Chapter 19
Lifelong Learning in Asia: Eclectic Concepts, Rhetorical Ideals, and Missing Values. Implications for Values Education

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1 Introduction: Common Education Reform Directions in Asia

The last decade has seen major education reform initiatives in Asia. There are some common emphases in these initiatives, such as school management reform in relation to school-based development, emphasising accountability especially in requiring school achievements be known to the public, redefinition of educational goals, aiming at quality and the assessment of quality, focusing on learning outcome rather than teaching performance, diverting the function of examinations from assessment and screening to assessment for learning and development, and – lifelong learning. These changes are not a single incidence, but are interlocking and build upon one another. They also reflect ideological shifts towards demands for efficiency, performativity, and measurability in education enterprises. In the face of more volatile economical situations and with a general elevation of education attainment in most countries, there are increased demands for public participation in educational provisions, including increased parental involvement in school activities and even policymaking and public participation in curriculum development. Lifelong learning is an area of educational provision that contains most of these elements in current educational reforms. It addresses educational needs for the volatile economies that would lead to quick turnovers in the types of jobs available because of quick turnovers in industries. To many, this type of economic situation is coined as the knowledge economy.

The notion of lifelong learning, as attractive as it is to educational policymakers across countries, is an umbrella term that embraces a multiplicity of ideologies. As Medel-Añonuevo et al. (2001) point out, "While lifelong learning has increasingly been cited as one of the key principles in the educational and development fields, there is no shared understanding of its usage at the global level." However, the idea of lifelong learning promoted by OECD based upon a market-oriented human resource development (HRD) concept, with a focus on the knowledge worker's self-directed learning motivation, has gained prominence. A worker's lifelong career development was gradually emphasised with his or her own expenses, and investment in human learning turned out to be the instrument for the realisation of

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global capitalism (Han 2001). It is contended by some that such a view has even become "hegemonic" in the interpretation of lifelong learning:

> Given their ideological, political and economic dominance *vis-à-vis* the rest of the world, it is not surprising that they are gaining adherents in other regions of the world. Many Asian countries, for example, have followed this line of thinking and have developed modern policy discourses on lifelong learning. (Medel-Añonuevo et al. 2001, p. 1)

This can easily be testified in the way lifelong learning is presented and justified in the Asian countries. Almost all cite the OECD reports, and invariably refer to the impact of globalisation and the knowledge economy.

2 Justification: Economic Globalisation

"Economic globalisation" is always mentioned as the foreground for promoting lifelong learning in Asian countries. Under economic globalisation, nations must add value through innovation, service, creativity, etc. These are often cited as features of the knowledge economy, which is characterised by quick turnover of modes of production turnover quickly and demand for high skills. Under such circumstances, lifelong learning is needed to maintain the competitiveness of nations by constant update of state-of-the-art skills (P. Kennedy 2004).

Such justification is fully elaborated in a report on lifelong learning in Japan (Yamada et al. 2003). It argues that the globalised movement of free competition has extended its influence to the Japanese employment system, shaking to the very roots the distinctively Japanese system of lifetime employment, in which a person works at the same workplace his or her whole life. Many companies begin to move offshore in order to strengthen their international competitiveness with cheaper labour, while domestically staff were cut back and divisions downsized. Without lifetime employment, Japanese companies no longer provide on-the-job occupational skill development as they did in the past as a common practice. Skill upgrading has become an individual responsibility. A new market demand for retraining (or lifelong learning) has been created, and universities start to open their doors to such people's need to continue learning work-related knowledge and technology by developing flexible education delivery systems. Increasing numbers of adult students have been entering universities recently by special admission procedures. The security of lifetime employment has given way to the insecurity of the lifelong learning necessary in the modern and transitory job market.

