Community Learning Centre as a Promising Medium for Promoting Sustainable Development Goal 4: Lifelong Learning

by

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Abstract

United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 aimed at ensuring an inclusive, equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for children, young persons and adults. However, these aims may not be effectively realised, as shown in this chapter, through formal education alone. Rather, a mixture of non-formal education, informal education and formal education is more likely to support local people to bring about sustainable social change in their society. The chapter therefore analyses the concepts of Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goal 4 and argues that the community learning centre is a promising medium for the promotion of Sustainable Development Goal 4: lifelong learning. The chapter also considers participatory communication and adult education and learning philosophies and their importance in the Sustainable Development Goal 4 discourse. Good and promising practices in promoting Sustainable Development Goal 4 at the community level are presented through examples from Tanzania and Thailand. This is followed by comparing the ways in which these two dissimilar countries, from Africa and Asia, are promoting Sustainable Development Goal 4: lifelong learning for all. The chapter then concludes that the implementation of SDG 4 policies and strategies across Thailand – particularly in areas occupied by vulnerable and marginalised communities – can be regarded as a positive vehicle for sustainable social change relative to the country. The promising practices of widening participation of adults and disaffected youth in alternative education programmes in Tanzania can serve also as an example of a possible course of action to reduce the rate of illiteracy and develop soft and practical skills related to SDG 4

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Keywords: Adult education and learning, community learning centres, lifelong learning, sustainable development, sustainable society, Sustainable Development Goal 4, participatory communication

Introduction

Sustainable development, and the conditions by which it can be maintained, has become a buzzword in both policy and practice, at different levels of government and other institutions and in different sectors including business and education. At the global institutional level, the United Nations has developed the 2030 agenda for sustainable development with its associated 17 goals (UN, 2015). In education, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2017) has identified indicative learning objectives for the 17 SDGs and the activities needed to achieve them. SDG 4 is dedicated to the provision of inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all.

This chapter is primarily concerned with SDG 4 – meeting the needs of all children, young persons and adults at local level. The chapter also argues that the concept of lifelong learning for all guides SDG 4 and that the community learning centre is an important institutional medium for empowering a learning community for sustainability in African and Asian contexts.

The chapter is structured as follows: It commences with a definition and perspectives of Sustainable Development. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 is then analysed. This leads to a consideration of the analytical framework, participatory communication, and adult education and learning approaches discussed in this chapter. This is followed by a description of the community learning centre as a medium for promoting SDG 4: lifelong learning. Some promising practices in promoting SDG 4 at the community level in Tanzania and Thailand are then presented. The discussion of SDG 4 at the community level continues by comparing the two case studies from Tanzania and Thailand. Finally, the chapter concludes that the implementation of SDG 4 policies and strategies across Thailand – particularly in areas

occupied by vulnerable and marginalised communities – can be regarded as a positive vehicle for sustainable social change relative to the country. The promising practices of widening participation of adults and disaffected youth in alternative education programmes in Tanzania can serve also as an example of a possible course of action to reduce the rate of illiteracy and develop soft and practical skills related to SDG 4

Defining Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is a dominant and elusive concept used in contemporary discourse surrounding societal responses to the current depletion of limited natural resources globally. However, although sustainable development is a global issue that is extensively researched in both the Global North and the Global South, Servaes and Malikhao (2016) argue that 'there is no universal development model'. They contend that, although it is possible to enjoy 'a more holistic and integrated vision of sustainable development' across contexts, the reality within each context will be dependent on the strategy, resources and capitals available in addition to the needs and views of the people in that context (Ibid, p. 173). Acknowledging the differences that exist across contexts, and the uniqueness of the overall sustainable development process for each context, an analysis of what sustainable development looks like in Thailand and Tanzania is presented in this chapter. The chapter first establishes the meaning of sustainable development in theory, before exploring media for communicating sustainable development and identifying sustainable development in practice within the case studies.

In its seminal report, titled 'Our Common Future', the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) aligns sustainable development with the exploitation of natural resources and associates it predominantly with ways of 'meeting the present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs' (WCED 1987, Sect. 4,

Article 27). Concerns have arisen that the strategy discussed in the report reduces sustainable development to unlimited economic growth (Seghezzo, 2009), focuses on environmental issues, downplays (or even discounts) the effect of ecological influences and emphasises competition (Payutto, 1998). He further considers how competition in the report would be characterised. At the very least this may include compromise, which in turn would require reducing the needs of one or both parties. However, compromising their own needs will lead to the frustration of either party and in this sense Payutto (1998) further claims that development will not be sustained if the parties involved are dissatisfied. He therefore concludes that the strategy proposed in the WCED report leads development into a cul-de-sac (see Servaes (2013) for a thorough exposition).

Alternatively, Payutto (1998) characterises sustainability as being equally about ecology, economy and evolvability and as encompassing the following:

> A correct relation system of developed mankind is the acceptance of the fact that human-being is part of the existence of nature and relates to its ecology. Human-being should develop itself to have a higher capacity to help his fellows and other species in the natural domain; to live in a harmonious way and lessen exploitations in order to contribute to a happier world" (Payutto, 1998, p. 189).

