment that will encourage private sector partners to invest in education, training and lifelong learning. They deploy various incentives – legal, financial and motivational – for enterprises and individuals to invest in education and training. These may include levy systems on enterprises accompanied by public grants, establishment of training funds, and various incentives for training and learning, such as tax rebates, training credits, training awards, individual training accounts, and collective and individual training rights.

The topic of enterprise investment and incentives for learning and training are covered in Chapter III. Developments in the other areas above are discussed below.

## 2.1 Access to lifelong learning: Expanding opportunities

Access to lifelong learning is still reserved for a minority of the working population in most countries in the region. Policies are therefore endeavouring to expand access to lifelong learning for workers in general, but targeting particularly those groups who, for various reasons, have had little access to education and training. The poor, women, young workers, the low-skilled, long-term unemployed, older workers and people with disabilities are among those specifically targeted by many government training and employment support programmes. Box 2 gives some details of the Community Learning Centre model to deliver lifelong learning opportunities to disadvantaged groups in several countries of Asia and the Pacific.

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**Box 2: Community Learning Centres: Poverty reduction and community development through lifelong learning**

In the Asia and Pacific region, Community Learning Centres have emerged as grassroots-based institutions for the delivery of literacy, basic education and lifelong learning opportunities, and other community development activities. Their mission is to improve the conditions of life of the most disadvantaged, particularly women and girls. Community Learning Centres are adapted to the needs of all people in the community through active community participation. The Centres provide educational opportunities to illiterate adults, youth and unschooled children, many of whom are socio-economically disadvantaged and belong to ethnic minorities. These people live in areas where literacy and basic education services are limited and severely deficient for the development of a literate learning society. UNESCO supports Community Learning Centres in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Thailand, Uzbekistan and Vietnam. Iran and the Philippines have recently joined the network.

In Nepal, the Community Learning Centres in Amarapur, Budole and Lidhansa operate in areas where literacy is low and gender disparity in access to education is high. The centres focus on non-formal continuous and lifelong learning in different forms, including vocational training, further skill development, development of income generating activities, and women empowerment. Impact analysis show that the Centres have brought about significant literacy improvements and made women economically more productive. Literacy and skills training resulted in greater participation in income generating activities among women than among men. The literacy programmes also brought about unprecedented improvements in people's attitudes towards women's education, their involvement in community development and their role as equal contributors to community development.

Source: UNESCO, 2003.

Training programmes for disadvantaged groups, including the poor, have been successful in improving skill levels and employability. This is particularly true of training that is geared to market opportunities and provided as part of an integrated and targeted set of measures to promote labour market inclusion of such groups, rather than as a stand-alone programme. Job-search training, vocational guidance and counselling, and remedial basic education, combined with training in specific skills, can improve prospects of finding a job.

Those countries that have accomplished mass education have emphasized the expansion of post-secondary education and training opportunities. In Hong Kong, China and Singapore, post-secondary enrolments have expanded rapidly. In Singapore for example, the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) and the Polytechnic are targeting people who want to acquire post-secondary diplomas in vocational areas. In Japan and Korea, private companies run their own corporate universities. Instrumental in expanding access to post-secondary and lifelong education and training in Korea has been the Credit Bank System that converts most formal and non-formal learning experiences, including in the vocational area, into credits that can be used for higher education qualifications.

In the particular context of Singapore, the issue of access centres on giving the existing workforce, particularly the low-skilled, effective opportunities for learning. As the pillar of its Manpower 21 blueprint, the country's School of Lifelong Learning (SoLL) framework provides opportunities for the current workforce to retool themselves with new skills and knowledge, and complements the pre-employment education system. SoLL endeavours to

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create opportunities for all to acquire new skills and to move up skills chain. Its five components include Incentives, Learning Infrastructure, Skills Standards and Recognition, Information Provision and Promotion of Lifelong Learning. Also, the Skills Redevelopment Programme under the country's Manpower Development Assistance Scheme (MDAS) retrain poorly educated workers who run the risk of structural employment for new jobs in strategic industries. A number of national programmes provide additional impetus to the governments' efforts to make lifelong learning accessible to all. Among these programmes can be mentioned: BEST (Basic Education for Skills Training) which provides basic education and maths for working adults; CREST (Critical Enabling Skills Training) that gives individuals the seven fundamental skills considered vital for individuals to meet the changing needs in the workplace; MOST (Modular Skills Training) which is offered by the Institute for Technical Education to working adults to help them up-date and up-grade their technical knowledge and skills on a part-time basis; and WISE (Worker Improvement through Secondary Education) which enables workers to improve their English and maths so that they can qualify for a wider range of nationally recognized skills training courses.

In Thailand, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare has created Labour Colleges and the Sukothai-thammatirat (open) University which are tasked to increase the work competencies of the Thai labour force. Managed by the Department of Skills Development, training is given not only in various industrial skills but is also focussed on languages, information technologies and technical literacy. The Ministry has also entered a partnership with The Sukothai-thammatirat University to provide courses to degree level through lifelong learning for the approximately 335,000 Thai workers who are employed abroad. The programme started with reaching out to Thai women workers in Hong Kong, China (ASEM, 2002, Report 3, p. 30).

### *2.1.1 Information and guidance on lifelong learning opportunities*

Crucial to effective access to lifelong learning is the availability of adequate information, guidance and counselling about existing courses, programmes and opportunities. A well informed and active guidance service at national, regional and also company level can be instrumental in helping prospective learners avail themselves of learning opportunities that meet their particular needs. At present, the development of such systems is work in progress. A first step is to identify individual lifelong learning needs. In Denmark, the Radiometer company undertakes a skills audit of all employees early in their career to identify their skill gaps and needs. Many employees are blue collar workers and of foreign origin who need training in ICT skills and Danish (ASEM, *ibid*). Singapore has set up a Careers Centre, whose brief it is to deliver comprehensive information and guidance on lifelong learning courses, on careers and labour market opportunities. The Government is also working with community organizations, employers' organizations and trade unions to provide similar services at other locations in the island. To further expand the reach of its information, the Careers Centre is making available on the Internet its core information and guidance services (*ibid*).

## 2.2 ICT and lifelong learning

Lifelong learning has been boosted by the advent of advanced, ICT-based new learning technologies. Particularly, ICT can overcome the problem of access to lifelong learning and training faced by remote communities, people with various disabilities and those who, for various reasons, cannot participate in conventional learning and training programmes. More

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and more people, enterprises, institutions and programmes use learner- and ICT-centred strategies and methods. As the costs of new technologies plummet, traditional distance learning tools (e.g. correspondence, radio) are being supplemented or even replaced by ICT-based technologies. “Mega-universities” in eleven countries, among them China, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Korea and Thailand, provide distance learning programmes to a total of some 2.8 million students a year at an average yearly cost per student of US\$350, compared to the average cost of \$12,500 per student per year for college and university students in the United States (ILO, 2001, p. 213). China has embarked on several initiatives to expand distance education. Among them is the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region’s distance learning centre which helps develop education and training and reduce poverty in the western region of China by using ICTs. This is a joint project by the regional government, the Australian government and the World Bank. Box 3 illustrates how ICT has been harnessed for lifelong learning in the remote islands of the Pacific.

**Box 3: Distance learning in the Pacific**

The University of South Pacific operates a satellite - based audio conferencing network that links its main campus in Suva, Fiji with the agricultural college in Western Samoa and with extension centres in nine Pacific island nations. The system is used for extension services activities and courses, tutorials for students taking correspondence courses, and outreach services to bring the lifelong learning resources of the University to the people in the region. The saving in travel time and costs resulting from having meetings over the network rather than bringing students from each location to Fiji have been at least ten times the cost of using the network. Drop out rates of correspondence students in courses with effective satellite tutorials have also been reduced. Distance education enables students to stay in their home countries, rather than leaving jobs and families to come to Fiji.

Source: H. Hudson, background paper for WER 2001.

Television is also being mobilized for lifelong learning. China has established the largest transmission network for educational television programmes in the world. The network reaches as many as 100 million Chinese. Some hundred television channels operate at both national and regional level delivering training and continuous education programmes. Viewers include farmers who want to learn new farming skills, teachers who seek formal diplomas through further training, and the general public who wish to obtain some further education and training qualifications (ASEM, 2002).

In Malaysia, policy is focussed on rendering, through ICTs and Internet, more accessible and affordable training and education opportunities to help individuals acquire new competences and qualifications for career advancement. Access is also being promoted by setting up more IT kiosks and cyber centres, especially in rural areas. Another policy prong is the establishment of community colleges, open universities and distance education centres (ibid).

As the amount of information available expands at an unprecedented pace, the onus of selecting, using and transforming information for knowledge creation is increasingly put on *the individual*. He or she is expected to organize his or her own learning. Rather than being a passive recipient of information, the individual must actively, and interactively, participate in the learning process. Teachers and trainers are no longer expected to instruct and pass on information. Instead, they are becoming facilitators, mentors and coaches who remove the roadblocks to the learner’s acquisition of knowledge. Hence, learning-to-learn and knowledge creation become the central skills taught at school and harnessed at the workplace. Being

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accessible to rapidly growing numbers of people, ICTs are increasingly used for such learner-centred strategies. Indeed, across countries and professional disciplines, a considerable number of skilled workers – so far mostly in the ICT-related professions – teach themselves, or combine some formal training with self-learning. A recent survey in Vietnam found that 70 percent of those trained in computer skills had learned them via the Internet. These learning opportunities are not restricted to computer and ICT skills but cover now a vast and rapidly expanding range of learning opportunities for life and work in the knowledge economy and society. However, the “digital divide” – unequal access to ICT and the Internet – both between and within countries risks growing even wider unless serious efforts are undertaken nationally and internationally to reverse the trend.

### *2.2.1 ICT has expanded opportunities for learning in the workplace*

Enterprises have pioneered the use of computers and ICT, first in production, management and communications, and then in providing opportunities for staff learning and training (see section below). In fact, online or e-learning in the workplace is the fastest expanding area of learning, education and training today. Typically, a large company makes available an array of education and training programmes on the computers of thousands of employees, often dispersed across the globe, via their Intranet or the Internet. Employees have instant access to learning resources in the workplace and, increasingly, at home, and can choose and pace their learning according to their needs, work schedules and family responsibilities.

### *2.2.2 “Blending” ICT-based learning with traditional methods*

In addition to their penetration in the workplace, ICT and e-learning are also making inroads in schools, colleges, community centres, training institutions and universities. As ICT and Internet applications in education and training proliferate, they are increasingly used in combination, or “blended”, with other more traditional learning and training methods, such as classroom teaching. Such blending can overcome the sense of isolation and lack of human contact often observed with pure ICT-based learning. At Xerox, an office equipment manufacturer, half of all learning programmes are delivered through electronic means, but are supplemented by classroom-based, student-trainer approaches.