The impact of globalisation on the Chinese economy has been late compared with Japan, but has been sharply felt since China became a member of the World Trade Organization. To boost the economy, China is strategically adjusting the economic and industrial structures to be led by high and new technology industries (including IT industries), and the service industry is being developed in all areas. Even in the agriculture and manufacturing sectors, the Chinese government aims to significantly increase the percentage of technology-intensive and value-added

products. As a result, 3,000 occupations disappeared between 1998 and 2003, and fewer than one-third of the recruitments in spring 2003 were without explicit technical and/or qualification requirements. In 2000, a quarter of the workforce aged 16–35 years had changed their jobs. The strategic adjustment of the industrial structure in China, and the large-scale mobilisation of the workforces among different trades and professions, especially the redundant cheap labour from traditional labour-intensive industries, have made the needs of pre-job training, on-job training, job-shifting training, and continuing education after school education growing as never before (Han 2003).

The disappearance of job security was a new experience for people in both Japan and China, and huge adjustments were needed for employees in both countries. Similar situations have taken place in other Asian countries. In Singapore, for example, 33.4% of residents aged 15–64 were engaged in some form of job-related structured training in 2000 and slightly less in 2001. In Hong Kong, 14.6% of 15–50-year-olds had attended job-related training schemes either arranged by employers or on their own initiative during the year 2000; 57% were male and 43% female. In Korea, data for the Vocational Ability Development Programme (VADP) suggest that 4.4% of the 15–64 age group received training in 1999 and 7% in 2001. During this period, the number of participants increased by 60%. The number of establishments providing training under this programme increased more than twice, i.e., from 43.844 to 94.404 (International Labour Office [ILO] 2004).

In post-1997 Hong Kong, lifelong learning has been presented by the government as central to education reform, represented by the publication of the reform document *Learning for Life, Learning through Life* (Hong Kong Education Commission 2000). Lifelong learning is used as a "reform package", referring to the *entire* education system from kindergarten to tertiary education, as well as to further and continuing education (Kennedy & Sweeting 2003).

3 Urgency: Economic Crisis and the Knowledge Economy

In the latter half of the 1980s Japan experienced an economic bubble which caused great damage to the economy following its subsequent burst in the 1990s. The economy turned to minus growth, which was followed by stagnation and recession in business. Under these circumstances the government attempted to change the employment situation through measures of Structural Reform; however, in July 2001 the unemployment rate had reached 5% and it was unclear where the Structural Reform would lead. Japan's labour market was further complicated by increased unemployment rates, with increased numbers of "Parasite Freeter" (early job-quitters) and *mugyousha* (graduates those who neither work nor undertake further study) among university graduates (21.7% in 2000) and high school graduates (10.5% in 2000) (Yamada et al. 2003). It is believed that Japan's international competitiveness in business will be harmed by increased numbers of *mugyousha*. This will ultimately decrease the economic foundation of overall social taxes and welfare

insurance. For this reason, questions have been already widely asked about how to guide young people into steady employment, and how lifelong learning is involved in skills development apart from schools and universities (Yamada et al. 2003).

Globalisation calls for strong individuals with a sense of self-responsibility, but, to the contrary, in a wealthy society there are many young people whose independence is delayed, and who are inclined towards living for the moment because they are resigned to a future which is cloudy. It has been argued in Japan that structural reforms are needed to make the demands of the labour market consistent with the supply, and being able to work in a situation where each person can maximise and make the most of their abilities (ibid.).

In addition to confronting the economic crisis, the challenge of the knowledge economy is commonly mentioned as a justification for the need to promote lifelong learning in many Asian countries. Atchoarena (2006) in his recent analysis of lifelong learning objectives across countries has identified that Australia, China, Thailand, and Malaysia promote lifelong learning with an objective to foster and adapt to the knowledge economy, whilst other countries might be focusing on establishing a learning society or reducing the impact of academic pathways or credentials. The Third Outline Perspective Plan (2001–2010) of Malaysia, for example, specifically mentions that, for the knowledge economy to be realised, the skill intensity for the different economic sectors must increase drastically. A statement to this effect is spelled out in the document:

A system of lifelong learning will be promoted to ensure that workers can continuously upgrade their skills and knowledge in order to remain relevant in the environment of rapidly changing technology and work processes as well as to nurture a learning society (Malaysia 2001, p. 134).

