

Tamara TKACH¹

EDUCATION IN AN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

*Education is at the heart of both personal
and community development; its mission is
to enable us, without exception, to develop
all our talents to the full...*

UNESCO Task Force on Education for the Twenty-
first Century – the Delors Report, 1996.

At the outset of what has been called the 'Global Century' there is much evidence of a revitalisation of the field of comparative and international education that few would have envisaged even a decade ago. The impact and implications of intensified globalisation and rapidly changing geopolitical relations underpin much of this revitalisation, as do dramatic advances in information and communications technology, paradigmatic challenges and developments across the social sciences, and the relative ease of international travel that has come to characterise our times. Globalisation of the economy strengthens the importance of human capital; transport and communications become cheaper and new technology is rapidly disseminated. Trade barriers have been demolished and companies and capital move freely across national borders. International competition over location of production facilities becomes harder. This increases the importance of factors of production whose mobility does not allow them to move as easily between countries. Development of the competence of the population provides more stable competitive advantages than investments in traditional physical capital. All the indications are that a country's future competitive advantages are dependent on investment in education and learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of the field has emerged a growing body of literature on the difficulties typically faced in conducting comparative and international research in education. Many of these issues relate to fundamental problems faced by all educational and social science researchers concerning epistemological, paradigmatic and broadly methodological dilemmas (Usher 1996; Crotty 1998) [1, 2]. Other issues relate more directly to distinctive problems encountered by those working specifically within the field of comparative and international education. Many philosophical and epistemological conceptions of problems encountered in carrying out specifically comparative and international research are closely related to the generic methodological literature, but there are other uniquely comparative dilemmas. To date, however, such work has attracted only somewhat specialist and periodic attention, and where this has been the case, it has stemmed largely from personnel working in the more theoretically-oriented 'comparative' constituency (Schriewer with Holmes 1988) [3].

Pragmatic issues and problems have, nevertheless, been addressed by a wider variety of personnel, and especially by those working in the more 'applied' arenas. Thus, in

¹ Ph.D. Tamara Tkach, Professor at Classic Private University, Ukraina

practice, much of the most accessible literature stemming from the field itself has traditionally conceptualised research problems and difficulties more in terms of the practicalities and logistics of doing comparative and international research.

A common international context of rapidly changing globalised economies, communications and human cultural perspectives, where knowledge is a key resource, and where the need for skilled workforces and active citizens is making increasing demands on education at all levels.

Society is changing in both economic and democratic terms. Important trends in the economy are technological development, structural economic change, and as a consequence of this greater demands on competence and learning throughout life. The explosion in knowledge and technological development make it impossible for individuals to acquire the competence they need for working life in one "lump".

Knowledge and competence become a "perishable" good. Partly as a consequence of technological developments, the organisation of workplaces is also changing. Hierarchical models are dismantled to provide scope for flatter organisations where individual demands for competence rise. The knowledge society is no longer a pipe dream but a current reality.

2. INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS

Political involvement of citizens in the country is decreasing or stagnating. This marks a turning point which is manifested in a number of ways. Individual public involvement is stagnating, participation in demonstrations sinking, contacts between citizens, politicians and decision-makers become fewer, political parties are being deserted and fewer people are taking the trouble to vote in Parliamentary elections.

Particularly disturbing is the fact that certain groups are being marginalised and excluded from mainstream society. In the first instance, this relates to the unemployed, immigrants and individuals with short formal education who have not become a part of mainstream society, but there are also indications that groups with high incomes and levels of education are choosing to ignore the political dimension of society. Formal learning is that which is assessed by a nationally recognised body and contributes towards a nationally recognised qualification. Non-formal learning covers that learning which is not so assessed, or does not lead to a nationally recognised qualification. Both formal and non-formal learning can be provided in either a workplace or institutional setting, either intramurally or extramurally.

Today our knowledge is limited on the learning potential of workplaces, and there is an explicit need to improve the current situation. Superficial information exists on company investments in in-service training and further information on participation could be obtained from labour force surveys. However, the picture of lifelong learning at workplaces needs to be clarified and our knowledge deepened and extended. From the perspective of state steering, however, it is not enough to improve knowledge about learning organisations.

In conjunction with limited public resources, this requires a new educational policy perspective where the individual's learning is regarded as a lifelong project which takes place not only in formal educational contexts, but also in all human activity. People learn throughout their lives, from the cradle to the grave, and they learn from all aspects of life. Lifelong and lifewide learning are the basic carriers of this new - or as it turns out to be the case, "new-old" way of looking at educational policy. The idea of lifelong learning has made a breakthrough in international debate and occupies a prominent place in the society discussion on educational and labour market policy. At the meeting of ministers of education in 1996, the OECD lays down four pillars in lifelong learning.

1. Improved conditions through better access to pre-school, individually oriented compulsory schooling, upper secondary schooling for all and a wide ranging supply of different forms of education and arrangements for non-formal learning.