The potential of harnessing ICT for lifelong learning is substantial. So are the challenges. A shift from instruction and passing on information to learning and knowledge creation will require a huge effort in terms of teacher and trainer (re)training. Ingrained professional and cultural habits and attitudes will have to be overcome; resources need to be invested in new learner-based techniques of education and training; and the ICT infrastructure, including in schools and training institutions, will need strengthening. These are challenges even in the richest countries. They are even more formidable in those countries where communication infrastructure is weak, incomes are low, education systems are resource-poor, and teachers lack materials and equipment that could support a shift to learner- and ICT-based education and training. But perhaps the greatest challenge of all is providing basic education to all people, as a prerequisite for access to the information and knowledge society. As the World Employment Report 2001 strongly argues, “digital literacy is essential, but there remains an order of priorities in which literacy and access to a basic education of high quality are most fundamental” (ILO, 2001, p. 324).

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## 2.3 Partnerships in lifelong learning for work

Asian and Pacific, Latin American and European countries have a long tradition of sector- and industry-based education and training. These programmes are frequently run and supervised by the relevant employers' association for the sector. Being employer-led, sector initiatives have the advantage of providing training that is demand-driven and tailored to fit the particular industry's needs. As change in the workplace is continuous, lifelong learning is taking the centre stage also in sector-based learning and training programmes.

An example of a sector partnership among large companies is the "ICT Consortium" formed in 2000 by major ICT companies in Europe with the objective of addressing large and continuous skills gap in the industry at that time. With the support of the European Commission, seven major ICT companies in Europe – IBM Europe, Nokia Telecommunications, Philips Semiconductors, Thomson CSF, Siemens AG, Microsoft Europe and British Telecommunications Plc. – formed an "ICT Consortium" and embarked on a pilot project to explore new ways of addressing the skills shortage. The objective of the project is to put in place a framework for students, education and training institutions and governments which describes the skills and competencies required by the ICT industry in Europe. To achieve that objective the sponsor companies have developed Generic Job Profiles relevant to their main activities. It is hoped that more students will be attracted to ICT courses and employment by providing attractive, plain-language profiles of the jobs, roles and opportunities in the industry today. The Consortium also provides higher education ICT curriculum designers with clear, up-to-date and easily accessible information on the skills needed by the industry; and assists governments in developing policies to foster the growth of ICT skills in Europe (Career Space website at [www.career-space.com/project\\_desc/serv.htm](http://www.career-space.com/project_desc/serv.htm)).

### *2.3.1 Lifelong learning opportunities for small firms*

In comparison with larger enterprises, small firms face disadvantages in acquiring knowledge and upgrading the skills of their workers. SMEs often cannot afford to train their staff. Courses available may be ill-tuned to their particular needs. A World Bank study of training in SMEs in Malaysia in 1997 concluded that they were under-investing in training. Some 80 per cent of the firms do not train or rely exclusively on informal training from co-workers and supervisors. 20 per cent of firms provide formal training. Firms that train meet their skill needs in-house or through various external training sources. Firms rely largely on private sector providers - private institutes, buyers and equipment suppliers, joint venture partners and overseas training institutions. With the exception of Skill Development Centres, the Centre for Industrial and Advanced Skills Training and the German Malaysia Institute, other public training institutions play a minor role in meeting the lifelong learning needs of workers in SMEs. Their main focus thus far has been on pre-employment training in basic and intermediate level technical skills (unpublished paper by Malaysian Employers Federation).

Many innovative partnership programmes have sprung up that particularly cater to the needs of small enterprises. Some of the most promising initiatives for SMEs have been sector-focused and have often involved intermediary institutions that provide or organize training, combined with services and capacity-raising initiatives. These initiatives frequently engage bodies or associations that represent enterprises in a sector. In Thailand, for example, enterprises face increasing pressure from leading inward investors to improve performance and quality, particularly among car manufacturers. A government intermediary institution specializing in technology transfer and training, the Metal Industries Development Institute (MIDI), assists

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small firms in metalworking and associated sectors in upgrading their technology, training and production processes. MIDI has helped establish sector-based entrepreneurial associations, such as the Thai Foundrymen's Society, which can transmit to MIDI and other institutions their needs for training and other services (Pyke, 2000).

*Cluster strategies.* Industrial sectors, geographically concentrated in “clusters”, can benefit from being served by tailored courses that are available in the area. In the Republic of Korea, the Kumi Electronic Industry Complex is composed of around 150 electronics-related firms, mostly SMEs, together with supporting firms and agents. It is served by specialized educational institutions such as the Kumi Electronics High School and the Keum-oh Engineering College (Kang, 1996). In Pakistan, the Sialkot surgical instruments cluster has been developed with the help of local institutions such as the Apprenticeship Training Institute of Sialkot and the Metal Industries Development Centre (Aftab, 1998).

*Supply chain programmes* are another innovation to offer lifelong learning opportunities for workers in small firms, often with government support. When small firms become sufficiently competent they can expect orders from lead firms, which may then transfer knowledge down the chain by providing expertise or facilities, or both. The lead firms, the local small suppliers and local training institutions, and possibly other actors as well, may also enter into a partnership to develop the suppliers. A well known supply chain initiative is the Global Supplier Programme in Malaysia. Box 4 gives some details.

**Box 4: Malaysia - The Global Supplier Programme**

The Penang Skills Development Centre runs the programme, which develops the capacities of local companies through training and linkages with multi-national companies (MNCs). The state Government provides financial incentives, industry shares resources and expertise, and the SMEs make a commitment to transform their technology and operations. Manufacturing and material suppliers learn critical skills to use new technologies. MNCs then “adopt” local companies, and upgrade their leadership skills and technology. Such continuous mentoring and coaching have proven successful; some suppliers have attained sufficient levels of competence to become global actors themselves. Continuous assessment, review and benchmarking of the performance of SMEs are significant features of the programme.

Source: UNCTAD, 2000.

## 2.4 The workplace as source of lifelong learning

A particular case of training in the enterprise is the use of workplace learning for improving its productivity and performance, while also benefiting professional and personal development of the employee. Harnessing the workplace for staff learning has been transformed in recent years. Three factors account for this transformation: the growth of the “knowledge economy”, the impact that the more widespread use of ICT has on boosting individual and enterprise productivity; and the rise of high performance practices that are changing the ways that work is organized.

Knowledge is becoming the key to economic success. Characteristic to economies that apply knowledge to the production of goods and services include the following: a general demand for the highest standard of products and services; high levels of research and development, particularly in new technology; high value attached to learning throughout working life –

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lifelong learning – and open and effective education/ training systems and labour markets. By definition knowledge economies employ workers who are highly educated and skilled. Notwithstanding the recent burst of dot.com and other bubbles, the “new economy” is likely to survive and, with it, the central role of ICT in sustaining technological progress. The new, high tech economy provides a relatively small – but growing - proportion of knowledge jobs in total employment. A more important factor that accounts for wider use of workplace learning is the spread of high performance work practices (HPWPs) in enterprises and organizations. These are used systematically to improve productivity and competitiveness while boosting employees’ motivation and job satisfaction, as well as loyalty to the organization. Learning and training in the workplace are key elements of these HPWPs. However, learning and training are by themselves not sufficient for improved organizational performance; in order to have the desired effect, learning and training must be bundled together with other organizational practices and competitive business strategies (Ashton and Sung, 2002).

*“Bundling” of work practices* – as many as 18 different practices have been identified - can be thought of in terms of four major dimensions: employee autonomy and involvement in decision-making; support for employee performance; rewards for performance; and sharing of information and knowledge. The first dimension refers to practices that structure employees’ opportunities to exercise their skills, for example by working in self-managed work teams and through multi-skilling that help them develop team-working and decision-making skills, as well as a range of technical skills. The second dimension relates to practices that intend to support continuous learning and acquisition of skills, for example appraisal systems, mentoring and coaching and train the trainer provision. The third dimension addresses systems that reward performance and motivate the employee through individual and group-based performance pay. The fourth, and final, dimension is about ensuring that information about decision-making and managing the work process is communicated to all employees and then fed back to those responsible for the organization’s strategy. These management practices come together in the form of a high performance work system which consists of “a particular configuration of working practices and processes with overlapping human resources policies and practices supported by communication, information system, technology system and measurement (ASTD, 2000). The example of Mandarin Hotels – a major hotel chain in Asia – Box 5 below illustrates the “bundling” together of various dimensions of work practices to increase organizational or enterprise performance, profitability, productivity and ultimately job motivation and satisfaction of both employees and customers.

#### *2.4.1 Spread of high performance work practices*

The spread of high performance work practices can, to a large extent, be attributed to market forces and stiffening competition as enterprises seek new opportunities in increasingly integrated world markets. A survey undertaken by the Centre for Labour Market Studies (CLMS), University of Leicester, UK in association with CIPD and IFTDO assesses the uptake of these practices in enterprises of countries as varied as Bahrain, Cyprus, Singapore, Thailand and the UK. Those responsible for the training and development function within an establishment were asked whether they were using any of 13 HPWPs listed in Table 3. The results from the survey suggested that HPWPs are used fairly extensively in these culturally different countries. However, they are not necessarily used systematically across the range of practices enumerated in Table 3.

### **Box 5: Mandarin hotel group - Bundling of high performance work practices**

The Mandarin strategy has several dimensions of practices that are mutually supportive: recruitment and selection; training and development; succession planning; compensation and benefits; and employee relations. The group's director of human resources estimates that it will take up to four years for culture change to be completed in the group. The first part of the strategy has been to introduce a new policy for recruitment and selection of personnel entering the management cluster. The use of an ad-hoc system for recruitment based on often subjective criteria has been replaced by a structured process consisting of a full day's assessment, a redesigned, more sophisticated application form, a weighting index and a score for the interviewing process. As the group has become committed to invest in staff development, the approach to recruitment and selection has become systematic. Core competencies have been introduced for the management cluster, which provide for linking behaviour to organizational objectives. The new competencies are assessed against managers' strengths and areas of development are identified. The next task is to move down to the level just below management and then again to the next level. Because work redesign is fundamental to performance improvement, training and development are the essence of the change project. A university has been established within the group, each job band has its own competences and every job its own job standards. As employees gain competencies – ranging from certificate qualifications to Master's degrees, these are certified, not only by the group but also by an external college or university. Succession planning is being reformed to remove subjectivity as much as possible. There is also search for appropriate structure to ensure that financial rewards are linked to individual and/or group performance. This is not an easy task as the system has to accommodate the movement of people across countries with different terms and conditions. The equation: employee satisfaction=customer satisfaction=increased profit provides the rationale for transforming employee relations. A monthly survey tracks employee satisfaction over time. Recently, the survey revealed three crucial areas that need further work: communication, recognition and reward, and leadership. The later is being tackled through a leadership audit.

