Conference on Prior Learning: A Key to Lifelong Learning

29 & 30 JUNE 2012
Venue: Silver Oak, India Habitat Centre
IHC Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi 110 003

Organised by National Literacy Mission Authority, MHRD,
New Delhi, India
in Partnership with
UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, Hamburg, Germany

Background Note

1. Background

The thrust of adult learning in India has been on adult literacy, mainly due to the massive numbers of non-literate. However, the achievement of 75% of literacy in 2011 and the emergence of knowledge economy, challenges of globalization, tremendous expansion of information communication technology and increasing lifespan of individuals calls for a major shift in the adult learning policy and programmes.

In recent times, lifelong learning has emerged as a significant strand of policy around the globe. Lifelong learning emphasises the integration of learning and
living – life-wide contexts across family and community settings, in study, work and leisure, and throughout an individual's life. Today in a complex and fast-changing world, it is necessary for adults, as for all individuals, to acquire and adapt competences (knowledge, skills and attitudes) through all forms of learning to cope with the various challenges. However, while it is widely acknowledged that learning can happen anywhere and anytime, very little of this non-formal and informal learning gets recognised, assessed and certified. Qualifications systems in many societies still focus on formal learning in educational institutions. This hinders the promotion of a more qualified labour force which is crucial to ensuring competitiveness and prosperity of both individuals as also of nations.

One of the biggest challenges that countries face with respect to lifelong learning at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first-century is how to approach the question of the recognition of learning that occurs outside formal education.

During the course of the last few years, policies and practice have been developed in some countries on the assessment and certification of learning outcomes and competences from non-formal and informal adult learning and skills development. However the challenges in this domain are considerable: How to expand the range of educational offerings beyond formal educational institutions? How to connect these non-formal offerings together with the recognition of previously acquired competences to further learning pathways, leading to full or partial qualifications or credits, as well as entry to labour market? How to boost self-esteem, personal development and career planning (paid, unpaid and voluntary work)?

In order to address these challenges it is useful to look at lifelong learning as an umbrella term applicable much beyond adult learning. In fact, lifelong learning is an organising principle and strategy that promotes education on a holistic basis. This holistic approach embraces both a systemic strategy and a holistic focus on the individual. At the systemic level the focus is on: How competence frameworks
can be established for assessing competences in relation to the existing education system? What are the implications of a shift to a learning outcomes-led approach for assessment, validation and certification? What is the link between assessment, validation and certification in adult learning and skills development and the arrangements of qualifications frameworks? How can the formal curricula be made more open to non-formal and informal learning? How can learning-outcomes orientation that meet diverse learning needs be strengthened? How can assessment facilities be established? How can the articulation between communities, business and the NGO sector be ensured in the interest of a coherent structure dealing with quality assurance, planning and funding?

At the individual level, the holistic focus would include strategies supporting individuals by providing the basis for goal-directed personal development and career-planning; putting in place a portfolio or competence passport as a way of individuals reflecting on, collating, describing and presenting their own skills and competences.

Recognition of prior learning, assessment and certification of outcomes and competences from non-formal and informal learning settings has been on the agenda of international organisations for quite some time. In India, while the adult and lifelong learning has grown, however, suffice to say that it has tremendous scope for improvement. Thus, to gain from international experiences, NLMA will strive to establish an international network and work closely with UNESCO, UNICEF, and other international bodies / countries engaged in lifelong learning and to arrive at bilateral and multilateral arrangements for mutually beneficial partnerships and the sharing of ideas, research and innovation in their areas.
2. Theme of the conference

*Prior Learning: A key to lifelong learning*

3. Objectives

The main objectives of the Conference will be:

1. To demonstrate key aspects of adult Learning in India and its strategic shift to lifelong learning
2. To provide a platform for policy makers and experts to share experiences and lessons learned on the recognition, assessment and certification of learning outcomes and competences in the context of non-formal and informal adult learning and skills development in different national and international settings.
3. To share ideas about innovative practices in the recognition of prior learning in the context of adult literacy and vocational skills.
4. To understand the complexities of establishing a coherent system for the recognition of prior learning in the context of adult learning and skills development
5. To present the draft guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Learning in Literacy in India.
6. To launch the UNESCO Guidelines for the Recognition, Validation and Accreditation of the Outcomes of Non-formal and Informal learning

4. Design of the Conference

- **DURATION:** 02 Days
- **VENUE:** India Habitat Centre, New Delhi
c. LANGUAGE: English

d. PARTICIPANTS: 125

Officials of Government of India and State Government, Academia, Experts in Lifelong Learning, Private Sector, international experts and representatives of International and Regional Organisations / Countries based in India – 10 (from UNESCO local office, World Bank, ILO, European Commission etc)

e. STRUCTURE: / Inaugural Session / Plenary Sessions / Concluding Session (Outcomes)

5. Expected Outcomes of the Conference

a. Enhanced understanding of the practical and political challenges involved in recognition of prior learning and the assessment and certification in the context of adult learning and skills development

b. Enhanced International Cooperation

c. Report based on Recommendations for policy planning

d. Meeting peers from all around the world and sharing experiences

6. For further queries:

Sanjeev Roy
Senior Consultant, National Literacy Mission Authority, MHRD
Tel: +91 11 2338 3446 / Mobile: +91 99999035336 / email: sunjeevroy@gmail.com