Lifelong Education and Learning

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Core argument

- Our vision for lifelong learning must ensure south – north dialogue
- Examples from Europe and Southern Africa
- Definitions and contexts to provoke and stimulate discussion
How global is our vision?

- Definitions of lifelong education and learning vary
- The perceived purpose of lifelong education and learning is different in different contexts
- Lifelong education – provider led (but is based on a particular definition of provider)
- Lifelong learning – learner led (but is based on a particular definition of learner)
Common values?

- People should engage in continuous learning
- People are learning all the time
- Society is more complex today and people need skills that enable them to cope with society’s complexities
- Our learning should be ethical
- Learning implies change and development
Differences?

- Not all societies experience the same complexities or changes.
- Societies are not at the same starting point in relation to educational opportunities.
- Societies have different priorities, needs and values.

These differences impact on our vision for lifelong education and learning.
Tensions in our vision

- Concepts of competitiveness and individualism Vs equality and social justice
- Emphasis on developing skills and qualifications Vs emphasis on developing critical thinkers and active citizens
- Conformity to the dominant goals and values Vs respect for difference and minorities
Challenges

- Learning cannot be controlled
- Lifelong learning is at the same time;
  - An ideology (all purposeful learning from cradle to grave: formal, non-formal, informal)
  - A goal (for continuous upskilling or democratic citizenship, transmission of values)
  - A process (the enabling institutional structures and accreditation systems)
- A world committee for lifelong learning must encompass global visions
‘North’ Vs ‘South’

THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Indigenous values – active citizenship and nation building
- Privilege the collective, community & spiritual

Basic education as a foundation for continuous learning

Harmonising individual interests with community interests
‘North’ Vs ‘South’

THE GLOBAL NORTH

Westernised values
- Economic competitiveness
- Individualism, neo liberalism
- Survival of the fittest

Qualifications transferability
- Learning that can be measured and graded
Policy definitions - Europe

- European Memorandum
  - All purposeful activity, undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective

- 4 pillars
  - Employability, entrepreneurship, adaptability and equal opportunities
Knowledge and skills

- Contribution to economic and social life
- Individuals are responsible for pursuing their own learning
- New basic skills
  - Digital literacy, foreign languages
  - Social skills – confidence, self direction, risk taking, autonomy
  - Entrepreneurial skills
- Competitive economic relationship
Policy definitions – Southern Africa

- SADC Technical Committee
  - A key purpose of lifelong learning is democratic citizenship, connecting individuals and groups to the structures of social, political and economic activity in both local and global contexts

- Contexts
  - HIV/AIDS, uneven basic education, high poverty rates, uneven democracies, indigenous values for community cohesion
Definition N-S comparisons

- SADC focus
  - Individuals *and* groups
  - Democratic citizenship comes *first*
  - Local *and* global contexts
  - Africa wants to be a mutual player in the wider world

- Core drivers N & S:
  - Economic & social change, demographic trends, educational expansion, rural-urban migration, civil society and political reforms; inequalities;

- are similar but in different order of priority
Country policy interpretations

- Finland – pre memorandum date
  - 1999 policy:
    - Enhancement of know-how, regional, national competitiveness
    - Social cohesion, support, development of democratic society
    - Personal development and empowerment

- UK – post memorandum
  - 2001 policy
    - To secure sustainable economic success
Botswana

- 1997-2004 Policies and Plans. Goals to be:
  - Educated and informed
  - Prosperous, productive and innovative
  - Compassionate, just and caring
  - Open, democratic and accountable
  - Moral and tolerant
  - United and proud

- National qualifications framework, local learning centres, expanded tertiary education system, investment in e-learning and vocational training
Namibia

2003 policy. Priorities:
- Economic – employment
- Social – poverty, gender equality, rehabilitation
- Environmental – ecological sustainability
- Political – participatory development and equity
- Human resource development - capacity building
- Life skills and learning for active citizenship
- ICT and distance education
Bucking the trend?

- **Scotland**
  - 2003 policy
    - Personal fulfilment and enterprise
    - Employability and adaptability
    - Active citizenship and social inclusion

- **South Africa**
  - 1997-2002 policies and papers
    - National qualifications framework
The need to straddle the divide

- Lifelong learning has to cover the whole spectrum of
  - Basic education, secondary education, higher education, out-of-school education, adult education and skills development
- As well as
  - Provide the foundations for lifelong learning through literacy and adult basic education
  - (Aitcheson 2003)
Avoid the assumption ...

- That basic education is a remedial exercise for the South or the few
- And that:
- Lifelong learning should focus on a league table of excellence, measured as economic success, for the North
How to embrace a global vision?

- This committee must include a wide range of players – geographically, demographically and politically.
- We should be ready to promote a definition of lifelong learning that looks beyond its relationship to economic competitiveness.
- We should include in our lifelong learning definition some core values for global living – for example, environmental awareness, peace, gender equality, ethical democracy & economic development etc.
How to embrace a global vision 2

- South – North dialogue
- Embrace non formal as well as formal education
- Provide space for marginalised voices
  - Women
  - People with disabilities
  - Ethnic minorities
  - Indigenous peoples