Source: Ashton and Sung, *ibid.*

**Table 3: HPWPs used in the CLMS International HRD Survey**

1. Annual performance reviews	8. Profit-sharing
2. Peer review or 360 deg. feedback	9. Multi-skilling
3. Personal development plan	10. Quality circles
4. Job/rotation/cross training	11. Total quality management
5. Mentoring or coaching programmes	12. Team-working
6. Training for trainers	13. Self-directed teams
7. Group/ team-based compensation	

#### *2.4.2 Diffusing high performance work practices*

Can high performance work practices be emulated, and spread on a wider scale, in the region? These practices and associated lifelong learning have been firmly established in many developing countries, but their spread is not as high as in the industrialized countries (Ashton and Sung, p. 149). Nevertheless, over the last three decades, there have been large capital inflows to fuel the growth of mass-production industries in countries such as China, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia. These industries have created not only low-skilled jobs. New domestic

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markets are emerging that provide a thriving environment for HPWPs and high skilled work. In China, MNCs that target the domestic market are using high performance practices, including workplace learning, to raise productivity. Procter and Gamble, an MNC established there, applies high performance practices to produce toiletries that are adapted to the domestic Chinese market. In the ITC market, Chinese entrepreneurs, such as USOFT, apply work practices to train and organize labour in software production for Chinese businesses (Ashton and Sung, 2002).

Many countries in the region - Hong Kong, China, the Republic of Korea, Singapore and Taiwan, China - have made the transition from developing to developed country status. The expansion of labour intensive industries led to full employment and subsequent pressure on wages to rise. As living standards and labour costs rose in these countries, other developing countries with cheaper labour expanded into labour intensive manufacturing. These developments have put pressure on governments and the private sector to invest in skills and move into higher value added goods and service production. It is to a significant extent by promoting the development and diffusion of high performance work practices and lifelong learning in enterprises and organizations that Asian countries can become true knowledge-based economies.

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## **Chapter III. Raising investment in lifelong learning: Potential and constraints**

The issue of raising investment in the lifelong development of workers' knowledge and skills has been the subject of policy discussion in several international and regional fora for many years. The *General discussion on human resources development and training undertaken at the ILC 2000* concluded that it is necessary to guarantee access of all to, and increasing overall investment in, basic education, initial training and continuous training (ILO, 2000a, para. 10). The ILO has suggested that the Cologne Charter of the G8 should be considered in the formulation of a new HRD recommendation. This Charter calls for “*a renewed commitment to investment in lifelong learning: by governments, investing to enhance education and training at all levels; by the private, training existing and future employees; by individuals, developing their own abilities and careers.*” The conclusions of the Lisbon European Council held in March 2000 invite the member States to identify coherent strategies and practical measures with a view to fostering lifelong learning for all, promote involvement of the social partners, to harness the full potential of public and private financing, and to make higher education more accessible to more people. The European Council accordingly called upon the member States to take the necessary steps to promote “substantial increase in per capita investment in human resources” (Lisbon EC, 2000, para. 26). These statements illustrate the international and tripartite consensus on the need to raise investment, financing and incentives to ensure adequate provision and participation in lifelong learning.

The growing interest in this topic reflects the concern of countries to become competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economies capable of sustainable growth with more and better jobs and social cohesion. At the same time, there is evidence that countries under-invest in the development of their human resources.

### **1. Some figures on investment in education and training**

In the EU, in 1999 for example, member States spent on average just over 5 per cent of their GDP on publicly funded education and training, with very substantial differences between member States. In the US and Japan, the figure was 4.9 per cent and 3.5 per cent respectively.

Compared with the OECD average of 5.0 per cent of GDP in 1999, Malaysia reached similar levels of investment followed by Australia and Thailand (4.5 per cent), and the Philippines and Korea with respectively 4.2 per cent and 4.1 per cent. The lowest level of public investment in education relative to their wealth was in Indonesia (0.8 per cent), the People's Republic of China (2.0 per cent) and India (3.2 per cent) (OECD/UNESCO WEI, 2003).

Private expenditure on educational institutions has increased very little in the EU between 1995 and 1999 (from about 0.6 to about 0.7 per cent of GDP). Japan spent about 1.1 per cent of GDP in 1999, the Philippines 1.7 per cent, China and the USA 1.6 per cent. In Korea, education funded from private sources accounts for 2.7 per cent of GDP. Other countries lag behind with figures lower than the OECD average, namely India (0.1 per cent), Thailand (0.3 per cent) and Indonesia (0.4 per cent) (ibid). In the EU, average expenditure by enterprises on continuous vocational training increased in the period 1993-1999 (from about 1.6 per cent to

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about 2.3 per cent of total labour costs, or from about 0.8 per cent to 1.1 per cent of GDP (EUROSTAT, 2002). In Australia, higher levels of employer expenditure on structured training were observed in the same period, However, in terms of expenditure as a share of payroll, there was a decline from 2.9 per cent in 1993 to 2.5 per cent in 1996 (Burke, 2001).

Although public and private spending on vocational training has grown, there are still great differences between countries, both in terms of participation (see Chapter I) and expenditures. Across countries, many recognize that effective implementation of lifelong learning requires more, better and more equitably distributed investment. OECD estimates that the total costs of implementing lifelong learning range from less than 0.5 per cent of GDP in countries with highly developed education systems and high levels of initial education, to more than 3.0 per cent in countries with low educational attainment and literacy levels among adults (OECD 1996).

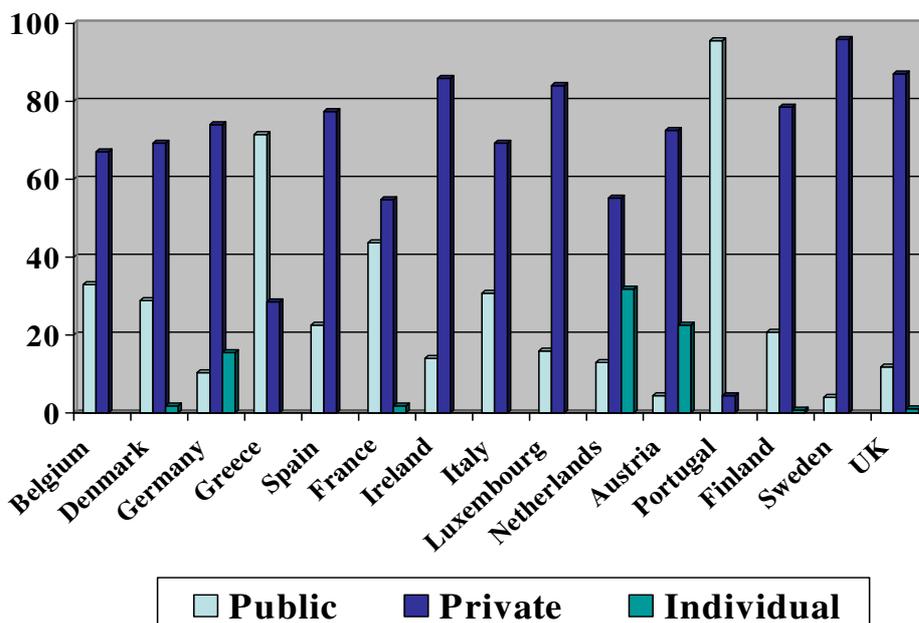
Europe and the most dynamic countries of the Asia-Pacific region have similar economic and demographic prospects. The Asian financial crisis in 1997 reversed decades of progress and sharply reduced job prospects for workers throughout the region. Countries capacity to rehabilitate their education and skills formation systems and ability to cope with the new conditions of the global economy become a major issue. If the challenges of a knowledge-based society are to be met in Asia and Europe, the barriers to lifelong learning must be overcome as quickly as possible, and the proportion of the workforce participating in education and further training measures must be increased substantially. Mobilizing new resources to support lifelong learning becomes an imperative.

## **2. Enterprises' investment in lifelong learning**

*“Enterprises have a critical role to play in investment in training”* as stated by the Conclusions (ILO, 2000a, para.12). In a large number of countries the private sector is responsible for skill development on a substantial scale.

In most EU countries, enterprises represent the main source of funding job-related continuous training, though the government is relatively important in France and Belgium, and in Greece and Portugal. In the latter two countries, the large government role may reflect the training levy imposed on companies there (CEDEFOP/EU, 1996, Figure 2). Between 60 per cent and 80 per cent of continuous training is supported by enterprises in countries such as Denmark, Germany, Italy, and more than 80 per cent in Ireland, Luxemburg, and the UK and about 96 per cent in Sweden. Patterns are similar in countries such as Australia (68.4 per cent), New Zealand (74.6 per cent), and the US (77.8 per cent) (O’Connell, 1999).

**Figure 2: EU – Expenditure in continuous vocational training (%) 1996**



Source: CEDEFOP, 1996.

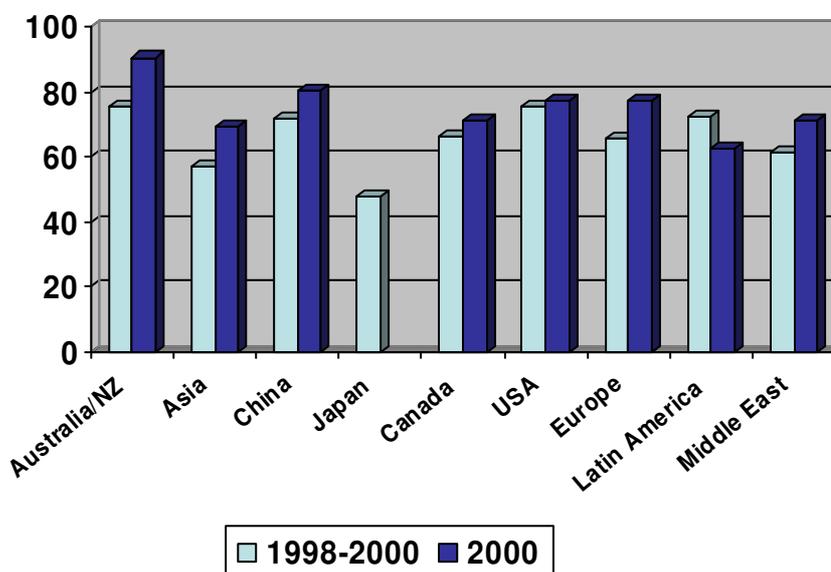
The volume of employer-sponsored training varies considerable across countries. In Singapore, 69.0 per cent of the firms provided training to their employees in 2000 (MoMRSD, 2001). More than half (58 per cent) of all employed trainees received financial support from their employer; 38 per cent had their course fees fully sponsored, and the remaining 20 per cent partially sponsored (National Survey on Adult Training, 2000). In Malaysia, 80 per cent of firms either do not train or rely exclusively on informal training by co-workers and supervisors, and only 21 per cent of firms provide formal training (World Bank, 1997).