4 Centralisation: The Governmentality of Government Initiatives

The recent trend of educational reform in Asia is marked by decentralisation in educational governance and the curriculum. As Chapman remarks, “Virtually every country in Asia has formulated official policies endorsing some level of decentralisation” (Chapman 2002, p. 3). However, in contrast, lifelong learning is promoted by centralised governmental efforts. In Japan this is described as both “horizontal” and “vertical” integration. Horizontal integration encompasses not only home education, school education, education outside of school and adult education, but also encompasses the attempt to coordinate, under the principle of lifelong learning, the various educational opportunities a society possesses, and an integrated ordering and restructuring of the aims, methods, and content of lifelong education (Dymock & Brennan 2003).

Analysing the pattern of lifelong learning development in six Asian countries, Han (2001) found that government structures are in place to promote lifelong learning through specific bureaus and agencies responsible for policymaking and

implementation. For example, this is described as a "new infrastructure" in the case of Japan (ASEM-Lifelong Learning 2002). Lifelong learning is also promoted through legislation in many Asian countries (see Table 1), such as Lifelong Education Law (2000) in Korea (Hong 2003), National Education Act (1999) in Thailand (ASEM Lifelong Learning 2002), the Third Outline Perspective Plan, 2001–2010 in Malaysia (Ruslan et al. 2005), Manpower 21 (1999) in Singapore (Ministry of Manpower (MOM), 1999), Education Blueprint for the 21st century (2000) in Hong Kong, and the Education Law (1996), the Action Scheme for Invigorating Education (1998) in China (Monk & Li 2004).

The legislation of lifelong learning is particularly phenomenal in Japan. In 1987 the Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture reformed its internal organisation, and established the Lifelong Learning Bureau as a leading administrative section within the ministry to head the reforms. Subsequently, it prepared the bill of the "Law Concerning the Establishment of Implementation Systems and Other Measures for the Promotion of Lifelong Learning" (abbreviated as the "Lifelong Learning Promotion Law") in collaboration with the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MITI), which was enforced in 1990. Through enforcement of this law, the Lifelong Learning Council was established in August 1990, and discussion began on the direction of new lifelong learning policies. The Lifelong Learning Council further proposed the construction of a lifelong learning society in the report on "The Promotion of Measures for Lifelong Learning which Corresponds to the Future Directions of Society" (1992). Other important reports made by the Lifelong Learning Council were "Measures to Improve Opportunities for Lifelong Learning" (1996), "A Future Nonformal Education Administration that Responds to Social Changes" (1998), "Measures to Make Best Use of the Achievements of Lifelong Learning" (1999), "Experiences in Daily Life and Nature Cultivate the Minds of Japanese Children: Measures to Enrich the Environments of Local Communities Vital for Fostering the Zest for living of Young People" (1999) and "Measures to Promote Lifelong Learning Utilising New Information Communication Technology" (2000) (Yamada et al. 2003).

A case for the central orchestration of lifelong learning can be seen in China. In Shanghai, for example, there is a trend towards institutionalising on-the-job training and off-the-job training by developing a general policy of integrating training, certification, deployment and remuneration in a comprehensive framework. Since 1992, all Shanghai workers at foreman level have had to undergo a licensing process before they receive assignments. There is also a trend in various enterprises of introducing mandated hours for in-service training as part of the conditions of service. In 1993, Shanghai issued a policy requiring at least 72 hours off-the-job training for all medium and high rank technical personnel and 43 hours for junior technical personnel (Cheng et al. 1999).

In Japan, the newly established Lifelong Learning Centres are more centralised in their controlling system, as compared with the traditional *kominkan*, which were usually managed locally. In Korea, the government recently attempted to build a centralised lifelong learning centre network according to the new Lifelong Education Law. Community clubs or community centres in Singapore are allocated

Table 1 Governance structures for lifelong learning in Asia (Han 2001, p. 90)