2. Promote mechanisms for linking learning with working life, flexible transitions between education, in-service training and support for competence development in working life. Create and improve competence and validation instruments.

3. Create incentives for individuals, employers and education providers to invest more in lifelong learning.

4. Review roles and distribution of responsibility between all parties, especially employers and different governmental departments authorities and agencies.

Such knowledge must impact employers who would then have the opportunity to change workplaces in accordance with principles promoting the learning organisation. This also applies to the effects of investments in competence development and in-service training. Knowledge and attitudes of employers are yet another key issue in lifelong learning.

The concept of lifelong learning is not new, but its importance has varied over time and place. This in itself is not remarkable; political ideas and concepts may re-emerge with different attributions depending on interests and context. Rubensson draws a distinction between two generations of lifelong learning with different meanings which have developed in different contexts. The idea of lifelong learning was first introduced 30 years ago by UNESCO. Over a short period lifelong learning, and closely related ideas on recurrent education from the OECD and "éducation permanente" from the Council of Europe made a great impact in the debate on educational policy. Then as now, the debate centred on lifelong and lifewide learning as well as the individual's responsibility for taking advantage of the opportunities provided by lifelong learning. Rubensson argues that lifelong learning should be understood against the background of the political culture of the times. The idea was grounded in a humanistic tradition and linked to expectations of a better society and higher quality of life. Lifelong learning epitomised the individual's personal development and increased self-confidence. Individual autonomy, self-realisation, equality and democracy were keywords and lifelong learning was regarded as one of a number of elements in a broader ideological context. These ideas did not come to fruition in concrete educational policies. Rubensson explains this by arguing that these visions remain on a vague, utopian level and were never transformed into implementable strategies. Gustavsson reasons in the same way and considers that the weakness of the humanistic variant of lifelong learning was that it was devoid of substance in, social, cognitive, and political terms.

3. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Much of the rhetorical power of the term «lifelong learning» stems from its resonance with established concepts drawn from learning theory. One of the best exemplars of this use of the concept is to be found in the 1996 UNESCO report *Learning, the Treasure Within* (the Delors Report). The pillars of learning identified in this report speak to a humanist tradition in educational theory that harks back to the educational philosophy of John Dewey and others. The pillars of learning identified in the UNESCO report are:

- Pillar 1: learning to know
- Pillar 2: learning to do
- Pillar 3: learning to live together
- Pillar 4: learning to be.

These «pillars» allow the notion of life long learning to be coupled with a wide range of curriculum issues – from, for example, «learning to learn» to education for citizenship,

to increased vocational emphasis in the curriculum. This notion also allows engagement with international concern over basic education provision for the world's poor which is an important element of the UNESCO [4].

The term remained idealistic precisely because of its shortcomings and its use was consequently limited to a dialogue on vision. But even though the idea of lifelong learning was not fully realised, it nevertheless left its stamp on EU educational policy. A large part of the systems for recurrent education i.e. different forms of public and formal adult education were established during the 60s and 70s. At the end of the 80s and throughout the whole of the 90s, the idea of lifelong learning resurfaced. But in a different policy context EU has over the 80s and 90s undergone an economic crisis with increasing unemployment. Technological and structural economic transformation imposes demands for increased competence and investment in education. Lifelong learning is viewed as an opportunity or an economic policy instrument for creating growth and employment. The contents of lifelong learning have been reshaped to the policy issues dominating the agenda. A comparison between the first and second generations of lifelong learning shows that the ideological contents of the concept have been replaced by a narrower interpretation centring around the needs of the economy for skilled labour with the necessary competence. Lifelong learning is merged with elements of economic human capital theory.

Education has a fundamental role to play in personal and social development. It is one of the principal means available to foster a deeper and more harmonious form of human development and thereby to reduce poverty, exclusion, ignorance, oppression and war. The coming century, dominated by globalisation, will bring with it enduring tensions to overcome, tensions between the global and the local, the universal and the individual, tradition and modernity, long-term and short-term considerations, competition and equality of opportunity, the unlimited expansion of knowledge and the limited capacity of human beings to assimilate it, and the spiritual and the material whatever the diversity of cultures, and systems for social organisation, there is a universal challenge of reinventing the democratic ideal to create, or maintain, social cohesion. In this context, learning throughout life will be one of the keys to meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century. The International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, chaired by former European Commission President Jacques Delors, proposes in this report that all societies should build on the four pillars that are the foundations of education - learning to be, learning to know, learning to do, and learning to live together.

The methodological fundamentals of researching learning space by analyzing space as an outlook category, the intentional vector of a personality, learning space genesis as a psychological and pedagogical category are investigated T.Tkach.. Continuity is determined as a principle of learning space organization, a pedagogical and psychological idea; the organizational structure of learning space is suggested T.Tkach [5]. Learning space models and functions of learning space in a person's activity are analyzed from the psychological standpoint; the role of a personality in the institutional system of learning space, psychological morphology of learning space, a model of personality inclusion into learning space are revealed. The psychological and active design of a personality's learning space is realized. The subjects of learning activity, motivation and value factors of pupils' and students' learning space are investigated empirically.