Some evidence suggests that enterprises train more and more employees. Overall there has been an increase in the share of employees receiving training in all regions. The ASTD International Comparison Report on employer-sponsored training found that the region with the highest percentage of employees receiving training in 2000 was Australia/New Zealand, where 90.5 per cent received training. The lowest was in Asia (69.2 per cent), Figure 3, (ASTD, 2002). The ASTD figures are based on replies received from some 550 organizations from 42 countries.

In some EU countries, the costs of continuous vocational training courses as a proportion of total labour costs of all enterprises ranged from 1.2 per cent in Portugal to 3.0 per cent in Denmark in 1999; the average in 15 EU countries was 2.3 per cent. A recent survey of 25 large industrial companies, most of them in Asia, found that the companies invested on average some 3.5 per cent of their payroll in training, but with considerable variation around the average. One-third of them invested 1 per cent and just one-sixth more than 5.0 per cent of the payroll (NCVER, 2002). Some firms, particularly in competitive high-technology sectors, spend significant shares of their operating expenses on training staff. For example, IBM Singapore Pte Ltd spent 7 per cent of the payroll on training. On average, each employee received 2 training places and 90 hours of training in 1998. Singaporean GlaxoWellcome

Manufacturing Pte Ltd spent 6 per cent of payroll on training and, each employee was allocated 11 training places and received 106 hours of training in the same year.

**Figure 3: Percentage of employees receiving training**



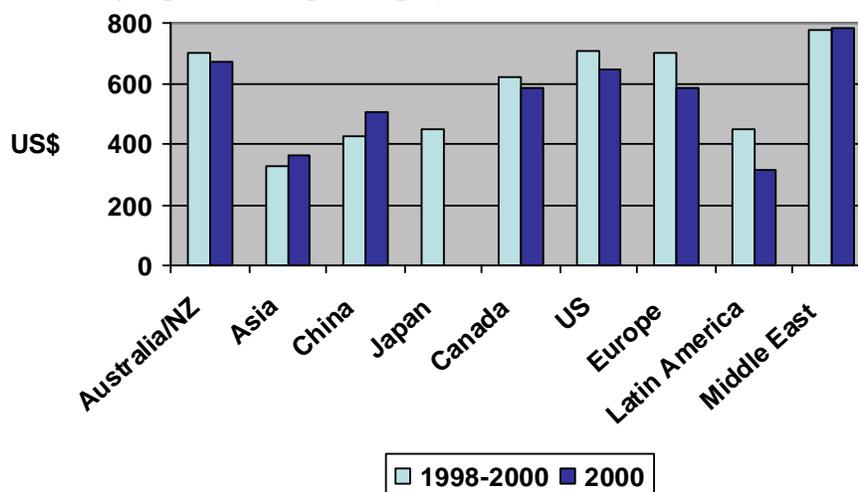
Source: ASTD, 2002.

According to the ASTD Report (*ibid*), total training expenditures as a percentage of payroll in 2000 were highest in Asia (3.8 per cent) compared with 2.9 per cent in the Middle East, 2.5 per cent in Latin America and Europe and about 2 per cent in the US and Canada. Across all the reporting companies, 2.5 per cent of the payroll was invested in training-related activities. This was the result of an upward trend, which started at 1.8 per cent in 1997, then moved to 2.2 per cent in 1998, and to 2.1 per cent in 1999.

In 2000, employers across all regions invested an average of \$630 per employee on training. Examining the various regions, total expenditures were highest for organizations in the Middle East, at \$783 per employee, followed by Australia/New Zealand, where expenditures were \$671 per employee. The lowest level of training expenditure was in Latin America at \$311 per employee.

Organizations in Latin America and Asia invested about half as much as those in the Middle East and Australia/New Zealand regions (ASTD, 2002). Across all reporting enterprises, 2.5 per cent of the payroll was invested in training-related activities. Training expenditures as a percentage of payrolls were highest in Asia (3.8 per cent), while in the United States they were 2 per cent. Although China had the lowest figure in last year's report, it has the second highest in the 2002 report, i.e. 3.2 per cent. In South Africa, a recent survey of 800 companies across regions and industrial sectors reported an average expenditure of 4.3 per cent of payroll costs. Nevertheless, the current level of funding does not match the challenges facing South Africa. "Although this figure is higher than most commonly quoted national averages (between 1.5 to 3 per cent), it remains low in relation to the average spent in many progressive, developed and developing markets in which we seek to compete internationally" (Westcott, 2001).

Figure 4: Training expenditures per employee



Source: ASTD, 2002.

Despite differences between countries, it is commonly agreed that private investments need to be raised, particularly in workplace-based and continuous education which can raise workers' employability and the competitiveness of enterprises. *The organization and implementation of private sector responsibilities in this area can best be accomplished through partnerships between the government and enterprises, between government and the social partners or between the social partners*" (ILO, 2000a, para. 11).

A particularly important issue concerns the fiscal treatment of lifelong learning and other incentives to invest in education and training. The Conclusions (ILO, 2000a) advocate the use of various mechanisms and incentives aimed at encouraging individuals and enterprises to invest in training. They are reviewed below.

### 3. Incentives for individuals to invest and engage in lifelong learning

The individual is becoming the architect and builder responsible for developing his or her own skills, supported by public and enterprise investment in lifelong learning (ILO, 2002, p.6). The consensus is that public authorities alone cannot provide the necessary financial resources for lifelong learning. As adult learning generates considerable private return, employers and employees are expected to finance at least part of it. Greater reliance on market forces is expected to strengthen the incentives for learners to seek more effective learning opportunities, and for providers to improve the effectiveness of learning and training outcomes. Strategies for financing lifelong learning therefore need to develop partnerships between individuals and others, rather than calling for more public funding of education and training.

There have been several co-financing initiatives since the late 1990s. Some of these schemes are attempts to address problems that were ignored in earlier approaches to financing adult education and training, such as providing lifelong learning opportunities for disadvantaged groups. These schemes reflect a willingness of public authorities, social partners and non-governmental organisations to explore approaches that are consistent with a learner-centred

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and demand-driven orientation of lifelong learning. They aim to strengthen incentives and financial means for individuals to engage in learning – particularly those for whom costs have been a barrier to participation. The initiatives can be grouped according to three general objectives: reducing the direct costs to individuals, compensating for earnings lost during learning; and sharing risks.

### 3.1 Reducing direct costs to individuals

The objective of most co-financing schemes is to supplement the resources that individuals put into learning (in cash or time) with a matching contribution and/or eligibility for reduced fees. Examples include the English Individual Learning Account Programme, launched in September 2000. Under this initiative, individuals contributed £25 to set up an account that was matched by £150 of public money. This money they could use to pay for courses from approved training providers. Following an initial slow start, the Government supplemented the scheme by compensating training providers to offer 80 per cent discount to account holders taking courses in ICT and mathematics, and 20 per cent discounts on other courses. Originally scheduled to run to March 2002 and aiming to enrol one million account holders, the initiative was discontinued four months early because of reports of bogus (non-registered) providers who received the subsidy without providing any real course content – illustrating a general difficulty with such subsidies in terms of defining what constitutes “learning”.

### 3.2 Reducing the costs of investing in learning

Another approach is to provide interest rate subsidies or tax relief. The Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development in Korea offers interest rate subsidies to adults (age 27-64) who want to take out loans to cover the cost of tuition for long-term (more than one year) training in private technical institutions. Learners are entitled to take out loans from private banks to cover the full cost. Interest costs are split between the government and individuals. This parallels loans that are available through the Vocational Ability Development Programme operated by the Ministry of Labour as part of the Employment Insurance Programme that was started in 1995. Learners pay one per cent interest and the duration of payment is equal to the duration of studies.

### 3.3 Compensating for earnings lost during learning and training

There are two general approaches to compensate for earnings lost by the individual during full-time learning. One is to set aside a share of working hours (e.g. overtime) in a “time account” that can be drawn on to continue earnings while an individual learns. The other is to set aside a share of earnings in a “financial account”, again to be used eventually to replace earnings during periods of education or training.

Some collective agreements in Germany have introduced “time accounts” to finance earnings lost during the time employees spend in learning programmes. Under this scheme individuals are entitled to apply for the reduced hours from a time account that would continue to pay their wages while workers participated in training. The training does not have to be linked to their present job. In 2001, Auto 5000 GmbH, a subsidiary of Volkswagen AG, negotiated an

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agreement for a new assembly plant that hired previously unemployed workers. Under the agreement, which put strong emphasis on training, individuals can spend an average of 3 hours per week in training, half paid by the employer, and half paid out of the individuals' personal time. At the Frankfurt am Main Airport Authority, similar arrangements entitle individual employees to a Euro 600 training voucher that they can use to pay for training of their choice, on the condition that it occurs outside working hours.

Financial accounts that compensate for earnings lost during periods of learning are rare. A few countries and enterprises have been experimenting with these schemes. In 1999, Skandia, a Sweden-based insurance multinational set up a scheme that encouraged employees to set aside up to 20 per cent of their salary for learning. The individual's contribution was matched by the company. The money could be used to compensate for earnings lost when employees engaged in mutually agreed learning activities. The scheme was modified over time (to facilitate inter-firm mobility), and was eventually adopted by other Swedish companies.

The Swedish government has been working on a scheme that is more modest in scale. Under the proposed scheme individuals would be allowed to deduct from their taxable income up to a quarter of the amount contributed to an individual learning account, with a ceiling of approximately Euros 1000. Money withdrawn would be taxed as ordinary income. However, when withdrawals are to pay for learning and skill development, a certain amount would be tax deductible, and individuals would receive up to approximately Euros 110 as a tax credit.

The Adult Education Initiative was introduced in Sweden in 1997 to raise adult qualifications levels quickly. While not based on co-financing, the scheme offers income support in the form of grants (equal to the level of unemployment benefits) to poorly qualified adults to allow them to complete upper secondary education. The education programmes are available at no charge.