	Japan	Korea	Hong Kong	Singapore	Thailand	Philippines
Government structure	Ministry of Education, Culture & Science + Ministry of Trade and Industry	Ministry of Education and Human Resources Department	Education & Labour Departments	Ministries of Education & Manpower	Ministry of Education and Culture	Department of Education, Culture & Sports
Specific bureau	Lifelong Learning Bureau	HRD Bureau	Education Bureau (adult education unit) + VTCs	Training & Development Division	Department of Non-formal Education	Bureau of Non-formal Education
Legal structure	Lifelong Learning Promotion Law	Lifelong Education Law	"Education Blueprint for 21st Century" + "Investing in our Human Capital"	"Manpower 21"	8th National Education Development Plan, 1997–2001	Constitution
Agencies for local implementation	LLCs/Kominkan	LLCs/Credit Bank System	Polytechnic, Open University	ITE, Community Clubs	Non-formal Education Centres	Local Non-formal Education Centres

according to the division of electoral districts, so that they mostly work with political units. In the Philippines, provincial or district branches of community education centres are structured along the line of central governing bodies (Han 2001).

A further example of the centralisation of lifelong learning is the establishment of a Credit Bank System in Korea, created according the Lifelong Learning Law. The Credit Bank System allows people to accumulate and convert vocational qualifications, accredited classroom experiences and experiential learning activities into academic credits that lead to higher education qualifications, such as a university degree. Under this system, learning experience is abstracted into academically exchangeable units of values (ibid.). Likewise, an education reform consultation document in Hong Kong proposed "to accord due recognition to the qualifications attained through different channels and modes of study [and] establish a comprehensive mechanism whereby qualifications are mutually recognised and transferable among various CE/formal education/professional/vocational training programmes" (Education Commission 2000b, para. 5.5.7).

Kerry Kennedy (2005) further points to the fact that the promotion of the idea of the learning society was built into the educational policies in various Asian countries. Or in the terms stated by Peter Kennedy and Sweeting (2003), lifelong learning becomes a part of the education reform package (as shown in Table 2).

The centralised effort in promoting lifelong learning, despite the policy justification in facing the challenges associated with the changing economy (and the emergence of knowledge economy in particular) is also perceived as a means of enhancing "governmentality" by the governments. Applying Foucault's concepts of the "micro-physics of power" and "governmentality", Peter Kennedy points out that the development of lifelong learning in Hong Kong is an illustrative case of how global policy discourses are deployed tactically by national governments for their local agendas, as an example of the governmentality of lifelong learning. He criticises that the previous Chief Executive of Hong Kong, C.H. Tung, gradually picked up the term lifelong learning, and even claimed ownership of it: "I put forward the concept of lifelong learning. …" (cited by P. Kennedy 2004, p. 592). Kennedy further points out that lifelong learning policies are imbued with concerns of local politics. Presenting the consequence of globalisation in terms of the knowledge economy and the need for individual responsibility to learn lifelong, the Hong Kong government constructed an economic picture (which was based on flawed

Table 2 The scope of education reform in the Asia-Pacific Region, 1997–2001 (Kennedy K.J. 2005, p. 65)

Country	Policy	Year
Korea	Adapting Education to the Information Age	1998
Taiwan	Towards a Learning Society	1998
Japan	Education Reform Plan for the 21st Century	2001
Singapore	Thinking Schools, Learning Nation	1997
Hong Kong	Learning for Life, Learning through Life	2000
Thailand	National Education Act	1999

analysis according to Kennedy) that was described as an inevitability, and thus necessitated and legitimated a series of post-1997 education reform agendas (ibid.).

Although Kennedy's analysis focuses on the hidden politics of educational policy-making in Hong Kong, the concept of governmentality in lifelong learning provides significant insight for understanding the centralised approaches of governments in other Asian countries mentioned in this chapter. In the light of Kennedy's analysis, a formula of lifelong learning development can now be established: the Asian governments in general start with the impact of the global economy as an inevitability → an analysis of their own economic situations as a matter of urgency → the necessitation of a lifelong learning policy.

