About the author

Raymond Smith *is a PhD candidate currently engaged in research in the field of adult and workplace learning through the Faculty of Education, Griffith University. Many years as an educator and employer have engendered a strong desire to more fully understand and thus encourage the rich cultural and personal potential of learning in and through work.*

Contact details

5 Hawick Street, Ashgrove, Queensland 4060
Tel: 0417 606862
Email: raymond.smith@griffith.edu.au

Lifelong, life-wide or life sentence?

Terry Clark
Charles Darwin University

This paper examines the life-wide dimensions of lifelong learning. Although the benefits of a life-wide approach to learning are well recognised, there appears to be little explicit attention given to the concept of life-wide learning in Australia. It is argued that recent pronouncements by the Australian Government about the challenges of an ageing population would be better informed by reference to lifelong learning that includes its life-wide dimensions, rather than continued concentration on formal learning.

Introduction

This paper examines the life-wide dimensions of lifelong learning in light of recent pronouncements by the Australian Government regarding the challenges posed by an ageing population. It argues that government responses to predicted economic problems would be

better informed by recognising that lifelong learning includes a life-wide continuum, rather than concentrating on the formal dimension of learning.

Lifelong learning

The term lifelong learning has been around for well over 70 years. It was first articulated in the United Kingdom by Basil Yeaxlee in 1929. Yeaxlee was active in the YMCA (1915–1918); the Ministry of Reconstruction Adult Education Committee (1917–1919); Secretary, Educational Settlements Association (1920–1928); Principal, Westhill College (1930–1935); University reader in Educational Psychology, and lecturer and tutor in the Department of Education, Oxford (1935–1949). The concept lay relatively dormant until UNESCO took it up as a central organising idea in the early 1970s (Faure 1972). Lifelong learning may simply be defined as "all learning activity taken throughout life" (European Commission 2002: 9), whether it is in formal, non-formal or informal settings.

According to Tight (1996: 36), lifelong learning exhibits three main features:

> First, lifelong education is seen as building upon and affecting all existing educational providers, including both schools and institutions of higher education… Second, it extends beyond the formal educational providers to encompass all agencies, groups and individuals involved in any kind of learning activity… Third, it rests on the belief that individuals are, or can become, self-directing, and that they will see the value in engaging in lifelong education.

Merriam and Caffarella (1991: 138) describe four distinct orientations to the various components of lifelong learning: behaviourist, cognitivist, humanist and social and situational. While there are distinct orientations and pedagogies for the component parts of lifelong learning, there does not appear to be distinctive lifelong pedagogies. Zukas and Malcolm (2001: 1) contend that lifelong learning pedagogies do not yet exist in the United Kingdom. They see few conceptual connections between adult and further education, higher education, training and professional development and a growing wall between these sectors in the pedagogical literature. Although the term 'lifelong' implies some continuity within the system, they argue that, so far, lifelong learning pedagogies are marked by disjunctions. They identify at least five pedagogic "identities" in the literature (Zukas & Malcolm 2001: 2).

- The educator as critical practitioner
- The educator as psycho-diagnostician and facilitator of learning
- The educator as reflective practitioner
- The educator as situated learner within a community of practice
- The educator as assurer of organisational quality and efficiency; and deliverer of service to agreed or imposed standards

During the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, lifelong learning in most OECD countries was overshadowed by vocational education and training (VET) with an emphasis on economic, rather than social or personal outcomes (Clark 2000; Jarvis 2002). Recently there has been a re-focus on lifelong learning by the Commission of European Communities. At its meeting in Lisbon in 2000, the European Council issued a Memorandum stating that "Lifelong learning is no longer just one aspect of education and training; it must become the guiding principle for provision and participation across the full continuum of learning contexts" (European Commission 2000: 3).

The Commission undertook a consultative process based on the Memorandum which produced over 3,000 submissions and involved over 12,000 participants. The findings of the consultation stated that lifelong learning has "four broad and mutually supporting objectives: personal fulfilment, active citizenship, social inclusion and employability/adaptability" (European Commission 2002: 9). In this regard, lifelong learning has life-wide dimensions that transcend narrow economic and vocational aspects.