Here, three key points emerge. First, the definition of sustainability might be driven by behaviours and lifestyles which do not harm nature. Second, the concept of sustainability is partly shaped by the way in which people within the national boundaries have been appropriately socialised. Third, societies or communities should adopt a positive approach towards nature and the environment. Finally, it is suggested that these three aspects can support and influence people to live in harmony with their environment.

Although this reflects a philosophical overview of the Global South of how the concept of sustainability evolved or should evolve, Payutto (1998) provides the least prescriptive definition of sustainability. Such a definition of sustainability has increased the number of pillars of sustainable development, from the initial two (economy and environment) in the WCED report to the four dimensions – economic, environmental, social and cultural – that are now recognised globally. Internationally, development is, as Servaes (2013) indicates, an integral, multidimensional and dialectic process which is peculiar to each society, community or context. This chapter adopts this interpretation of sustainable development as a multidimensional process which can take place at different levels and within different settings. All communication processes of sustainable development, as Servaes (2013) further argues, should be open, inclusive and participatory in order to utilise the knowledge, skills and energy of all stakeholder groups concerned with sustainability. In addition to this, Elias and Merriam (2005) outline educational approaches that promote development and social change while Servaes and Malikhao, (2016) describe a participatory communication strategy in which sustainable development can respond to the needs of all social groups in a given context. These educational approaches and communication strategy (used as analytical framework in this chapter) are discussed in subsequent sections of the chapter. Meanwhile, the notion of sustainable development and sustainable development goals are examined next.

Sustainable Development Goal 4: Lifelong Learning

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of goals articulated to help the global community to work collectively to make the world a better place in which to live and to implement a more just society (UN, 2015). The ambitious new Agenda for Sustainable Development, titled: 'Transforming Our World', increases the number of goals from the initial eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) designed in 2000 to be met by

2015, to 17 goals scheduled to be reached by 2030 (ibid). The 17 SDGs focus on topics related to 'economic growth, social development [and] environmental protection' (ibid, item 9) and are further broken down into 169 targets. SDG 4 is devoted to education and lifelong learning.

This indicates that sustainable development has also been attracting political attention in education. For example, the two seminal reports of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – Learning to be: The world of education today and tomorrow (Faure et al., 1972) and Learning: The Treasure Within (Delors et al., 1996) – represent important planning documents and milestones in the world history of education and lifelong learning. The reports underscore the importance of education in addressing environmental and social problems.

These attempts were re-echoed in the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UN DESD: 2005-2014), which was led by UNESCO, and in the Bonn declaration. The declaration suggests that:

> through education and lifelong learning we can achieve lifestyles based on economic and social justice, food security, ecological integrity, sustainable livelihoods, respect for all life forms and strong values that foster social cohesion, democracy and collective action (UNESCO, 2009, para 5).

These policy packages placed emphasis on active involvement in learning and critical pedagogical approaches aimed at encouraging and empowering learners to change their behaviour and help ensure the concept of sustainability is incorporated within policies globally. UNESCO recently issued 'Learning Objectives' (UNESCO, 2017) pertinent to the 17 SDGs, including SDG 4 which is the focus in this section. These specific learning objectives focus on three domains: cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural. In other words, the domains

comprise the knowledge and skills needed to achieve these objectives, the motivation and attitudes that can support them, and the actions needed to reach them.

It is important to note here that lifelong learning is given greater prominence under the SDGs and Education 2030 than in the MDGs and Education for All (EFA) proposals. The scope, policy focus and the countries targeted under EFA and education-related MDGs are limited compared to SDGs. In terms of scope, EFA and MDG2 placed emphasis on universal and quality basic education to children, youth, and adults by 2015. However, the significant percentage of out-of-school children, high illiteracy rates, barriers to education, lack of access to education for marginalised groups and poor infrastructure in some countries (see Kurawa, 2019) suggested that EFA and MDG2 targets have not been achieved. Thus SDG 4, which forms part of the 17 SDGs, expanded the focus to all forms of education – basic education, adult education, higher education and technical education – to 'become part of the continuum supported by the global education community in the realisation of sustainability' (Kurawa, 2020).

In regard to geographical coverage, MDG2 generally aimed at ensuring access to and completion of basic education by children in the Global South. This agenda was pursued further by EFA committing to ensure the right to basic 'quality' education for all in both the Global South and the Global North though. The effort was more directed towards countries with high percentage of out-of-school children. This means EFA and MDG2 are not universal agenda. The subsequent SDG4, however, can be viewed as a global programme as it targets all countries across the world. Globally, SDG4 policy focuses, as Kurawa (2020) suggests, on provision of equal opportunity in access to quality forms of education and acquisition of soft and practical skills for the world of work and citizenship. On the other hand, EFA and MDG2 policies are

narrowed only to access and quality of basic education. In essence, SDG 4, with its associated ten targets, attends to the needs of children, youth and adults and, guided by the concept of lifelong learning, is:

> rooted in the integration of learning and living, covering learning activities for people of all ages (children, young people, adults and the elderly, girls and boys, women and men) in all life-wide contexts (homes, schools, workplace and community among others) and through a variety of modalities (formal, non-formal and informal) which together meet a wide range of learning needs and demands… (UIL, 2015:2).