While the formula is used in Hong Kong for hidden political agendas, as strongly argued by Kennedy, other Asian governments may use it for different reasons. It requires further efforts to explore these reasons, but some commonalities are easily identifiable. For example, concern about the need to be competitive is clearly expressed in almost all policy explanations for lifelong learning in Asia (e.g., see Law 2002). In addition, almost all lifelong learning initiatives in Asia express the urgency of introducing lifelong learning in terms of the knowledge economy. This is challenged by Kennedy, who critiques what he views as the faulty analysis of Hong Kong's economic situation: How can one Asian nation use lifelong learning to gain a competitive edge when other Asian nations are using the very same strategy? Rather than developing lifelong learning to face the challenges of the knowledge economy, it seems that the Asian countries are introducing lifelong learning to *create* a knowledge economy. This explains the need for centralised efforts, and the phenomenon of governmentality in lifelong learning in Asia. The global policy discourse has been deployed by Asian countries for their own local agendas – the creation of the knowledge economy, in order to compete with the other knowledge economies that have already existed or about to emerge. Lifelong learning was not really developed as a *response* to the knowledge economy, but more truly, for Asia in general, as a means to *create* a knowledge economy, in order to enhance competitiveness in the global economy. This agenda is at least explicitly expressed in a government address in Thailand's national Assembly in February 2001:

> [T]o launch educational reforms with the aim of developing Thailand into a knowledge-based society, which is a pre-requisite for becoming a knowledge-based economy. . . . Towards this end, the Government will abide by the principle that "Education Builds the Nation, Empowers the Individual and Generates Employment" (MOE Department of Vocational Education 2003, p. 1).

5 Conceptual Eclecticism: Global Policy for Local Agendas

It is no wonder that, as latecomers to the lifelong learning discourse, Asian countries are rather eclectic in adopting concepts of lifelong learning. On this, Han (2001) provides an interesting analogy:

> In many Asian countries, lifelong learning wears a strange costume: a jacket of humanistic ideas and pants of market-driven HRD representation, in which the tradition of critical pedagogy in lifelong education is totally unseen from the "contested terrain". (p. 86)

The term lifelong learning is used rather loosely in Asia. It is variously referred to as social education, adult education, lifelong education (as in the case of Japan) (ASEM-Lifelong Learning 2002); "all forms of organised educational activities taking place outside of formal school education", para-schools, vocational and technical education and training, liberal education for the general public, distance university education (as in the case of Korea) (Chung 2003); retraining and upgrading of skills, community-based adult education (as in the case of Malaysia) (ASEM-Lifelong Learning 2002; Lee 2005); and distance learning, adult education, on-the-job training and off-the-job training (as in the case of China) (ibid.; Cheng et al. 1999; Atchoarena 2003).

Referring to the case of Hong Kong, P. Kennedy and Sweeting (2003) critically analyse the variations and inconsistencies of the concepts of lifelong learning presented in Hong Kong's education reform documents. The Education Reform document *Learning for Life, Learning through Life* (Education Commission 2000) contains numerous allusions to "continuing education" (73 of them to the expression "continuing education", nine to the "continuous" nature of the process of learning or of constructing and upgrading knowledge, with 29 references to "life-long learning" and 41 to "lifelong learning"). These different terminologies sometimes present the idea of an education that is truly continuous, i.e., ongoing and never-ending, and sometimes as a stage of education continuing after nine years of basic education. The former is close to the current concept of lifelong learning, but the latter to the older concept of "further" education. The statement they find most confusing is: "Continuing education is an important stage for the pursuit of life-long learning" (Education Commission 2000, para. 4.6) (Kennedy P. & Sweeting 2003).

Perhaps most illustrative of the eclecticism is the definition given in a review of lifelong learning in Singapore:

There is no one precise definition that captures lifelong learning [to be] shared by everyone. Lifelong learning is interpreted by various stakeholders in many different ways. What appears to be common however is that the idea relates to learning that continues throughout a person's lifetime, from cradle to grave, of acquiring the aptitude, skills, knowledge, and qualifications of processes through formal, non-formal and informal modes of learning, use of technology to enhance learning, of providing learning opportunities, of becoming a learning society or nation, amongst others (Kumar 2004, p. 560).

With this inclusive approach to defining lifelong learning, many Asian countries trace the roots of lifelong learning back to their traditional philosophies and argue that these traditional philosophies (such as Confucianism or Buddhism) transform modern concepts (Medel-Añonuevo et al. 2001). It is therefore not surprising that those from the Chinese tradition would argue that the concept of lifelong learning can be traced back to the civil examinations which set no limit to age or mode of learning, and the traditional broad conception of lifelong education explains recent developments of lifelong learning in China (Cheng et al. 1999). Likewise, those from the Thai

tradition would argue that the indigenous Thai knowledge and wisdom is central for today's learning society (Office of the National Education Commission, n.d.). Discussing the concept of lifelong learning in the context of Malaysia, Lee (2005) goes as far as saying "lifelong learning is as old as the human race itself. For the hunter and gatherer in ancient times, living by his or her wits was lifelong learning".