The European Lifelong Learning Initiative defines lifelong learning as

> ...a continuously supportive process which stimulates and
> empowers individuals to acquire all the knowledge, values,
> skills and understanding they will require throughout their
> lifetimes and to apply them with confidence, creativity and
> enjoyment, in all roles, circumstances and environments.
> (Watson 2003: 3)

Life-wide learning

Life-wide learning is hardly a novel concept. Eduard Lindeman,
a colleague of John Dewey, wrote about the links between adult
education and community development in 1921 and 1926, and with
social education in 1933. Lindeman (1926: 4–7) contended that adult
education was based on four assumptions:

- That *education is life* – not merely preparation for an unknown
  kind of future living
- Education is conceived as a process coterminous with life and
  revolves about *non-vocational* ideals
- The approach to adult education will be via the route of *situations*,
  not subjects
- The resource of highest value in adult education is the *learner's
  experience*

Lindeman was strongly committed to action-oriented education, "not
designed merely for the purpose of cultivating skills, but ... something
which relates [people] definitely to their community..." (quoted in
Brookfield 1987: 129–130).

Adult educationists who followed and further developed Lindeman's
traditions included Knowles (1970), Freire (1972), Brookfield
(1983) and Jarvis (1987 & 1995). These writers continued to stress
(1) the value of problem solving and learning from experience,
(2) the community building benefits of adult education and (3) its
transformative and emancipatory outcomes.

Embeddedness of learning in the daily lives of individuals and
communities was observed as early as 1916 by Lyda Hanifan (1916).
Hanifan (1920) is also credited as being the first to discuss the notion
of social capital. More recently, Bourdieu (1983) with regard to social
theory, Coleman (1988) in his discussions of the social context of
education and Putnam (2000) have added to our understandings of
the nexus between learning and social capital.

The interconnectedness of adult and community education (ACE),
lifelong learning and social capital in ten Australian communities was
confirmed in a research report by Falk, Golding and Balatti (2000).
"Here ACE expands social capital by calling on existing networks
and by generating new networks and connections... Social capital
production is the *modus operandi* of ACE not a by-product" (Falk et
al. 2000: 78–79).

These writers all make linkages between lifelong learning and social
capital. They also confirm the broader, life-wide dimensions of
learning that extend well beyond formal education and training
settings.

In Sweden, the National Agency for Education has put forward
a conceptual framework for both lifelong learning and life-
wide learning (Skolverket 2000). Lifelong learning is seen as a
holistic view of education and recognises learning from different
environments. The concept also consists of two dimensions
(Skolverket 2000: 19):

- life-long learning, recognising that individuals learn throughout a
  lifetime, and
- life-wide learning, recognising the formal, non-formal and
  informal settings.

Lifelong

Death

▲

Life-wide   Formal ←   →Informal

▲

Birth
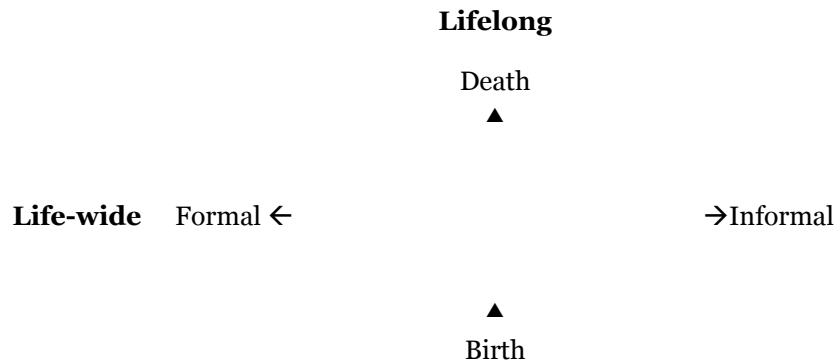
The life-long dimension is relatively non-problematic, as it simply comprises what an individual learns throughout life. It is widely accepted that as knowledge and skills become obsolete, individuals need continuously to update their competencies in a process of continuous learning.

The life-wide dimension is more complex, as it embraces an extensive range of learning settings and contexts, such as the following:

Formal	Non-formal	Informal
ACE institutions	Labour market programs	Clubs
Universities	Professional associations	Libraries
VET providers	On-the-job training	Museums
High schools	Work experience programs	Art galleries
Primary schools	Volunteer organisations	Playgrounds
Pre-schools	Childcare centres	Families
U3As	Learning circles	Eldercare homes

The distinction between formal and non-formal learning environments is about **where** learning takes place. Formal learning occurs within institutions established primarily to deliver education and training, often leading to recognised outcomes and qualifications. Non-formal learning has intended education and training outcomes, however, the setting is outside dedicated learning institutions, most often in places where learning is not the primary business.