### 3.4 Sharing risks

Finally there are co-financing strategies which aim to reduce the risk to individuals of investing in learning. For example, Australia introduced in 1989 *income-contingent loans* for higher education fees, i.e., the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS), for undergraduate studies. Under current HECS arrangements students pay about 30 per cent of the average cost of a training place. The cost varies by field of study. Students can either choose to pay the HECS directly to the university when they enrol and receive a 25 per cent discount, or defer payment. Students who defer payment begin repaying their debt through the income tax system when their income reaches the minimum threshold (which was A\$24,365 in 2002-03). The repayments commence at 3 per cent of taxable income, and the higher the income, the faster the rate of repayment (to a maximum of 6 per cent). The government assumes the risk for those individuals whose earnings after study are exceptionally low (i.e. who do not reach the threshold level for repayment). In 2002, the government extended the principle of *income-contingent loans* to a wider group of learners by establishing the Postgraduate Education Loans Scheme (PELS).

In addition to the risk to individuals arising from possible low economic returns to learning, there is a related risk to employers. Employees who have been trained in the enterprise may leave before the employer can reap the benefits of the training investment. As part of its "workforce development strategies", the United Kingdom's Learning and Skills Council is considering launching a pilot project featuring "*transferable training loans*" to address the problem of diminished employer returns due to poaching or trained employees leaving early.

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A *transferable training loan* is intended to overcome these problems by creating a debt when an individual undergoes education or training, and which is tied to that individual for the period that it is amortized. If the individual stays with a company, the company would pay off the loan as a kind of depreciation. If the individual leaves, the new employer would pick up the debt. The rationale for doing so would be that paying the debt is cheaper than poaching scarce skills in the open market.

#### **4. Incentives for enterprises to invest in lifelong learning**

Singapore's *Skills Development Fund* (SDF) runs a disbursement scheme that has been highly successful in raising training investments by enterprises. It also gives financial incentives to workers who prepare to join the workforce and those re-entering the workforce. It encourages the development of higher-level skills to support economic restructuring and knowledge-intensive industries. The Fund collects a levy and provides employers with grants for approved training programmes. As an incentive for enterprises to upgrade their workers' skills, the levy is imposed on the wages of low-skilled workers earning less than 1,500 Singapore dollars (S\$) a month. The levy has frequently fluctuated as international economic conditions have changed. It was originally set at 2 per cent of eligible wages, was raised to 4 per cent in the boom years in the early 1980s, and is at present 1 per cent of employees' remuneration or a minimum of S\$ 2 whichever is greater. In 1998, some 565,000 training places were supported through grants by the Fund. In that year S\$ 88 million were committed, raising the total amount committed since the start of the Fund in 1979 to S\$ 1.5 billion.

The rationale for the recent transfer of the Fund's administration to the Ministry of Manpower is to achieve greater synergy in the Ministry's efforts to integrate workforce development with lifelong learning. The Ministry will be better able to develop a holistic plan for the funding and management of the major national training programmes for adults in Singapore, be it through employer-based funding through the SDF or through other funding from government such as the Lifelong Learning Fund.

In Malaysia, a major incentive for the private sector to develop its human resources is training schemes provided and/or approved by the Human Resource Development Council (HRDC) and financed by the Human Resources Development Fund (HRDF), set up in 1993. The objective of the Human Resources Development Act 1992 is to ensure that companies continuously train staff and upgrade their skills. Companies pay a compulsory contribution of 1 per cent of their monthly wage bill to the Fund. Those companies that have paid the levy can apply for financial assistance to defray a major part of the "allowable costs" of employee training. For the period from 6 August 1998 to 31 December 1999, the financing rate was raised to 100 per cent, except for overseas training, which remained at 50 per cent. The rate was raised to encourage employers to intensify their training efforts. Each Malaysian ringgit contributed by small- and medium-sized companies (10-49 employees, with paid-up capital of below 2.5 million ringgit), will be matched by a Government grant of 2 ringgit. This *subsidy scheme* was implemented in 1996-2001. In 2000, 7,135 employers registered with HRDF, 5,236 were from the manufacturing sector (18 per cent from the electronic industry) and 1,899 from the service sector (36.7 per cent from the hotel industry). The number of approved training places increased from 247,673 in 1999 to 301,790 in 2000, a 21.8 per cent rise. Compared with 1999, financial assistance approved in 2000 increased by 7.7 per cent to RM

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113.7 million. In 1993-2000, the cumulative number of approved training places totalled 3.3 million. Financial assistance disbursed was RM 1.2 billion.

The *apprenticeship scheme* under the HRDF benefits school leavers. Under this scheme, employers are required to train school leavers in specific areas agreed by employers and approved by the Fund. Course fees are financed by the Fund. The sponsoring company is required to pay the trainee RM 300 – RM 500 per month. This amount plus insurance and other expenses can be reimbursed from the Fund. Between 1999 and 2000, the total intake into the scheme increased by 17.8 per cent. Upon completion of training, apprentices are awarded the Malaysian Skill Certificate (Level 1 or 2) and an apprenticeship certificate. An added advantage of the scheme is that the sponsor will employ the apprentice upon completion of training.

## **5. Employment insurance to develop workers' competences**

In Korea, the employment insurance programme has been operating since July 1995. It is a social insurance system that aims to reduce unemployment, promote job security and develop the vocational ability of workers. It provides benefits to maintain stable livelihoods of unemployed workers and supports their reemployment. The Employment insurance has three component programmes; the employment security programme; the vocational ability development programme (VADP), and unemployment benefits. The VADP supports vocational training in the workplace, by providing incentives for continuous development of employees' vocational abilities. Employment insurance provides various benefits to individuals and/or employers: (i) training subsidies and tuition support to employed workers, and unemployment benefits and training subsidies during periods of unemployment; (ii) subsidies for job maintenance, outplacement and reemployment when the employer does not lay off workers although economic conditions may justify lay-offs; (iii) subsidies for hiring senior citizens, for promoting employment of long-term unemployed and female workers; (iv) subsidies for VADP, paid training leave, and loans to install training facilities and equipment. VADP includes employment promotion training, university training, and programmes for low-income workers and unemployed workers who are not covered by employment insurance.

Since June 2003 the Korean Ministry of Labour (MOL) has extended training subsidies to cover more workers. For example, insured workers about to move to another job, and older workers, can receive training support. The subsidy is offered to assist outplacement when workers voluntarily take part in job training at vocational training facilities designated by the Ministry. Worker can receive subsidies of up to one million won per year. Subsidies amounting to 80 per cent of course fees for general skills development are provided based on standard training costs set up by MOL. For foreign language courses, 50 per cent of fees are subsidized up to a maximum of 75,000 won per 40 hours ([www.hrd.go.kr](http://www.hrd.go.kr)).

### **5.1 Training of displaced workers**

The employment prospects of displaced workers can be improved by means of policies that help workers move into existing jobs or generate new jobs. Currently, unemployed workers often have difficulty in filling job vacancies because their skills do not match job requirements. Although unemployment is high, there are shortages of skills that are key to continued growth

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and development - in particular, technology, marketing and other “knowledge and information society” skills. Therefore, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Korea, Taiwan, China, Australia and Japan implementing measures to improve the skills of displaced workers (Haworth 1998).

In Malaysia, the *Workers’ Retraining Programme* has allocated additional resources to workers’ retraining. Under this programme, firms that have exhausted their contributions to the Human Resources Development Fund can apply for financial assistance in retraining workers. Public training centres and educational institutions offer training to new labour market entrants in addition to retrenched workers. In Taiwan, China, unemployed workers are given a training allowance that allows them to cover basic daily expenditures while they undergo training in a public vocational training programme. Unemployed workers who complete training and register with a public employment agency are given a transportation allowance. Finally, when no long-term placement or vocational training opportunity is available, workers who settle for a temporary job placement are also given an allowance. Japan is supporting the re-employment of retrenched middle-aged (45-59 years) workers through its Project for Counselling and Supporting Human Resources Development. The scheme provides vocational counselling, and training at private educational and training institutions. Under the Intensive Assistance service provided by *Job Network* centres in Australia, long-term unemployed can obtain individually tailored help to address any employment barrier. Also, the Entry Level Training Support Services provide integrated and streamlined apprenticeship and trainee services to new job seekers and employers.

The above text suggests that there is no a unique way of promoting investment, provision and comprehensive participation in lifelong learning programmes. It is rather a mix of policies that will help resolve the problems of under-investment and access, in particular economic and institutional incentives that increase the demand for and supply of lifelong learning opportunities. Strategies for co-financing lifelong learning are relatively recent, limited in number and still largely untested in terms of their long-term costs and benefits. A major issue is whether co-financing schemes can raise the contributions to, and participation in, education and training of those groups who are the least educated and have been the most under-represented so far.

#### **Chapter IV. Recognition of skills, with special focus on prior learning, and the development of core skills**

The issue of skills recognition and qualifications reform has been a major theme of international debates on education and training strategy. The initiative reflects the changing patterns of learning and work which have prompted governments to review and explore new approaches to qualifications, which facilitate lifelong learning. Learning is no longer ‘once and for all’ nor is it just for a particular occupation as skill demands in the workplace are changing and intensifying. Traditional occupational boundaries are increasingly being redrawn and changes in careers and jobs are now more common. In this context, individual initiatives to engage in lifelong learning are essential for employability. One aspect of the debate on skills recognition, therefore, is how to develop systems to support these individual initiatives.

In most countries, however, traditional qualification systems are defined by the time, location and order of learning, which are increasingly at odds with the new patterns of learning that

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embrace all types of learning activities regardless of where and when such learning takes place. The traditional systems are often divided between academic and vocational qualification pathways and such division has limited mobility of learners from one pathway to another. The system's limited capacity in recognising non-formal and informal learning is also an obstacle to improving access to, and inclusiveness of, the qualification system. Learning at work has tended to be structured and managed by certain craft, occupational and professional associations, often without a clear link to and recognition by the formal system. This has made transfers of learning between formal institutions and the workplace difficult. A lack of transparency and coherence in the system is also regarded as a major obstacle to lifelong learning. This occurs when there is no clear indication of how a qualification awarded by one awarding body compares to another qualification with the similar name awarded by a different awarding body. Therefore, the major challenge in qualifications reform is to develop a system that is more flexible, accessible and transparent, yet without undermining its quality and credibility.

It is also widely acknowledged that an improved system for skills recognition can contribute to: better identification and use of skills by existing employees; assistance and guidance in HRD planning; improved enterprises' recruitment of staff; improved credibility of qualifications and training provision; the creation of systems of certification of portable skills that are recognised across enterprises, sectors, industries, educational institutions; and, the promotion of labour market mobility.

Skills have become increasingly important in determining an individual's ability to secure a job, retain employment and move flexibly in the labour market. Although vocational skills remain important, another category has become crucial for the individual's employability. This category has been variously labelled under key and core skills, key competencies, generic skills, etc. These skills differ both in number and type according to the socio-economic context and time reference. However, there is consensus over the requirement of higher and non-vocational skills that enable the individual to perform at work and in society. In other terms, an individual's employability is the resultant of a set of vocational and core-work skills that can be transferred between and across occupational sectors.