This description of lifelong learning, which expresses emancipatory, humanistic and democratic values, is currently perceived as 'a philosophy, a conceptual framework and an organising principle of all forms of education' (UIL, 2010:5), is aimed at transforming people's lives for the better (UNESCO, 2016). This wide-ranging scope of SDG 4 also aims to ensure the provision of equitable education and training opportunities for all individuals throughout their lives. However, it requires economic, communication, cultural and other resources to make learning happen within the home, local libraries, community centres or formal schools (World Education Forum (WEF), 2016). The emancipatory, humanistic and democratic values infused in the concept of lifelong learning are considered in this chapter from participatory communication and adult education and learning approaches.

Participatory Communication, and Adult Education and Learning Approaches

This section presents eclectic philosophical approaches. Instead of exclusively considering one particular approach, the chapter draws from the participatory communication model, and the adult education and learning philosophies. These include radical, humanistic and progressive education, discussed below.

Progressive education places much emphasis on hands-on activities which would lead to social change (Elias & Merriam, 2005), the main concern of progressives being to educate individuals towards democracy and prioritise the learning goals of both the individual and society. The authors also note that, in the process of acquiring knowledge, progressives emphasise the learner experience and view the teacher as a facilitator and co-learner. They further suggest that progressive education encourages community participation and draws the attention of learners to the consequences of their actions and to social reform. This philosophy, as the authors view it, has shifted emphasis towards teaching individuals greater practical life issues such as agriculture, health, vocation and social life. It also moves away from the teacher-centred method to the learner-centred method, which focuses on problem-solving or project-based activities. In this way, education can be (as perceived here) a medium of both individual and societal transformation. The humanist and radical philosophies draw, as shown below, from the progressive movement.

Humanist philosophy focuses on the 'freedom and integrity of the individual in the face of increased bureaucratization in society and its institutions, as well as the whole gamut of human relations' (Elias & Merriam, 2005, p. 113). Humanist philosophy is here summarised as primarily supporting transforming of the human condition and society by individuals attending to their own needs and those of others. In the learning process, teachers serve as facilitators or co-learners. Although this philosophy values self-directed learning, it also encourages group learning and group projects, thus developing a spirit of cooperation and communication (ibid). Shared learning promotes democratic values, which lead to an increase in acceptance of learning (Oliver, 1987). Learning together with others can also lead to personal meaning making and transformational learning, which allows individuals to create new meanings in

their lives (ibid). Having discussed the humanist tradition, the chapter now moves on to radical adult education philosophy.

Radical philosophy of education is influenced largely by the anarchist and Marxist traditions. The former calls for the restraining of public schooling from educating students to be obedient and compliant in favour of allowing learners to become creative individuals, capable of selecting their own learning goals (Elias & Merriam, 2005). The latter tradition also calls for the emancipation of people from domination, colonialism, cultural imperialism and hegemony (ibid). This simply advocates for individual freedom and autonomy. Influenced by the three philosophies described above, Freire analyses two educational assumptions – the neutrality of education and the relationship between the teacher and the learners – and concludes that education is not neutral but rather is value-laden (Freire, 1983). He calls for teachers not to exercise power and control over learners as a result of their greater level of knowledge but rather suggests listening to the views of learners in the learning process; engaging learners in education is a welcomed counterbalance to silencing their voices (ibid). This approach also empowers learners individually and socially which in turn can transform their consciousness and the social structures of the society (Elias & Merriam, 2005). This consciousness-raising should be implemented through dialogue and social activities undertaken during the process of learning (Freire, 1983).

It is important to mention here that this social learning process, which is evident in all the three adult education and learning approaches, closely correlates with the key features of the participatory communication model. The model proposes engaging with a range of perspectives (Servaes & Malikhao, 2016). Specifically, the participatory communication approach provides equal opportunities to diverse stakeholders at all levels - international,

national, local and individual - to participate in decision-making process for development (see Servaes, 2013:19). This can be helpful in achieving an understanding of how to move towards more inclusive ways of working that respond to local needs. Local needs, as Jan Servaes clarifies, should be identified by the local people. He draws on the writing of Paulo Freire places emphasis on listening to a plurality of voices as one of processes which could bring to the surface features which are important for the successful implementation of development projects. Freire (1983:76) argued that within a development process there should be a plurality of voices devoid of existing hierarchies of status and privilege:

> This is not the privilege of some few men, but the right of every (wo) man. Consequently, no one can say a true word alone – nor can he say it for another, in a prescriptive act which robs others of their words.

In this sense, listening to the voices is a dialogue or an active process of communication that involves hearing and/or reading, interpreting and constructing meanings, and the understanding of the individuals that results from listening to their voices and is a contextual and interactional aspect explored later in this chapter. This results in a reciprocal relationship in addressing practical life issues such as agriculture, health, vocation and social life of particular cultural and social groups. This chapter also explores how cultural and social groups in Tanzania and Thailand are actively involved in planning and production of media content of their development projects. Of course, it is not feasible to include everyone in its practical implementation however. This chapter is interested to see whether the voices of local people in the two countries are encoded in determining the subjects treated in the messages and in the selection processes. This and other shared features between the participatory communication model and adult education and learning philosophies are analysed in the case studies and discussion sections.

What is emphasised in this section is that the participatory communication and adult education approaches have similar features and are used interchangeably. It is also noted here that sustainable development commences by listening to the perspectives of a local community at a community level or at centres for learning.