Informal learning is distinguishable by an absence of primary **intent**. It can occur almost anywhere, but as a by-product of other activities. It is often unplanned and without explicit emphasis on learning, yet may still lead to the acquisition of valuable skills, knowledge and attitudes.

This Swedish analysis of lifelong learning differs from that postulated by the OECD which classifies formal learning as a program of study that is recognised through a qualification, non-formal learning as a program of study that is not recognised through a qualification, and informal learning as that which is achieved outside an organised program (Watson 2003: 2). While the OECD version dominates in Australia, it can be argued that such an analysis privileges formal learning over non-formal and informal learning (Clark 2000, Jarvis 2002). For example, a manifestation of this hegemony is the failure of many Australian governments to develop thorough adult learning policies or adequately resource their ACE sectors, as the following grants demonstrate (NCVER 2003):

Australia total ACE grants 2002 - $50,298,000 - 100%
Victoria - $31,027,000 - 62%
NSW   - $16,690,000 - 33%
SA   - $1,252,000 - 2.5%
Qld   - $647,000 - 1.3%
ACT   - $536,000 - 1.1%
NT   - $86,000 - 0.17%
WA   - $36,000 - 0.07%
TAS   - $24,000 - 0.04%

In order to reposition non-formal and informal learning as equally valid contributors to lifelong learning and national skill formation, it may be useful to use the Skolverket model, rather than that of the OECD.

Although some writers have discussed the benefits of non-formal learning (Billett 2001), informal learning (Foley 1999) and ACE (McIntyre 1998) in Australia, there have been relatively few explicit references to the life-wide continuum of lifelong learning (for example, ALA 2004: 4 & 14, Cross 2004, Brennan 2004, O'Toole 2003). With exception of the ALA, these writers have not discussed life-wide learning in any great depth. Government policy and position papers are largely silent, while indirect references may be found in Birch (2003), DEST (2003) and DETIR (2000). A few professional associations and peak bodies (e.g. LLCQ 2002) have also made indirect references to life-wide learning in policy documents and submissions to governments.

In Europe, substantial discussions about life-wide learning have been published by the European Commission (2000 & 2001), Jarvis (2002) and Sweden's National Agency for Education (Skolverket 2000). Government agencies in Belgium, Denmark (Undervisnings Ministeriet 2004), Ireland and Romania also make references to life-wide learning and its applications.

In Hong Kong, life-wide learning is referred to quite frequently, but in the narrower context of school education (Yip 2002). The concept was introduced by the Education and Manpower Bureau and the Curriculum Development Council in *Learning to learn* (2001). It generally refers to life-wide learning experiences as those which "take place beyond the classroom" (Employment and Manpower Bureau 2004). This interpretation of life-wide learning is about experiential learning in "authentic environments". As such, it mainly concentrates on the formal and non-formal dimensions, rather than on the informal. Local primary and secondary schools have started to design various modes of life-wide learning activities tailored for their own needs.

According to Yip (2002), life-wide learning is seen in Hong Kong as a long-term educational strategy, which is supported by a set of complete philosophy. Its slogan is "support from the community and learning beyond the classroom". It aims at enabling students to learn efficiently from authentic experiences or experiences different from those of the classroom to strengthen whole-person education. From a macroscopic point of view, the strategy of 'life-wide learning' contains the following four characteristics and strengths:

- "learning-focused" rather than "activity-focused"
- closely linked with the curriculum: extending, enriching, enabling
- the three elements in the contextual matrix: the coordination of time, place and people
- community support: enhancing social trust

Thus in Hong Kong, government focus on life-wide learning appears to concentrate on forging links between formal and non-formal learning environments. While this is consistent with the well-established tenets of lifelong learning, it remains to be seen whether Hong Kong embraces a more holistic approach by (1) formally recognising the relevance of informal learning and (2) articulating policy beyond school education.

Life sentence?