## **1. A National Qualification Framework as an instrument for promoting lifelong learning**

### 1.1 What is a national qualification framework?

The development of national qualification frameworks (NQFs) represents one of the main initiatives in addressing the challenges of qualification reforms. An NQF is essentially a framework which classifies and registers qualifications, according to a set of nationally agreed standards/criteria for levels of learning/skills obtained.

A national qualification framework needs to be distinguished from a *national qualification system* which broadly encompasses the combination of all qualifications available in the country and the institutions, processes and mechanisms which support the provision of qualifications (Young, 2001). An NQF should not be regarded, however, simply as a matrix that indicates how different qualifications relate to each other. An NQF is defined also by distinctive ways of developing, organising and providing qualifications. In an NQF,

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qualifications consist of a set of nationally agreed standards/criteria which are classified at different levels. Qualifications are provided on the basis of obtaining competencies (or expected learning outcomes) stipulated by these standards. This means that gaining a qualification is no longer associated with “what goes into the learning” whether it is a specific learning time, place, or instructions of particular education or training institutions. An NQF yields a pattern of learning that is not bounded by time or location but which can better support learning across different learning pathways (i.e. academic and vocational), or integrate formal and non-formal learning, notably learning in the workplace. However, the scope, structure, organisational and implementation framework vary considerably from one country to another, as discussed below.

## 1.2 How does a national qualification framework facilitate lifelong learning?

The development of a national qualification framework is regarded as being “in the interest of enterprises and workers as it facilitates lifelong learning, helps enterprises and employment agencies match skill demand with supply, and guides individuals in their choice of training and career” (ILO, 2000a). With regard to lifelong learning, improving access to and flexibility in qualification systems are central features of most qualification reform efforts in promoting lifelong learning.

*Improving accessibility and flexibility.* Some features of a national qualification framework, notably its modular structure, statements of attainment (or records of learning) and credit transfers, facilitate easy entry to and exit from learning programmes and learning over an extended period of time. Modular structures mean that learning for a qualification is organised by smaller units so that learners can have a choice of learning towards an entire, or only a few components of, a qualification. The modular structure also allows individuals to accumulate units over a long period of time, so it allows, as a principle, individuals to enter and exit the programmes whenever it suits them without being constrained by the timeframe of education or training programme courses, or ‘wasting’ the learning they gained (Slovenia, Trinidad and Tobago). In Australia, a Statement of Attainment can be issued when only part of a qualification is completed, as a formal record of achievement towards an Australian national qualification. New Zealand has a similar mechanism called ‘Record of Learning’. Assigning credits to all units is also regarded as a contributing factor for greater mobility of learning and for encouraging people to learn more freely across different learning routes and progressing onto a next higher level (Scotland, Ireland, and South Africa).

*Transparency and clear pathways.* An NQF, which presents competency-standards for a qualification at different levels, provides a clear reference for individuals who plan to start (or move to) different learning and career paths and for education and training institutions that attempt to accredit individuals’ prior learning as part of the requirements for obtaining a qualification. Indicating clear routes for career development and desired skill standards are considered important factors for motivating people to learn (Singapore, Jamaica).

*Integrating non-formal and formal learning* – Since qualifications are awarded on the basis of the assessment of competencies (based on agreed standards and criteria) in an NQF, gaining a qualification is not bound by a place of learning (e.g. institution). This opens up the system to those who acquired skills in the workplace and through other activities. Individuals can re-enter the formal education and training system at the appropriate level by getting their skills assessed and certified. Improving access by formally recognising prior skills and learning is

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viewed as an important benefit of NQF (Philippines, Singapore, Slovenia, Mauritius, South Africa, and Ghana). The recognition of prior learning (RPL) is regarded as a particularly important element of the NQF in South Africa in redressing the past inequality in accessing formal education and training and employment opportunities.

### 1.3 Implementation of national qualification frameworks

Since its basic concept was developed and tried in England in the mid-1980s, it was introduced in Scotland and New Zealand by the late 1980s, followed by Australia, South Africa and Namibia in the mid-1990s. The interest in NQFs has been increasing recently as the model has been adopted in more countries including Mexico, Trinidad and Tobago, the Philippines, Ghana, Slovenia, Mauritius, Ireland, Singapore and some Arabic countries (e.g. Oman, Qatar, Bahrain). Some regions have begun discussion on the possible creation of common regional qualification frameworks based on NQFs in their regions. In addition to leading countries with NQFs (e.g. Australia, England, Scotland and New Zealand), international bodies have been actively supporting such initiatives by undertaking research or providing technical and financial support (EU, OECD, World Bank, ILO).

Despite the commonality in terms of its basic definition and main characteristics (e.g. qualifications based on outcome of learning), the objectives, scope and implementation structures vary considerably among countries. In terms of the objectives, some countries need to rectify poor credibility and quality of existing qualifications and training programmes (including Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Ghana, and South Africa). Other countries view an NQF more as a means of raising the skills level of the workforce and as a factor contributing to enhanced competitiveness of the national economy (Singapore and Malaysia). In Singapore, NQF (National Skills Recognition System) is defined as a national framework for benchmarking work performance (as well as identifying job competencies and certifying skills acquisition). It aims to encourage enterprises to raise the skill standards of their employees to achieve the stipulated work performance standard (Standards, Productivity and Innovation Board, Singapore). On the other hand, in countries such as Australia, New Zealand, England, Scotland and Ireland, the objective of improving organisation and management of qualifications (for better coherence, transparency and quality assurance) is more stressed. At the same time, many of the countries raise the issue of poor articulation of qualifications and actual skills needed in the workplace (including England, Australia, the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, Mauritius, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago).

In terms of its scope, for instance, NQFs range from the most inclusive framework structure of Scotland, which includes qualifications for learners with severe learning difficulties (level 1) to doctoral study (level 12), to a more common structure which includes qualifications of secondary education and above (e.g. England, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Jamaica). South Africa's framework is closer to the Scottish framework. The main difference is whether the framework includes only VET qualifications (e.g. Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Trinidad and Tobago), or includes other qualifications such as secondary and post-secondary academic qualifications and higher education qualifications (e.g. South Africa, New Zealand, Australia, Scotland, Ireland). However, even though the framework includes both academic and vocational qualifications, in some countries, qualifications are grouped by each educational

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sector,<sup>1</sup> often with different criteria. This means, in reality, maintaining ‘tracked’ structures in a single framework (e.g. England and Australia) (Keating, 2002).

In the Asia-Pacific region, some of the leading countries in implementing NQFs include Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore and Malaysia. In Australia, the National Qualifications Framework (AQF) is designed to make training and regulatory arrangements simple and more flexible and allow easier movement between courses, programmes and institutions. It has two main components: the Australian Quality Training Framework – and nationally endorsed Training Packages<sup>2</sup> (ANTA, 2003). The Australian Qualification Framework was introduced in 1995 and, after five years of the transitional period, the full implementation was achieved in 2000. The Australia model is a single comprehensive framework including and benchmarking the qualifications at 12 levels (from Senior Secondary Certificate of Education to Doctoral Degree). The Philippine TVET Qualifications Framework was officially adopted in March 2003, although the initiative builds on the on-going work of developing the Technical Occupation Qualification and Certification System since 1994. As the name suggests, the Philippine model focuses on TVET. The framework is based on four levels of competences required for the middle level skilled occupations.<sup>3</sup> The National Skills Recognition System in Singapore is another notable example in the region, officially launched in 2000. The Standards, Productivity and Innovation Board (SPRING), Singapore has set a target that 1000 occupational standards in 100 industries are developed by 2005. So far about 700 occupational standards have been established in 68 industries.<sup>4</sup>

## **2. Recognition of prior learning**

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is regarded as an important means of facilitating participation in formal education and training. RPL provides individuals with an opportunity to validate their skills and competencies irrespective of how and where they learned them, for example, through formal and non-formal education and training, work experience and on-the-job learning. Learning takes place not only in formal educational or training institutions but also in the workplace and in non-formal activities. However, not all learning is formally recognised. Individuals who acquired skills on the job or through other activities are often disadvantaged in gaining access to formal education and training opportunities, or in securing employment which reflects adequately their skills and previous experience. Workers with few, or no, formal qualifications are least likely to secure decent employment. By helping these workers to get their skills formally recognised, RPL creates a level playing field and helps them access further learning opportunities and improve career prospects. For enterprises, a

<sup>1</sup> E.g. higher education, secondary, post-secondary academic/VET sector.

<sup>2</sup> Training packages comprise sets of industry competences designed to support a competency-based training and assessment.

<sup>3</sup> Middle-level refers to those who have acquired practical skills and knowledge through formal or non-formal education and training, equivalent to at least a secondary education, but preferably at post-secondary education, with a corresponding degree or diploma; skilled workers who have become highly competent in their trade or craft as attested by industry (TESDA, the official website, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> [Http://www.enterpriseone.org.sg/nsrs/index.asp](http://www.enterpriseone.org.sg/nsrs/index.asp).

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better recognition of workers' skills is a way to overcome skills shortages and match skills demand with supply. This contributes to enterprises' investment in and planning of human resources.

RPL is particularly appealing to developing countries where many people cannot access formal schooling, but have acquired skills and knowledge on-the-job or through other non-formal learning.<sup>5</sup> Policy makers regard RPL as an important instrument for encouraging and facilitating people to return to study or work, thus contributing to the broader policy initiative of social inclusion.

In summary, RPL is important because it:

- facilitates individuals job entry and expands career development opportunities, thus enhancing employability and labour mobility and improving prospects for gaining decent employment;
- motivates and guides individuals to return to the formal education and training system by accrediting their work experience or other prior/non-formal learning (by doing so, individuals do not have to repeat training for skills which they already have);
- assists enterprises in identifying and tapping individual's skills, which have been unrecognised and, thus, under-utilised;
- helps enterprises with the planning of HRD investments and activities; and,
- helps employment services in the placement (or further training) of job-seekers by better identifying and recognising their skills and competences.

As increased competition and uncertainty in employment characterise the current world of work, the potential for RPL to address the current HRD challenges such as lifelong learning, employability and competitiveness is appealing and this has contributed to strong support at the policy level.

RPL is defined by similar terms such as Prior Learning Assessment, Assessment of Prior Learning, Recognition of Current Competency and Validation of Non-formal Learning. Leading countries in terms of implementation of RPL include Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Nordic countries and South Africa. However, more countries are at the preparatory stage of implementation, or have expressed their interest in introducing it, although progress varies (e.g. Slovenia, Namibia, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago). RPL can be implemented with or without an NQF. However, it is argued that 'outcome-based' qualifications that are a feature of Australian and New Zealand's NQFs better facilitate recognition processes (Keating, 2003), as they offer more flexibility in terms of easy entry to and exit from learning programmes. The qualification structure based on unit-standards also allows learning by unit over a long time span. This contrasts with an approach in Norway and France, for example, in which prior learning is mapped onto educational qualifications.