Community Learning Centre

A Community Learning Centre (CLC) is a local educational institution typically established and run by grassroots people to provide a range of learning opportunities for individuals and community development (Lee & Kim, 2016). CLCs, which are supported by public and private sectors and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), normally offer literacy and post-literacy programmes, continuing education, income generating and life skills training (Victorino-Soriano, 2016). These learning programmes are often modified to reflect the local needs and contexts of a given community (ibid).

The purpose of setting up CLCs is to empower diverse local groups and to move forward with community development through lifelong learning for all in the communities (Lee & Kim, 2016). This form of learning particularly helps those social groups with reduced access to learning; for example, pre-school children, out-of-school children, women, youths and the elderly. In other words, CLCs offer new learning pathways through which marginalised social groups may acquire creative and analytical skills to enable them to make improved choices for themselves and their communities (ibid). The community also chooses and processes the learning resources directly relevant to its needs, reflects on local content and simultaneously learns how to apply the shared knowledge and seek better information (Victorino-Soriano, 2016).

It is important to specify here that CLCs, which are part of non-formal education (NFE), take place outside the formal system. Unlike the formal education system grounded on a conventional curriculum and on standard teaching and assessment methods practised in mainstream schools, NFE is organised in homes, rural libraries, museums or community centres. Informal education (IE) also focuses on everyday human activities related to profession, family or leisure, and takes place within families, religious organisations, community groups and traditional culture. It is similarly provided by news organisations, social media and various forms of entertainment (Fien, 2012, UIL, 2012). This chapter focuses on the provision of IE and NFE in CLCs.

Presently, CLC programmes are mostly operational in 24 Asia-Pacific nations and ten Arabic-speaking countries (Victorino-Soriano, 2016). Support given to CLCs by countries across the globe has been increasing steadily, however (ibid). This suggests that CLCs are viewed as a medium for learning, information dissemination and networking to implement the SDGs, especially SDG 4. The next section discusses promising practices in the promotion of SDG 4: lifelong learning.

Promising Practices in Promoting SDG 4 at the Community Level

Case Study 1: Tanzania

Political and Socio-economic Contexts of Tanzania

According to the World Bank Report, Tanzania has sustained relatively high economic growth in the last ten years or so (World Bank, 2019). This has, as the report shows, reduced the poverty rate in the country, but the number of poor households has increased due to the faster rise in the population growth rate. The country is home to an estimated 55 million people, of which 13 million are poor, as held in the report. The report further illustrates that the high

population growth rate has undermined the government's attempts to increase access to quality social services such as education, medical care and water. On the other hand, the Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance demonstrates that the country has, as noted in the report, improved in its overall governance indicators, such as controlling corruption, improving public administration and managing public resources for improved social outcomes, between 2015 and 2018 (ibid). Conversely, the global index of Governance indicates that the country's scores either dropped or stagnated in those indicators (with the exception of clampdown on corruption) between 2012 and 2017 (ibid). To put it simply, what are the specific challenges of education in Tanzania?

It follows from the above that, in Tanzania, ensuring universal access to compulsory education for all children remains a challenge. Although primary school enrolment in the country has rapidly been expanded, a significant number of children are dropping out of school or are not attending school at all (UNICEF, 2018). For example, there are nearly 2 million out-of-school primary school-aged children, 1.5 million drop-out in lower secondary school-aged population, and the completion rate of schooling generally is less than 4 percent (ibid). In addition to this, provision of equal educational opportunity for all is another challenge to the country (UNICEF, 2017). Girl-child, children affected by poverty, children with disabilities and children living in deprived areas are most at risk of discontinuing with their education, exclusion from school, or not attending school at all (ibid).

It is also noted in the document that quality education and its relevance is a big issue to be addressed. For example, the school curriculum was failing children to achieve basic learning outcomes (i. e. numeracy, literacy and entrepreneurial skills) (UNICEF, 2018). These skills determine the future academic performance and earning potentials of children. Research

findings on final year primary school students indicated that over 50 percent cannot read in English properly, or achieve Standard 2 level in mathematics, and they barely had high levels entrepreneurial skills (ibid).

This chapter argues that this situation calls for transformation of the educational system of the country, to train individuals in the social and functional skills needed to respond to the demands of the labour market and participate in the creation of a peaceful, healthy, secure and green living society. This would, this chapter further contends, improve wellbeing and reduce poverty across the country. Highlighted here is also the role science and technology can play in using educational programmes to develop a skilled labour force for strategic business (Walters, Yang & Roslander, 2014).

In line with the demands echoed by Recommendation 4 of the UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning, on creating a learning society, the government of Tanzania has initiated educational reforms intended to provide effective education, strengthen adult and non-formal education, and encourage family and community learning**.** The table below shows the alignment of Tanzanian national policies with lifelong learning.

Policies and Plans relating to Lifelong Learning in Tanzania

Policies and plans	Year	Remarks
The Tanzania Development Vision 2025	1999	Focuses on building a prosperous and well-educated society through diverse educational initiatives
National Youth Development Policy	2007	Promotes learning opportunities for youth through flexible non-formal and continuing educational projects realized in cooperation with various stakeholders.
Education Sector Development Programme 2008–2017	2008	Envisages the establishment of links with civil society organizations and the private sector for the provision of high-quality education and training that correspond to the needs of citizens and labour market.