The concept of lifelong learning in the international literature emerges from a host of related concepts, for example, lifelong education, adult education and continuing education. However there can be fine distinctions between these various concepts. Lifelong education in the early 1970s was associated with the more comprehensive and integrated strategy of developing individuals and communities to face rapid social change (Medel-Añonuevo et al. 2001), and is a kind of provider-led model of learning activity (Preece 2005). In the 1990s, as elaborated by UNESCO's Delors Report (1996), lifelong learning attempted to "reconcile three forces: competition, which provides incentives; co-operation which gives strength; and solidarity, which unites"(Delors 1996, p. 18). In sum, lifelong education is more focused on the strategic provision of education and is more emphasised in the structures and institutions of learning. The concepts of continuing education and adult education are more in line with those of lifelong education. Continuing education usually refers to short-term, programme- and qualification-related post-compulsory education (Harvey 2004). Adult education has been described as a set of organised activities carried on by a wide variety of institutions for the accomplishment of specific educational objectives (Knowles 1980), improvement of technical or professional qualifications (UNESCO 1980), and is more emphasised in the action of an external educational agent purposefully ordering behaviour into planned systematic experiences (Verner 1962).

However, the more dominant interpretation of lifelong learning in the 1990s was linked to retraining and learning new skills that would enable individuals to cope with the demands of the rapidly changing workplace. It also seems that lifelong learning, as it is presently promoted, has become more individual-oriented whereas lifelong education often referred back to the community. The emphasis of lifelong learning on the learner could also be interpreted as assigning more agencies to individuals in contrast to lifelong education's thrust on structures and institutions. (Medel-Añonuevo et al. 2001).

It may be more appropriate to say that the terminological change (from lifelong education, continuing education, and adult education, to lifelong learning) reflects a conceptual departure from the idea of organised educational provision to that of a more individualised pursuit of learning. The former emphasises programmes, organisations, and central strategies of provision, whilst the latter emphasises motivating individuals to learn what would suit them for their own adaptation to the changing world, and facilitating the emergence of spontaneous community provision of learning opportunities to suit the learners' needs. The former emphasises structures, and the latter emphasises culture. The former emphasises state-led provision, the latter private initiatives. In relation to this, it is also criticised that the state tries to abdicate its responsibility to provide economic opportunities (P. Kennedy & Sweeting 2003; Medel-Añonuevo et al. 2001).

Reviewing lifelong learning from this perspective, particularly referring to the above-mentioned terminologies adopted to explain the development of lifelong learning in Asian countries and the centralised efforts in organising learning activities or courses, lifelong learning in Asian countries tends to be closer to the traditional concepts of lifelong education, continuing education and/or adult education. This is particularly revealed from the comment that "The Japanese government believes that, in order to promote lifelong learning in Japan, institutions of formal education should play an important role in offering a basis of lifelong learning" (ASEM-Lifelong Learning 2002).

6 Rhetorical Ideals: A Lifelong Slogan, but an Economic Agenda

These changes, rather than being a simple reaction towards changing social and economic facets of the Asian societies, have ideological implications. Yamada and his associates see lifelong learning as a sign of the emergence of neo-liberalism in Japan. They concede that the traditional mode of economy characterised by lifetime employment gradually faded away in Japan, as this was an efficient system putting exceptional burdens on employment on the one hand, and making Japanese companies slow to change in face of a globalised movement of free competition in a world scale, on the other. The traditional economic system was particularly inefficient for Japan in face of the economic crises. The neo-liberalist economy requires people with strong individuality subsisting on qualities of being self-equipped and self-responsible. Without a lifetime employment system, occupational skills development is no longer a part of the company's duty or strategy; individuals without the skills or abilities to fit the new economy are deemed to have no choice but to be left behind in a competitive society. Thus, universities started to open their doors to such people's need to continue learning work-related knowledge and technology by providing more diversified access to university education and also by developing flexible education delivery systems. Increasing numbers of adult students are now entering universities through special selection procedures provided by some of the universities (see Yamada et al. 2003).