Australian Treasurer Peter Costello (2004) recently put forward policy suggestions to improve the affordability of retirement. Citing his *Intergenerational report* (Costello 2002), he observed that by 2042 the proportion of Australians aged over 65 was projected to almost double from 12.7% of population to around 25%, with the largest increases being in persons aged 85 and over. During the same time period, annual growth of the Australian workforce was expected

to decline from 1.2% to zero. In 2002 there were approximately five working people to support each person over 65. By 2042 this will have fallen to 2.5 working people to support each person over 65. The implications of an increasing dependency ratio between those in the workforce and those in retirement have been widely canvassed. If no action is taken, it is estimated that by 2042 the additional annual cost of social security and other aged care services to the Australian Government will be approximately five percent of gross domestic product, or $40 billion.

Costello's suggestions, drawn from his discussion paper, *Australia's demographic challenges* (The Treasury 2004), call for a significant increase in the participation rate in the Australian labour force, which in 2002 was 78% and ranked 12th among OECD countries. The paper sets out three complementary policy areas to lift labour force participation: (1) improvements in the capacity for work, through better health and education, (2) better incentives to work, and (3) improved flexibility in the workplace.

The paper contends that 12% of 15 year old Australian students and around 20% of adults

> ... continue to have very poor literacy skills. Further improvements in education would have widespread benefits. Individuals can derive financial and economic benefits while society overall benefits from a higher average level of education and skills that lead to greater productivity and employment (The Treasury 2004: 4).

The paper trumpets a range of Australian Government education and training initiatives that will supposedly address these demographic challenges including: higher education reform, Backing Australia's Future, New Apprenticeships, reforms to literacy and numeracy education in schools, improvements in teacher quality, common curriculum outcomes, uniform school starting age and programs for 'at risk' teenagers. It also states:

> Over the past 20 years, unskilled workers have not been as involved in the labour force as their more skilled counterparts ... Improving skill levels – particularly for the low skilled – is a key element of improving overall participation levels (The Treasury 2004: 4).

Most of these initiatives are in the formal learning sector and concentrate on pre-employment, or entry-level education and training. If, as forecast, new entrants into the labour force halve over the next forty years, then such an emphasis on 'front-end' solutions seems misdirected. Although the paper recommends applying "remedial efforts to improve the participation rates of the current group of adult workers, particularly the low skilled and mature-aged" (The Treasury 2004: 6), there are no new suggestions for assisting older people to remain in or re-enter the workforce.

Later, the paper cites Job Network Training Accounts, Training Credits gained through Work for the Dole, Transition to Work Programs (which require a person to be unemployed for two or more years) and Intensive Assistance as remedial strategies (The Treasury 2004: 15). However, these tend to be reactive interventions which have been criticised for their limited scope, restrictive eligibility and modest employment outcomes (Brophy 2001). More futures-oriented solutions are required to prepare people for tomorrow's needs rather than yesterday's.

The paper makes useful observations about current training opportunities tending to privilege those with relatively high skills levels, negative employer attitudes to mature-aged workers and restricting self-images held by some older people. Overall, however, *Australia's demographic challenges* merely spells out the obvious and provides no new strategies or policies.

If in the future, as Costello has declared, "...there will be no such thing as fulltime retirement" (Olsberg 2004), then many older Australians appear to face a life sentence of myopic education, employment and

training policies and practices. Major barriers to labour market participation, such as the lack of access to recognition of prior learning by older people (Bowman 2003) and affordable training for the low waged have been overlooked.

While lifelong learning is recognised by the Australian Government (DEST 2003: 5, 8–9) as a key to improving employability, there is little acknowledgment of its life-wide dimensions. The current narrow policy focus on front-end, formal learning is inadequate, as is the discontinuous patchwork of state and federal adult learning policies (Clark 2004). All Australian governments need to develop comprehensive, integrated lifelong and life-wide learning policies and implementation strategies. It is significant to note that European countries, including Denmark, Sweden and the United Kingdom with comprehensive and well-articulated lifelong learning policies, exhibit higher levels of labour force participation, even though their demographic profiles tend to be even more aged than Australia's (The Treasury 2004: 2).

Summary

In Australia, the life-wide dimensions of lifelong learning are often overlooked in official policies relating to education, training and employment. The current focus on 'front end' skill formation strategies is likely to have little impact on Australia's demographic challenges. Fundamental and pervasive issues, such as poor literacy levels among significant proportions of school leavers and adults, require urgent, remedial action supported and resourced by governments. It is both inadequate and inappropriate to leave this task largely to volunteers. Recognition of prior learning must also become more accessible and affordable to older people.