Adult and Non-Formal Education Development Plan 2012/13–2016/17	2012	Stipulates alternative schooling in order to enable out-of-school youth and adults to complete basic education
Education and Training Policy	2014	Advocates the improvement of access to educational services for all learners.

Information for the table was taken from the UIL Publications Series on Lifelong Learning Policies and Strategies: No. 5

These national policies reflect the broader scope of SDG 4 analysed previously in this chapter. Simply, the policies aim to supplement conventional schooling with a range of flexible non-formal and informal learning and training opportunities for children, young persons and adults throughout their whole lifespan. Equally, transitions between the three forms of education and work and vice versa are, as suggested in SDG 4, strengthened in the above policy documents. For example, basic education and literacy standards are expanded and enhanced through various non-formal education initiatives, as evident in the above policies. Simply put, the documents signal that raising the standards of literacy of adults and young persons, their transition back to school and their acquisition of skills and qualities that will increase their earning potential are organised through the following non-formal education programmes: Open and Distance Learning (ODL), Complimentary Basic Education (COBET) Integrated Post Primary Education (IPPE) and Integrated Community Based Adult Education (ICBAE). ICBAE which is a community learning programme aimed at ensuring community participation in achieving SDG 4 or promoting lifelong learning is analysed below.

Tanzanian Integrated Community Based Adult Education (ICBAE)

Although ICBAE is the focus in this section, a discussion around how the other programmes mentioned above may lead to realisation of SDG 4 is presented below, beginning with COBET. This programme provides out-of-school children and youth with alternative education to complete primary education. It also increases the children's and young persons' chances to enrol into secondary and higher institutions (UNICEF, 2018). The programme mainly supports

out-of-school children between the ages of 11 and 13 years and those aged 14 to 18 years (ibid). Although COBET curriculum can be described as 'loose' or 'easy options', it helps out-of-school and drop-out children and youth acquire social capitals that many professions prefer in this rapidly changing global market economy. Conversely, after reaching some satisfactory levels in the programme, the children are returned to formal primary schools that are required to provide quality and balanced education.

Progression to secondary schools is supported through ODL and Integrated Post Primary Education (IPPE) programme. Both IPPE and ODL programmes provide alternative opportunities to secondary school dropped out and those who are denied access to, and expelled from, secondary school because they could not afford the fees (Do Nascimento & Valdés-Cotera, 2018). The programmes are organised by the Adult Education Institute and the Open University of Tanzania (ibid). The programmes are accessible to learners irrespective of their socio-economic circumstances and geographical location respectively. In other words, the programmes are often delivered through virtual teaching and learning (Walters, Yang & Roslander, 2014). Lessons are pre-recorded and shared with learners through digital mass media (e.g. internet and mobile) and printed media (e.g. textbooks and other teaching materials from rural and mobile libraries and CLCs). CLCs are being developed and expanded and one of the existing community learning is ICBAE.

The ICBAE programme was initiated 23 years ago and has adopted learner-centred and community-based learning approaches in literacy and post-literacy sessions for adults and disaffected youths in the country (Do Nascimento & Valdés-Cotera, 2018). They note that the aim of this existing project is three-fold: first, it expands equitable access to, and widens participation in, effective basic education. Second, it supports adults and disaffected young

persons to learn literacy skills and achieve a sustainable proficiency level. Third, it enables adults and disengaged youths to acquire soft and practical skills to improve their livelihoods.

This agenda for sustainable development is, as detailed in the above publication, practised across the 25 regions of the country. A typical literacy group comprises 30 learners and a lead facilitator, who may be supplied by public, private or faith organisations (ibid). The group learning session runs for one year and six months, as also noted in the publication. The group, with its flexible curriculum, focuses on specific local issues affecting the community, plans learning tasks, contributes to the finding of solutions to complex issues and organises income generation activities (IGAs) (Walters, Yang & Roslander, 2014). The initial six months of the programme are devoted to shared learning by the group, followed by 12 months putting learning into practice, which then continues following completion of the programme when groups may establish their own IGAs. The founding of new IGAs is encouraged by way of a revolving loan made to the group (Do Nascimento & Valdés-Cotera, 2018).

So far, an estimated four million disaffected youth and adult learners have been provided with increased access to basic education and other learning opportunities through ICBAE (ibid). From the information presented in this section, it can be argued that ICBAE is in line with the learning society concept. It is shown that lifelong learning, for children, young persons and adults, is being encouraged, through a variety of modalities. Youth and adults were supported to acquire knowledge, attitudes and aptitudes which are required for economic realities. Such qualities would help the re-engaged and re-motivated disaffected youth and adults to actively participate in the process of their individual and community development. IGAs, which are self-initiated community-based learning, seemed to be successful across the regions in Tanzania. This is, of course, not surprising given that the shared learning process, expressed in

the ICBAE, promotes a sense of belonging and increases participation in group and community businesses. This prioritisation of community learning and other forms of education to ensure people of all ages return back to school and learning is showing positive result. As Tanzania is not listed in the top 10 countries in the world with highest rate of illiteracy and out-of-school children (UNICEF, 2018).

ICBAE has also witnessed a dramatic increase in female participation though. The programme does not lead to qualification. ICBAE is monitored and evaluated through field visits by several personnel from national, district and ward adult education offices (Walters, Yang & Roslander, 2014). This is augmented by qualitative feedback gained from learners concerning the quality of ICBAE implementation, obtained during follow-up field visits (Ibid). These and other successes witnessed through ICBAE programme are considered later in the discussion section along with those identified in CLCs in Thailand.