<sup>5</sup> Discussion at the HRD Committee, International Labour Conference, 2003.

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Attempts to recognise non-formal (or informal) learning itself are not new. However, several developments are contributing to renewed commitment to RPL, promoting it more systematically on a wider scale. Currently, the increasing political attention given to learning outside formal education and training institutions in the EU is creating momentum to support member States' initiatives in this area.<sup>6</sup> The European Commission is, for instance, currently leading an effort to develop common European principles for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, which embrace a diversity of practices but attempt to achieve greater comparability between different systems and approaches. The importance of RPL was also emphasised at the International Labour Conference at ILO in June 2003. The ILO is currently developing a new international labour standard concerning human resources development and training. The proposed text for the new standard was discussed and agreed at the Conference and it will be considered for formal adoption next year. Considerable attention was given to the role of recognising prior learning, in particular skills learned in the workplace, as a means of promoting lifelong learning and employability. The following draft text was adopted in relation to the recognition of skills:

“(The instrument should encourage Members to promote) the development and implementation, with the social partners, of a transparent mechanism for the assessment, certification and recognition of skills and credentials, including the accreditation and validation of prior learning and previous experience, irrespective of the countries where they were acquired and whether acquired formally or informally, and using a national qualifications framework” (ILO, 2003).

In the Asia-Pacific region, New Zealand, Australia and Singapore have advanced the most in terms of experiences, reviews and institutional development for RPL implementation. RPL in these countries has been an integral part of the development of their NQFs. In fact, in New Zealand, the development of the concept and underlying principles of RPL can be traced back to the 1980s. The National Skills Recognition System in Singapore provides a framework for certifying skill acquisition. The framework allows those who lack academic and vocational qualifications to have their skills assessed through a network of approved assessment centres (SPRING, 2000). The certification is implemented within the framework of lifelong learning. Those who wish to pursue formal academic qualifications can seek the transfer of credits to institutions locally and abroad (ibid).

**Box 6: Recognition of Prior Learning – Australia**

The Worker Assistance Program-Forestry industry project is funded by the Victorian government and supported by the Construction Forestry Mining and Engineering Union (CFMEU) and Forest and Forest Products Employment Skills Council (FAFPESC). The Victorian government's 'Our Forests, Our Future' policy statement was developed in response to community pressure to reduce the size of the native timber industry. The Worker Assistance Program, aimed to assist workers displaced from the industry, was instigated in 2002. It provides funds for relocation assistance for forestry workers, an employment incentive scheme and opportunities for re-training in addition to other benefits. One of its features is the assessment of the skills that workers have developed at the workplace, in order to provide them with a skills passbook to present to prospective employers.

Sawmill workers and associated personnel are assessed. These workers are drawn from the

<sup>6</sup> Copenhagen agreements among EU member States, 2001.

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range of occupations, from operatives on the mill floor to those working in offices at the mill. They include a cohort of mature aged workers (over 55 years), many of whom have worked in the industry for most of their lives, as did their fathers and grandfathers. Workers are assessed against any benchmark that is relevant to their experience. Primarily, they are assessed against the competency standards in the Forestry Training Package, but workers have been assessed against the competencies in the Business Services Training Package and against heavy machinery competency standards, amongst others. A local Technical and Further Education (TAFE) Institute carries out the assessments. Qualified assessors are provided for each competency area. The advantage of using a TAFE Institute is that there is a large pool of qualified assessors to draw from.

Five hundred people have been made redundant to date. Ninety-five per cent of these people have gone through the recognition process. Of these 8 per cent have entered further training and 67 per cent have found employment. Some workers have retired (7 per cent), others are not actively seeking employment (4 per cent) and others are receiving workers' compensation due to illness or disability.

Source: CFMEU, 2003.

The Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation Program (ETEEAP) in the Philippines is a comprehensive educational assessment programme at the tertiary level. The programme allows skills, knowledge, attitudes and values gained by individuals from relevant work experiences, high-level formal training, and informal experiences, to be recognised, accredited and given equivalencies parallel to those obtained through formal education (since 1996). Also its TOQCS (Technical Occupation Qualification and Certification System) recognises prior learning whether acquired in a learning institution or enterprise. RPL provides a framework that makes it possible for individuals to enter and exit easily the education system by having the knowledge and skills they have acquired at school and in the workplace recognised. This means that for workers who want to pursue further schooling relevant to their work, their job experiences can have equivalent units earned in the formal educational system (TESDA, 2003). An example can be found also in Malaysia, where experienced and skilled workers, who can provide evidence of their previously acquired competencies, based on the requirements of relevant National Occupational Skill Standards (NOSS), are eligible for applying for Malaysian Skills Certifications (SKM).

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**Box 7: Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation Program (ETEEAP) - the Philippines**

The ETEEAP is an educational assessment scheme which recognizes knowledge, skills and prior learning gained by individuals from non-formal and informal education experiences. It credits experiential learning into the formal higher educational system.

The Commission on Higher Education has been implementing the Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation Program through deputized Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) nationwide. To date, there are eighty-one (81) deputized HEIs that are eligible to participate in the program. ETEEAP is being implemented for the RPL and eventually the granting of credit equivalent/degree in a number of courses/fields of discipline that include: Education, Business, Information Technology, Hotel and Restaurant Management (HRM), Criminology and Technological Courses like engineering, among others.

ETEEAP has been using several evaluation and assessment techniques to ascertain the competence of a student/worker applying for equivalency. Assessment tools include written tests, interviews, product presentations, skills demonstrations, and portfolio assessment. A panel of assessors, consisting of experts in a particular field, determines the candidate's knowledge, skills, and attitudes relevant to a particular discipline. Successful applicants are awarded equivalent credits or an appropriate academic degree by the deputized higher education institution.

TESDA has been working with the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in developing a national framework of equivalency and accreditation for technical vocational educational and training (TVET) students, graduates and practitioners.

Source: TESDA, 2003.

The issue, however, is that the implementation of RPL has been generally slow, or not as widely spread as it was anticipated, despite general agreement and enthusiasm on the potential benefits that RPL offers. This includes some of the leading countries including Australia, England and South Africa. There are a number of issues in implementation, including appropriate assessment methodologies and mechanisms for quality assurance and financing which still need to be resolved if RPL is to achieve its full potential. Factors that limit take-up, for instance in Australia, are reportedly related also to cost and attitudes to RPL of practitioners, students and employers (Keating, forthcoming). On the other hand, some industry-based RPL experiences in the country suggest that provision of RPL tailored to a specific enterprise, or industrial sector, can bring positive results (ibid). RPL provides those workers who acquired skills in the workplace or other non-formal learning settings with opportunities for re-entry to formal education and training (without repeating training for skills that they already possess) and to improve career/employment prospects. However, in order to achieve such an objective, the initiative needs to be supported with appropriate incentive and supporting mechanisms (in terms of finance, institutional and technical support) where social dialogue and partnership between the government, employers and workers can play a critical role.

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### **3. Core work skills for the global economy**

The skills needed to succeed in the workplace have changed significantly in the past three decades. In the 1960s jobs were classified in the United States at 20 per cent professional, 20 per cent skilled and 60 per cent unskilled. By the mid-1990s, however, the percentage for skilled and unskilled workers had reversed, with 60 per cent skilled and 20 per cent unskilled. Although vocational skills remain important, another category has become crucial for the individual's employability. This category has been variously labelled under key and core skills, key competencies, basic skills, etc. A comparative analysis of core work/employability skills in four countries is shown in Annex I.

Core work skills have become increasingly important in determining an individual's ability to engage in lifelong learning, secure a job, retain employment and move flexibly in the labour market. When employers are asked what competencies job applicants are missing they mention, most frequently, the following skills: learning how to learn; competence in reading, writing and computing; effective listening and oral communication skills; adaptability through creative thinking and problem-solving; personal management; interpersonal skills; the ability to work in teams or groups; basic technology skills; and leadership effectiveness.

The interaction of globalization, technological development and changes in the organization of work have resulted in the demand of higher and different skills. Today's world of work calls for individuals who are able to flexibly acquire, adapt, apply and transfer their knowledge to different contexts and under varying technological conditions, and to respond independently and creatively.

#### **Box 8 : Core work skills in China: Employers' perceptions**

The ILO, together with the Centre of Labour Market Studies, University of Leicester, responded to a request from the China Enterprise Confederation (CEC) to determine employers' views on the quality and relevance of the education and training system to enterprises in China. A survey was conducted of 465 organizations located mainly in eastern, southern and coastal areas of China, with a broad cross-section of size of enterprise and type of ownership. The study found that employers require not only higher-level skills but also a much broader range of skills, for managers, and to a lesser extent, technicians, than for other types of workers. These broader skills include, for example, the ability to organize, solve problems, communicate with others, and work in teams. Those organisations operating in international markets have the highest level of skill demands. In these organisations, there is a huge shortage of skilled labour at management and technician level. While foreign-owned enterprises are able to minimize the impact of the shortage of managerial workers through their attractive salary packages, smaller firms, especially the Chinese private sector firms, experience considerable difficulties in attracting managers and technicians, because they have few benefits to offer prospective recruits. Employers also felt that the existing training system is geared to meet the needs of the State Owned Enterprises and public sector. It less tightly geared to the needs of the new economy and those enterprises operating in international product markets. The employers at the leading edge of world markets use training to deliver task skills but also to inculcate to their employees a high level of commitment, team-work and the ability to collaborate. The survey also found that there has been a rapid growth of ICT usage in enterprises over the last five years. The usage of ICT skills is highest among those firms competing in international markets. Most of these skills have been delivered through public sector training provision, especially for managers and senior staff. Manual workers acquire their skills more from in-house provision.

Source: Venter, K. et al. 2002.

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New forms of work organizations that are more flexible and process-based are replacing traditional mass and Taylorist production systems, as well as organizations based on hierarchical command and control. These changes have been brought about by increased competition between global markets and the diffusion of new technology. New systems are required to meet greater competitiveness, flexibility, enhanced quality, reduced life-time of products and services, and ability to quickly respond to customers' needs.

Within these new systems, work is increasingly undertaken by teams of workers who are also involved in aspects other than direct work activities. Multi-skilled employees rotate around self-directed teams, with managers playing more of a facilitator and coaching role, and participate in cross-section groups to address problems that are common to several units of the same organization (e.g. health and safety measures, production techniques, quality issues, etc.). These types of work organizations are spreading rapidly across the globe. In many companies, increased worker responsibility, multi-tasking and decision-making has empowered employees and flattened hierarchical structures. Higher levels of training and performance-based compensation have been introduced and human resources policies readjusted to reflect these organizational changes.