The adoption of a lifelong learning approach to lifelong learning has important implications for national policy-making. Public policy has to create the frameworks – legislative, governance, financial, institutional, learning, informational, qualifications and regulatory – to motivate adults to engage in structured learning (Jones 2005). In addition, the promotion of ALE requires ‘collateral’ policies in related areas such as employment,

welfare, rural development and poverty reduction and monitoring and evaluation of policy impact across many ministries and agencies.

The majority of the national reports display a high level of commonality in their rhetoric. It is evident that the concept of lifelong learning is operating as a vision for education and training in the majority of countries and, in many countries, it is also providing a conceptual framework for policy-making and a guiding principle for provision and participation across all learning contexts, including lifelong learning. However, beyond the rhetoric, the realities of ALE on the ground vary between countries, depending on recent history, the socio-economic context, the underlying education and training system and traditions, and the level of development of lifelong learning policy, governance and provision.

The EU Action Plan (European Commission 2007a) identifies five concrete priority goals to reduce labour shortages by raising skill levels and by upgrading low-skilled workers; to offer a second chance to those who enter adulthood without qualifications; to reduce poverty and social exclusion among marginalised groups; to increase the integration of migrants in society and labour markets; and to increase participation in lifelong learning, especially among older workers.

Lifelong learning is becoming a reality in Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and United Kingdom. However, in 2007, eight countries were still preparing overarching strategy statements and seven countries were still pursuing lifelong learning policies without an encompassing, overarching lifelong learning strategy (European Commission 2007b). Cyprus and Romania, which have yet to complete overarching strategies, note the challenges involved in generating a national debate and responding to the perspectives of different interest groups. The latter notes that, apart from vocational training, Lifelong learning is not the subject of coherent strategies, policies and specific regulations'. Overall, a key challenge in the majority of EU-27+ countries is policy implementation. In Switzerland, political attention has always focused on vocational lifelong learning and there is currently a national debate on the definition of Lifelong learning. In South Eastern Europe, CIS and Georgia, ALE is considered to have a primarily developmental role in kick-starting and/or contributing to economic growth and poverty reduction. The role of lifelong learning in achieving civil integration and social cohesion and in promoting democratic values and institutions is less emphasised. In Israel, Lifelong learning is seen as making a key contribution to the integration of immigrants, and to economic growth and competitiveness. In the USA, Lifelong learning is seen as contributing to the growth of the economy through raising adult literacy levels, supporting the acquisition of English by immigrants and contributing to the skilling of workers.

4. CONCLUSION

The initial stages of a systemic approach to policy-making in lifelong learning are in evidence in individual countries in South Eastern Europe and CIS and Georgia. The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has developed an Adult Education Plan and is promoting access for individuals from ethnic groups with low education levels. Serbia has developed a Strategy for the Development of Lifelong learning, a Strategy for the Development of Vocational Education (2006), action plans and active labour market policies. In 2006 model legislation on adult education was adopted by the Interparliamentary Assembly of the CIS. The Concept for the development of adult education was also adopted and a plan for the implementation of the Concept in CIS member states was elaborated. Ukraine seeks to bring ETF-supported projects into a coherent policy learning process. Moldova notes the adoption of the 'Conception

regarding the orientation, training and professional education of human resources' and the Labour Code in 2003. The latter sets out the responsibilities of employers in relation to the training of employees. In Georgia, where work on a lifelong learning strategy began in 2008, Lifelong learning has limited practical expression on the ground apart from a number of programmes for unemployed people, but there is recognition in the education ministry of the need to target 'at risk' groups. In Russia, the concept of the Federal target programme for the development of education for 2006-2010 is the main document that defines both the concept of continuing education and its separate elements, including lifelong learning.

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EDUKACJA W KONTEKŚCIE MIĘDZYNARODOWYM

Na początku "Wiek globalizacji" w dziedzinie edukacji międzynarodowej zaszły poważne zmiany, jakie mało kto mógłby przewidzieć dziesięć lat temu. Wpływ i skutki globalizacji i szybkie zmiany w światowej geopolityce sprzyjały szybkiemu rozwojowi technologii informacyjnych i komunikacyjnych, powstaniu paradygmatycznych problemów w naukach społecznych. Globalizacja gospodarki wzmacnia znaczenie kapitału ludzkiego. Rozwój ludzkiej kompetencji staje się ważniejszy w osiąganiu przewagi konkurencyjnej niż tradycyjne inwestycje w kapitał fizyczny. W konsekwencji w przyszłości osiągnięcie przewagi konkurencyjnej dowolnego kraju na świecie zależeć będzie od inwestycji w edukację.