Case Study 2: Thailand

Political and Socio-economic Contexts of Thailand

Thailand saw relatively high school enrolment and progression between 2000 and 2016 (Lee & Kim, 2016). It is noteworthy however that the country's education system failed to respond appropriately to concerns about inclusion, equity and quality. Over a million 15 year-old students attending schools are underperforming (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2019). This is evident in its Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). This shows Thailand slips further in global ranking - from 64th to 66th in reading and 55th to 57th in mathematics. Although it retains its previous 54th position in science on the ranking list, a small percentage of students performed at highest levels of

proficiency in science (1%) and mathematics (2%). Equally, a negligible number of students achieved a minimum level of proficiency in English.

In other words, less than 4 percent of students are demonstrating higher problem-solving and analytical skills compared to 11% on average in the OECD countries (ibid). This PISA, especially English assessment, suggests that the ratio of functionally illiterate 15 year-old students in Thailand is increasing since 2012. Inclusion and equity in education also require greater attention because most of the underachieving students are from small schools in rural villages (UNESCO, 2017b). In these villages, and perhaps in some urban areas, children from poor backgrounds and those with disabilities are less likely to attend schools (ibid). This means some children are being denied their right to education and equally the quality of education that other children are receiving is not training them for modern work and life.

Despite Thailand's wealth of culture and history, the country has been troubled by prolonged political instability caused by stark disparities between better-off urban communities, living in and around the capital Bangkok, and worse-off rural communities, living in the agricultural heartland in the northeast of the country (ibid). In other words, the growing wellbeing and income gaps between urban and rural communities suggest that social and economic developments in the country have not benefitted the disadvantaged. In this context, lifelong learning would be a popular concept in Thailand's education and business sectors.

Education Policies for Promoting SDG 4: Lifelong Learning

The concept of lifelong learning in Thailand is imbedded in its National Education Plan (2017-2036) (Office of the Education Council (OEC), 2017). The plan sets out the government's objective of providing educational opportunities for all citizens for the span of

their lives, with much focus on the poorest communities residing in rural and remote districts (Lee & Kim, 2016). The education agenda also adopts equitable non-formal and informal provisions of education and training opportunities through CLCs utilising local resources (Yoruzo, 2017). The operational plan for non-formal education, informal training and CLCs is outlined and supported by the Office of Non-Formal and Informal Education (ONIE) (OEC, 2017). ONIE also raises awareness of the importance of development programmes and creates partnerships with local communities to participate in CLC projects and activities (UNESCO Bangkok, 2013).

Prior to this, the National Education Acts of 1999, 2002 and 2010 implemented initial reforms for equitable educational opportunities (OEC, 2017). These key acts of legislation have promoted the concepts of lifelong learning for all, continuous knowledge development and participation in learning processes by individuals, families, communities, and public and private sectors.

Also remarkable in the promotion of lifelong learning was the enactment of the Non-Formal and Informal Education Act of 2008, which supported the development of alternative approaches to education and learning (Yoruzo, 2017). The Act also stipulated the adoption of lifelong learning practices and marked the beginning of the integration of formal, non-formal and informal education (OEC, 2017). This is likely to contribute towards improving individual's lives and social conditions at national and community levels.

Community Learning Centres (CLCs) in Thailand

CLCs, as specified above, are institutional media for non-formal education and informal training, used to promote lifelong learning across Thailand. CLCs are, as also shown above,

managed by ONIE through its offices and centres located within each province and district. The non-formal provision focuses on literacy, basic education and continuing education (Yoruzo, 2017). Continuing education equips learners with social skills and the sufficiency economy philosophy (explained below), while basic education provides access to general and vocational training and participation in the literacy project offers access to thousands of 'Smart Book Houses' (UNESCO, 2013). Informal learning, on the other hand, is concerned with the promotion of reading through printed and digital media (OEC, 2017). Both non-formal and informal education at the CLCs is offered to those aged 15 to 59 years within the working population, particularly those who have previously missed out, or are currently missing out, on opportunities to exercise their right to education (Yoruzo, 2017).

She noted that, so far, CLCs have offered such opportunities to nearly 3.9 million Thais from diverse social backgrounds. Of these figures, 2.5 million learners have participated in informal learning and the remaining 1.4 million in non-formal education. This, of course, reduces the number of out-of-school children in the country. Of the 18 million primary-aged children in Asia-pacific who are out-of-school, Thailand is the third country with the lowest rate of such children (UNESCO, 2019). The country also ranks third with smaller percentage of secondary-aged students missing out from school in the nine countries in Southeast Asia (UNESCO, 2017b)

The number of CLCs has recently risen from 7,424 to 8,000 spread across a range of provinces and sub-districts, especially areas occupied by ethnic minorities (Victorino-Soriano, 2016). Learning in CLCs focuses on the specific needs and expectations of local communities (Mongsawad, 2010). The communities need access to digital learning, New Theory Farming, democratic values and Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP). SEP places emphasis on a

'middle path' consisting of three interconnected and interdependent principles of moderation, reasonableness, and self-immunity (OEC, 2017). Simply, these principles are a bedrock for developing self-reliance and self-discipline and can be applied at individual, private business or national economic policy levels (Mongsawad, 2010). By applying these principles, Payutto (1998) argues that communities are more likely to live in harmony in a sustainable society and environment.