If Australians are to participate more equally, and for longer, in an economy that is increasingly knowledge-based, then learning in all its forms should be valued and supported. Mainstream providers

and individuals with existing high levels of skills are privileged under current arrangements. The prevailing market-driven approach to learning is failing around one in five people. Overseas experience suggests that Australian governments should develop integrated lifelong learning policies which support a broader range of education and training options. Families, businesses, not-for-profit organisations, ACE providers and community organisations all need to be included in new learning partnerships so that lifelong learning embraces its inseparable, life-wide dimensions.

References

Adult Learning Australia (ALA) (2004) *Inquiry into the progress and future direction of life-long learning,* Submission 24 to Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References Committee, Canberra: Adult Learning Australia.

Billett, S. (2001) *Learning in the workplace: Strategies for effective practice*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Birch, E-R., Kenyon, P., Koshy, P. & Wills-Johnson, N. (2003) *Exploring the social and economic impacts of adult and community education*, Adelaide: National Centre for Vocational Education Research.

Bourdieu, P. (1983) 'Economic capital, cultural capital, social capital', *Soziale-Welt, Supplement*, 2: 183–198.

Bowman, K., Clayton, B., Bateman, A., Knight, B., Thompson, P., Hargreaves, J., Blom, K. & Enders, M. (2003) *Recognition of prior learning in the vocational education and training sector,* Adelaide: National Centre for Vocational Education Research.

Brennan, B. (2004) 'Response to "Adult Learning in Australia"', Canberra: Adult Learning Australia. Available from http://www.ala.asn.au/members/2004-02-brennan.pdf [accessed: 5 February 2004].

Brookfield, S. (1983) *Adult learners, adult education and the community*, Buckingham: Open University Press.

Brophy, M. (2001) 'The study circle. Participatory action research, with and for the unemployed', PhD thesis, Melbourne, Victoria University of Technology.

Clark, T. (2000) "Lifelong learning: Contested ground", *Australian Journal of Adult Learning,* 40(3), November.

Clark, T. (2004) 'Response to "Adult Learning in Australia"', Canberra: Adult Learning Australia. Available at http://www.lna.net.au/lna_articles.htm

Coleman, J. (1988) 'Social capital in the creation of human capital', *American Journal of Sociology,* 94, S95-S120.

Costello, P. (2002) *Intergenerational report 2002–2003,* Budget Paper No. 5, 14 May, Canberra, Commonwealth of Australia. Available from http://www.budget.gov.au/2002–03/bp5/download/01_BP5Prelim.rtf [accessed: 22 July 2004].

Costello, P. (2004) 'Some policy suggestions to improve the affordability of retirement' in *On-line opinion,* 5 March. Available from http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/print.asp?article=2047 [accessed: 21 July 2004].

Cross, J. (2004) 'Crossing the moat: Art museums and life-wide learning', paper presented to the Museums Australia Conference, Melbourne, 20 May.

Curriculum Development Council (2001), *Learning to learn: Life-long learning and whole person development,* Hong Kong.

Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) (2003) *Adult learning in Australia: consultation paper: You can too*, Canberra: Department of Education, Science and Training.

Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations (DETIR) (2000) *The untapped potential: Benefits for the individual, community and workplace,* Queensland Adult Community Education Mapping and Identifying Project 2000 Report, Brisbane: Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations.

Employment and Manpower Bureau (2004) *Life-wide learning*. Available from http://www.emb.gov.hk/index.aspx?nodeID=1683&langno=1 [accessed 21 July 2004]

European Commission (2000) *A memorandum on lifelong learning,* Brussels: SEC(2000), 1832.

European Commission (2001) *Making a European area of lifelong learning a reality*, Brussels, COM(2001), 428final.

Falk, I., Golding, B. & Balatti, J. (2000) *Building communities: ACE, lifelong learning and social capital,* an anthology of word portraits reporting research conducted for the Adult, Community and Further Education Board, Melbourne, Victoria.

Faure, E. (1972) *Learning to be: The world of education today and tomorrow,* Paris: UNESCO.

Freire, P. (1972) *Pedagogy of the oppressed,* Harmondsworth, Penguin.

Foley, G. (1999) *Learning in social action: A contribution to understanding informal education,* London: Zed Books.

Jarvis, P. (1987) *Adult learning in the social context*, London: Croom Helm.