### **Box 9: Critical Enabling Skills Training (CREST) in Singapore**

An example of strategic response to the knowledge society and today's world of work is Singapore's CREST national programme that seeks to develop workers who are able to: learn continuously the best practices and new skills to meet the challenges of the knowledge age; and think critically and apply new knowledge and skills in new and innovative ways so as to enhance their organization's competitiveness. This programme aims to accelerate the acquisition of the seven critical enabling skills. These are core skills that cut across job, rank and industry (Learning-to-Learn, Literacy, Listening and Oral Communication, Problem- Solving and Creativity, Personal Effectiveness, Group Effectiveness, Organisational Effectiveness and Leadership). The programme is implemented through a network of training providers that covers different economic sectors, including banking, hotel and tourism, electronics, telecommunications, garment manufacturing, etc. Up to 90 per cent of fees for course endorsed by the Standards, Productivity and Innovation Board (SPRING) can be financed by the Skills Development and Redevelopment Funds. This applies to all company-sponsored employees. Attendance fees for workers aged 40 years or more are 100% sponsored by the Funds. By June 2003, 189,111 workers had been trained by some 2,350 organizations that have joined and implemented the CREST programme since its inception in November 1998.

Source: Extract from CREST website (2003): [www.workforceone.org.sg/crest](http://www.workforceone.org.sg/crest)

### 3.1 Core work skills and equity

In many developing countries workers often lack basic literacy skills required for learning and "learn-ability", as well as for employability and access to decent forms of work. Various developments associated with globalization have brought about higher vulnerability in the labour market among many population groups. Unemployment remains persistent. The economic and social response has often been limited. Education and skills alone do not create jobs. They need to be part of an integrated policy approach for promoting growth and shared prosperity. The development of core work skills constitutes an important part of a reform package to prepare individual men and women for the knowledge society and therefore to promote equity in employment outcomes through the enhancement of employability of many disadvantaged groups in the labour market.

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### 3.2 Promoting core work skills for all

Developing core work skills and lifelong learning for all is an enormous challenge for any country and it requires pursuing and advancing the education and training reforms that many countries have already started. The Conclusions concerning human resources training and development of the International Labour Conference call for training policies and programmes that take into account “training and education needs in the modern world of work in both developing and developed countries, and promote social equity in the global economy.” They refer to the role of training in helping individuals to develop their employability “by providing general core work skills, and the underpinning knowledge, and industry-based and professional competencies which are portable and facilitate the transition into the world of work.” While defining the employability concept they state that “individuals are most employable when they have broad-based education and training, basic and portable high-level skills, including teamwork, problem solving, ICT and communication and language skills, learning-to-learn skills, and competencies to protect themselves against occupational hazards and diseases. This combination of skills enables them to adapt to changes in the world of work.” They also reaffirm “universal access of all... to basic education, initial training and continuous training. Discrimination which limits access to training should be combated both by anti-discrimination regulations, as well as by common action of social partners.”

### 3.3 International initiatives on core work skills

The ILO is currently undertaking research on core work skills with the objective of raising awareness and understanding in non-industrialized countries on the integration of these skills with vocational skills and promote employability and lifelong learning. This research concentrates on the development of skills for the world of work, especially in developing and transition contexts. The aim is to identify good practices, methodologies and enabling mechanisms that can be shared amongst countries in the introduction of policies and programmes on core work skills.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, a number of initiatives on the introduction of core work skills have been pilot-tested through various technical assistance programmes in developing and transition countries. These skills have been integrated in different education and training programmes, including train-the-trainer, curriculum development and training activities. A number of lessons have been learned from these pilot activities.

In particular, there is a great opportunity for the development of core work skills that enhance workforce employability in developing countries. Most of these countries continue to focus on traditional vocational skills. Countries that have started introducing core work skills rely on existing models. Cultural diversity and different levels of economic and social development make it impossible to identify a common set of core work skills that can be applied in all contexts. In addition, there is a need to promote international cooperation and exchange information on national core work skills practices between industrialized and developing countries. At the same time, applied-research should focus more on non-industrialized countries that have developed and introduced their own methodologies, programmes and skills. Very little is known about practices, consensus building processes and enabling mechanisms that integrate core work skills into adult training policies and strategies.

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Also, given the growing number of regional integration agreements, it would be worth exploring possibilities for the development of common frameworks for introducing policy reforms and programmes on core work skills in countries where labour is geographically and occupationally mobile.

### 3.4 Regional initiatives on core work skills

The European Commission has finalized an Action Plan to develop skills that promote geographical and occupational mobility in the Union. These skills include ICT, language and other cross-cultural skills.

The Asia European Meeting (ASEM) is an interregional cooperation framework between Asian and European countries. One of its main initiatives is to promote lifelong learning in ASEM member countries through dialogue and exchange of experiences. Three working groups were set-up for this purpose. Basic skills as foundation for lifelong learning were the subject of one of the working groups. Issues such as determining a common definition; access mechanisms to basic skills for all; and how to operationalize this conceptual framework were addressed. The group agreed that “a shift from basic skills to key competencies is necessary.” Key competencies such as ICT skills and learning-to-learn skills directly influence individuals’ employability and lifelong learning opportunities. They are equivalent to the core work skills discussed in this chapter.

In a second phase, the basic skills Group will focus on issues of implementing key competencies in lifelong learning initiatives in ASEM countries. A major contribution to implementation should be the development of concrete pilot projects to test the applicability of various models. The Working Group outlined three major proposals that focus on: identifying cost-effective models and quality systems for lifelong learning; institutional change; and development of learning environments. The Group also recommended the establishment of an Asian-European Observatory on “New Basic Skills/Key Competencies” to promote key competency development through pilot projects.

Alliances and knowledge sharing in the area of core work skills development between industrialized and developing countries similar to the ASEM initiative, and among international development agencies, need to be further explored and exploited in order to promote individuals’ employability through sustained economic growth and within more equitable societies.

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## Concluding remarks

This report has illustrated some contemporary trends in lifelong learning in Asia and the Pacific and also in other regions of the world. The focus has been on lifelong learning policies and practices for the world of work. The report does not claim to be exhaustive, instead it has endeavoured to provide examples of developments from a wide range of countries in the region.

It is commonly recognized today that the knowledge and skills endowment of a country's labour force, rather than its physical capital, determines its economic and social progress, and its ability to compete in the world economy. Promoting innovation, productivity and competitiveness of individuals, enterprises and countries therefore underlies contemporary learning and training policies and provision. Similarly, individuals' possession of knowledge and skills increasingly determines their employment outcomes and lifetime incomes. Ensuring that all people have access to learning and training opportunities during their entire life cycle by means of lifelong learning, therefore, becomes the pillar of human resources development and training policies and programmes.

Few countries can yet claim that they have put into place the institutions, mechanisms and incentives that would ensure access of all their citizens to opportunities for lifelong learning. Some countries continue to under-invest in their human resources. Although considerable progress has been made in some countries, many workers lack access to institutions and mechanisms for recognizing their skills including prior learning. The development of a lifelong learning society is therefore work in progress.

Countries are pursuing their education and training system reforms to make lifelong learning opportunities more broadly available. Expanding access lies at the centre of these reforms. Countries are making efforts to improve physical access to lifelong learning by reaching out to population groups that hitherto have been excluded, particularly women, the poor, the low skilled and people who never had a first chance of educating and training themselves. New technologies and distance learning are being harnessed for lifelong learning. Partnerships between government, the social partners, enterprises and a wide range of institutions and representatives of civil society have been instrumental in raising the effectiveness and resource base, and improving the equity outcomes, of many learning and training programmes.

Investment in learning and training programmes is being boosted by several developments in the region. Enterprises increasingly realize that they can improve their performance best by investing in their human resources. Progressive companies provide their staff with opportunities for lifelong learning, increasingly at the workplace, and often encouraged by government's training incentives. Individuals are also given incentives to invest in their own lifelong learning and training, for example, by means of training vouchers and individual learning accounts. The report gives examples of many co-financing schemes. It concludes that policies that encourage investment from a wide range of sources are most likely to raise the total resource base for lifelong learning.

More and more, individuals use the workplace, ICTs and the internet as sources and media for their learning. Such learning tends to be informal. Therefore, recognition of informally acquired skills and prior learning become central to policies that endeavour to enhance individuals' motivation to learn, improve their access to further learning opportunities, and

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reward them for qualifications gained. Countries in the region have recognized the importance of putting into place mechanisms for skills recognition, but, with the exception of a few countries, implementation has, so far, been slow.

Some countries in the region have introduced core work skills development into their education, training and lifelong learning programmes. Although fundamental to individuals' employability, the take up, and integration of such programmes into existing training and lifelong learning programmes, have generally been limited.

Many countries in the region have put lifelong learning development at the centre of their education and training policies. Countries have introduced legislation to promote access to learning opportunities for all. Commonly, education, training and learning policies and programmes are increasingly seen as strategic investments for economic and social development. Developing the policies and institutions, and mobilizing the necessary financial resources, to realize the objective of lifelong learning for all is also increasingly seen as a joint endeavour by the state, enterprises and individuals. Social dialogue, engaging governments and employers' and workers' organizations, is the driving force behind the legal, policy and institutional developments in the area of lifelong learning in many countries in the region.

## Annex 1: Comparative Analysis of Core Work/Employability Skills in Four Countries

<b>Australia</b> Key competencies (Mayer +)	<b>Canada</b> Employability skills profile	<b>United Kingdom</b> Key skills (NCVQ)	<b>United States</b> Workplace know-how (SCANS)
Collecting, analyzing and organizing information	Thinking skills	Communication	Information Foundation skills: basic skills
Communicating ideas and information	Communication skills	Communication Personal skills: improving own performance and learning	Information Foundation skills: basic skills
Planning and organizing activities	Responsibility skills Thinking skills	Personal skills: improving own performance and learning	Resources Foundation skills: personal qualities
Working with others and in teams	Positive attitudes and behaviour Work with others Adaptability	Personal skills: Working with others	Interpersonal skills
Using mathematical ideas and techniques	Understand and solve problems using mathematics	Numeracy: application of number	Foundation skills: basic skills
Solving problems	Problem-solving and decision-making skills Learning skills	Problem solving	Foundation skills: thinking
Using technology	Use technology Communication skills	Information technology	Technology Systems
Cultural understandings	Manage information Use numbers Work safely Participate in project and tasks	Modern foreign language	

Source: Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Business Council of Australia (2002), Employability Skills for the Future.

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