Sustainable self-development further requires people to acquire Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills (OEC, 2017). In this way, the Thai government has equipped more than 1,600 CLCs with ICTs and a database for education management, in order to develop the capacities of 1.2 million learners (Yoruzo, 2017). Learners – and especially those from agricultural backgrounds – are being supported to utilise New Theory Farming, which promotes organic farming as a minimum (Mongsawad, 2010). This method of farming opposes chemical fertiliser and chemical pesticide use in farming. These chemicals result in soil acidity which lowers crop productivity, kills insects and imperils the environment, which consequently also harms communities. On the other hand, organic farming utilises the natural resources locally available to produce organic fertiliser and insecticide (ibid). This assists in improving the ecology, preserving the environment and reducing harm to people. To sustain this and other forms of learning, the Thai government resources the CLCs with huge levels of funding and thousands of teachers coached in different pedagogical and knowledge-management approaches, which are subsequently used to collect data for evaluation and improving provision (OEC, 2017). This provision of education at the CLCs in Thailand is compared with ICBAE in Tanzania to allow a deeper understanding to be gained of the different ways in which the two dissimilar countries, from Africa and Asia, are empowering their learning communities for sustainability.

Discussion: Empowering Learning Communities for Sustainability

Many countries have in place an UIL publication series exploring lifelong learning policies and strategies. For example, Yoruzo (2017) examined lifelong learning for social change from the transformative education perspective in 11 Southeast Asian countries and Do Nascimento and Valdés-Cotera (2018) discussed the experiences of five African countries in promoting lifelong learning and their challenges for the future. This UNESCO publications series did not compare the community learning practices for social change in Tanzania and Thailand however and it is important to explore and compare how the two learning practices contribute to social change in dissimilar sociocultural contexts, as set out in the preceding section.

The practices presented earlier indicate that Tanzanian ICBAE and Thailand's CLCs share certain qualities. For instance, they both value liberal and hands-on activities in learning and learner-centred pedagogy, which are guided by progressive education (Elias & Merriam, 2005). On the other hand, these two learning practices follow different philosophical foundations that closely reflect the different social challenges required to be dealt with in their distinct historical and cultural contexts. Contextually, Tanzanian ICBAE has been affected by the radical education for structural social transformation while Thailand's CLCs underscore how humanistic education for individual development needs to succeed in transforming the society. These points are elaborated upon after comparing the conceptual understanding of lifelong learning and its policies in the two countries.

Although in Thailand the concept of lifelong learning has officially been recognised for some 43 years, it only became popular 21 years ago when the Education Acts of 1999, 2002 and 2010 were enacted (OEC, 2017). The Acts adopted lifelong learning as an organising principle of the whole education system in the country, and encouraged the participation of diverse

stakeholders in the lifelong learning processes and in designing learning goals for citizens and society as a whole. An increased focus on lifelong learning was witnessed by the promulgation of the Non-Formal and Informal Education Act of 2008, which calls for the development of unconventional education and learning (Yoruzo, 2017). This Act sanctioned lifelong learning practices and the integration of traditional and alternative education (OEC, 2017), and aimed to enhance the lives of individuals and social situations at country and local levels. These plans were further rooted in the National Education Plan (2017-2036) (OEC, 2017), which places significant emphasis on the ethnic minorities living in rural and isolated areas (Lee & Kim, 2016).

Comparatively, lifelong learning in Tanzania is evolving, as there is no precise definition of lifelong learning found in the country's national policy documents. The notion of learning throughout life has however been indicated in certain national policies and development plans. The Education and Training Policy 2014 and Vision 2025 hint at developing programmes to provide all learners with opportunities for 'continuous learning' (Do Nascimento & Valdés-Cotera, 2018). However, this simply means progression, as a learning outcome, which is only one aspect of a lifelong learning process (ibid). It is also argued that the prominence given to literacy programmes in NFE, in the 2007 policy and 2008 and 2012 development plans, suggests that lifelong learning is equated with adult learning only (Walters, Yang & Roslander, 2014). 'This approach impeded the integration of lifelong learning principles into the education system as a whole, and into wider sectors of society' (Do Nascimento & Valdés-Cotera, 2018:41).

To sum up, the concept of lifelong learning within Thailand and Tanzania is comparable. It is understood as continuous learning, comprising formal, non-formal, and informal learning in

Thailand, and as being associated not only with formal education but with a process of learning in Tanzania. The policies and development plans of both countries, as shown previously and hereafter, promote lifelong learning for social change and lifelong learning connecting to local problems. The policies and plans of both countries also underline the experiences of the learners and local people, in addition to democracy within learning and social processes. Both have connected with the Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques (REFLECT). This technique supports flexible curricula and development project activities, allowing learners and local people to focus on issues that affect and interest them as a way in which to effect social change. Examples of practices related to democracy in learning and social processes, as well as learner-centred pedagogy, are briefly summarised below.