Jarvis, P. (1995) *Adult and continuing education: Theory and practice*, London: Routledge.

Jarvis, P. (2002) 'The implications of life-wide learning for lifelong learning', paper presented to the Danish EU Presidency Conference on Lifelong Learning, 9 October.

Lifelong Learning Council Queensland (2002) *Lifelong learning and community-based learning: A discussion paper about developing a proposal for a whole-of-government policy for Queensland*, Brisbane, Lifelong Learning Council Queensland. Available from http://www.LLCQ.org [accessed 12 June 2003].

Lindeman, E.C. (1921) *The community. An introduction to the study of community leadership and organization*, New York: Association Press.

Lindeman, E.C. (1926) *The meaning of adult education*, New York: New Republic, republished in 1989 by Oklahoma Research Center for Continuing Professional and Higher Education.

Lindeman, E.C. (1933) *Social education. An interpretation of the principles and methods developed by the inquiry during the years 1923 - 1933*, New York: New Republic.

McIntyre, J. (1998) 'Policy symbolism and economic realities: ACE, equity and the market' in Ferrier, F. & Anderson, D. (eds.), *Different drums, one beat: Economic and social goals in education and training*, Adelaide: National Centre for Vocational Education Research.

Merriam, S. & Caffarella, R. (1991) *Learning in adulthood. A comprehensive guide*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) (2003) *Australian vocational education and training statistics: Financial information 2002,* 30 September, Adelaide: National Centre for Vocational Education Research.

Olsberg, D. (2004) 'Ageing policy reforms: Much noise, little action', in *uniken on line,* Issue 13, May, Sydney, UNSW Research Centre on Ageing and Retirement. Available from http://www.unsw.edu.au/news/adv/uniken/uniken0405/p16.htm [accessed 21 July 2004).

O'Toole, S. (2003) 'Introducing lifelong and lifewide learning in the development of careers for corrections staff', *Australian Journal of Adult Learning,* 43(1), April.

Putnam, R.D. (2000) *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*, New York: Simon & Schuster.

Skolverket (2000) *Lifelong learning and lifewidelLearning*, Stockholm: The National Agency for Education.

Tight, M. (1996) *Key concepts in adult education and training*, London: Routledge.

The Treasury (2004) *Australia's demographic challenges*, Canberra: Social Policy Division, The Treasury.

Undervisnings Ministeriet (2004) *The implications of lifewide learning for lifelong learning*, Danish Ministry of Education. Available from http://us.uvm.dk/lifelonglearning/ABSTRACTS/keynote5.htm [accessed 22 July 2004].

Yeaxlee, B. (1929) *Lifelong education*, London: Cassell.

Yip, S. (2002) *Life-wide learning: Extending, enriching, enabling,* Hong Kong: Employment and Manpower Bureau. Available from http://cd.ed.gov.hk/lwl/doc/2.8.4lwl_3E.doc. [accessed 21 July 2004].

Watson, L. (2003) *Lifelong learning in Australia*, Canberra: Department of Education, Science and Training.

Zukas, M & Malcolm, J. (2001) 'Pedagogies for lifelong learning: Building bridges or building walls?' *Working Papers of the Global Colloquium on Supporting Lifelong Learning* [online], Milton Keynes, UK: Open University. Available from http://www.open.ac.uk/lifelong-learning [accessed: 8 December 2003].

About the author

Terry Clark *is Academic Coordinator in the Teaching & Learning Development Group at Charles Darwin University.*

Contact details

Teaching & Learning Development Group, Charles Darwin University, Northern Territory 0909

Tel: 08 8946 7768   Fax: 08-8946 6755

Mobile: 0418 770 646

Email: terry.clark@cdu.edu.au

Assessing learning achievements and development impact: Ghana's national functional literacy program

Aya Aoki
Tokyo Institute of Technology
PhD candidate

This paper summarises findings and lessons from a recently conducted evaluation of an adult functional literacy program in Ghana. The study attempted to assess learners' literacy and numeracy skills, and ascertain participants' knowledge and skills in various development aspects as well as their impact.

The literacy and numeracy skills assessment exercise suggested that the learners are gaining significant reading skills and modest numeracy skills, while achievements in writing appear to remain weak. The findings also highlight the question of sustainability of these skills, which implies a need for improvements in post-literacy programs.

The assessment demonstrated significant impact of the program on various areas of development. In particular, the study revealed the