For example, the learning themes within ICBAE and the CLCs include the IGAs listed in the previous section. Learning is organised within groups and is based on group projects where each participant's views and opinions are valued. In this way, the participants take turns to share their experiences, and listen to those of others, in relation to the common themes they choose to develop. Civic education linked to IGAs is also discussed during the group seminars facilitated by personnel from government, and international and national NGOs (such as the Seidel Foundation) (Do Nascimento & Valdés-Cotera, 2018). Based on the results of these social interactions and small-scale credit schemes, learners (or local people) can establish their own IGAs.

These IGAs have effectively motivated both the adults and disaffected youth in Tanzania to enrol in the ICBAE programme. The adequate provision of learning resources, chosen and processed by the learners, has improved the quality of the programme and helped facilitators to assess learners through tasks and activities set up in the resources (ibid). Equally, IGAs

enable learners and graduates to access enhanced employment and salary levels, and to acquire greater life skills connected to current changes in the Thai and international communities (Yoruzo, 2017). These benefits are evident as the learners become more aware of the concept of social equity and their surrounding environment. For example, Thai farmers have substituted their chemical fertilizers and chemical pesticides for organic fertilizers and insecticides that help to conserve the environment and do no harm to insects and people (Mongsawad, 2010). In Tanzania, more local people have actively engaged in guarding themselves against negative influences within and outside their community, such as in relation to drugs, sexuality and violence (Walters et al., 2014).

To sum up, dialogue, participation and the sharing of experiences in ICBAE and the CLCs continue today. In both ICBAE and the CLCs, the experiences and socio-cultural backgrounds of the learners are considered. Facilitators are prepared to utilise the learner-centred pedagogy in their facilitation of learning. Learners are given more freedom to design their learning programmes and to reflect on their personal experiences during their social learning process. This also reflects participatory communication and progressive education approaches to social change.

Social change has been developed by Tanzania and Thailand through other participatory communication and adult education philosophies. Tanzania has positive and negative reports on its index of governance indicators (see Case Study 1), which suggests the presence of serious social equity concerns (World Bank, 2019). These issues are discouraging and act to erode the confidence of the people, and especially the disadvantaged, to participate in changing their social conditions. Changing the country into an equal society requires, as Freire (1983) argued, heightened consciousness and collective action. Thus, ICBAE aimed at increasing the

awareness of the population (especially the poor), adults and disaffected youth across the country of democracy, governance and human rights. Literacy and post-literacy learning, in this sense, reflect radical participatory communication and adult education philosophies. Radical philosophy places emphasis on 'social empowerment' by bringing together those whose voices have been marginalised in the local communities to collectively address their social problems.

On the other hand, Thailand has comparatively fewer serious social equity problems. The country continues to promote its three principles of SEP – moderation, reasonableness and self-immunity – by providing equitable educational opportunities to all its citizens. Such education opportunities are also provided at CLCs in a democratic, participatory and shared form of learning. This provision of education and the country's philosophy towards sustainable development is clearly affected by humanistic participatory communication and adult education. Humanistic tradition in this chapter emphasises 'individual empowerment' by providing all individuals, regardless of socio-cultural background, with equal opportunities to access an education that supports them in contributing to changing their lives and society.

These societal changes are communicated, as shown in the case studies, through printed and digital media are being utilised to promote lifelong learning. Textbooks, magazines, newspapers and other local processed learning materials are playing active roles in non-formal and informal education delivered through ICBAE and at CLCs in both countries. In Tanzania, for example, pre-recorded lessons (recently known as lecture capture), email and perhaps text (as learning) messages via chosen media are used in ODL and IPPE programmes. In Thailand, the supply of ICT infrastructure, database, and preparation of both teachers and learners in ICT integration at CLCs would contribute in transforming the country towards a learning society.

Conclusion

It follows from the above that implementation of SDG 4 policies and strategies across Thailand – particularly in areas occupied by vulnerable and marginalised communities – can be regarded as a positive vehicle for sustainable social change relative to the country. The current and most pressing SDG 4 challenge faced by Tanzania concerns the desire to reduce the rate of adult and youth illiteracy. Although a reduction of illiteracy rates would not necessarily evidence the development of soft and practical skills related to SDG 4, the promising practices of Tanzania can serve as an example of a possible course of action for illiteracy challenges. The comparison of the two types of learning practices in two countries with dissimilar cultural histories and located in different geographical areas presented in this chapter can also serve as a reminder that 'there is no universal development model' (Servaes & Malikhao, 2016:180).

Finally, as shown in the two case studies, school enrolments has highly increased in Tanzania and Thailand. In particular, expansion of access to formal, non-formal and informal education are all on their national policies. However, the right to education of children with disabilities is not been given adequate attention in the two countries. Of the 7.9 percent of such children in Tanzania, less than 1 percent are enrolled in formal schools (UNICEF, 2018). Similarly, the risk of missing out from school for disabled children is more likely higher than those without disabilities in Thailand (UNESCO, 2017b). Again, formal education, compared to non-formal education, faced other serious challenges in both countries. Formal education values theoretical knowledge expected to be learned perhaps exclusive of its utility. Generally, the curriculum provision, in both countries, is less quality because the breadth of the education and achievement of children are below the expected standards nationally or internationally.

This author, therefore, suggests that access to both forms of education to children with disabilities should be expanded in both countries. The countries should also offer relevant professional development and support to teachers to enable them to respond to the learning needs of all learners. Such learners need curriculum which is more concerned with social, economic, and academic goals related to sustainable development.

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