Kerry Kennedy on the other hand argues that the change reflects the emergence of neo-progressivism, which emphasises the instrumentality of education, that learning is regarded as a means to stimulate economic development. Lifelong learning is thus a rather pragmatic response to changing social and economic conditions in Asia. However, Kennedy also qualifies this with the comment that the new progressivism is eclectic, reflecting a combination of competing progressive ideals such a personal development (focusing on the individuals), social efficiency (focusing on the economy), and social reconstruction (focusing on the society) (K. J. Kennedy 2005).

Han (2001), for her part, sees the existence of a contestation between two ideological orientations: the humanistic orientation in lifelong education that

focuses on personal enrichment, and the instrumental-pragmatic orientation that focuses on the economics and business. Likewise, Peter Kennedy and Sweeting point out the inconsistencies of the perceived function of lifelong learning espoused in the education documents in Hong Kong. Although the Education Reform document (Education Commission 2000a) proposes that "the curriculum of continuing education . . . should constantly adapt to society's changes and learners' needs" (para. 2.26), the major emphasis in the education reform document seems to be on its value to the community and, especially, to the economy, as distinct from its contributions to an individual's personal development and "enrichment" in a cultural rather than a financial sense (P. Kennedy & Sweeting 2003).

The above review shows the range of different approaches and perspectives in the interpretation of the ideological implications of lifelong learning, variously seeing it as neo-liberalism, neo-progressivism, or as a polemic concept that contains competing ideologies. One common observation emerges: lifelong learning in Asia is economically focused and financially oriented. The major target is competitiveness in the global market, and the major means is to increase individual responsibility either from the demand side or supply side. On this, Medel-Añonuevo et al. (2001) criticise that "By promoting individual agency in determining the learning agenda, the welfare state tries to abdicate its responsibility to provide economic opportunities." Kennedy and Sweeting (2003) criticise the point that the Hong Kong government, in its education reform proposal, tries to make continuing education self-financing rather than dependent on government subsidy. To them, this is an "unjustifiably confident assumption".

It becomes clear that the fundamental concerns and values of lifelong learning in Asia are economic. The policies are justified in economic terms, and the end product is also economically and financially focused, such as increased employment, and increased self-financing of the learning activities. There is no lack of liberalisation slogans, such as learners' needs, increased opportunities, personal development, individual responsibility, and community participation. However, they appear but empty slogans, as lifelong learning in Asia is generally promoted through centralised means with a strong element of governmentality in the initiatives. Taking into account the implicit agendas and the explicit centralisation in its implementation strategies, it is right to say that the liberalisation ideals and values related to lifelong learning are only seen as an instrumental *means* to achieve economic ends.

In this sense, therefore, lifelong learning is not different from the above-mentioned related concepts such as lifelong education, continuing education, and adult education. It now becomes easier to understand the nature of conceptual eclecticism in lifelong learning in Asia. This eclecticism reflects the fundamental nature of the deployment of lifelong learning for economic purposes and the differences between the various aspects of learning activities are insignificant, insofar as they all serve the economic ends. Perhaps, the less clear-cut the distinctions between these concepts are the better, as it is more convenient for people to fit into the government's new agendas.

7 Missing Values: The Development of Democracy and Active Citizenship

Reviewing lifelong learning policies and policy-related documents, it is easy to note the rich references to the values of economic globalisation, knowledge economy, the significance of individual responsibility, the focus on learners' needs, and the various provision programmes and strategies. A missing link in many countries' lifelong learning discourse, however, is its significance for enhancing humanitarian values on an individual level, active citizenship on a societal level, and democracy on a political level. The term "missing link" does not mean that there is no mention of humanitarian values, and the ideals of democracy and citizenship education. However, compared with the stress on economic values and the attention towards programmes orientated towards them, attention towards humanitarian values, the concern for democracy and citizenship is minimal.

A significant goal of lifelong learning should be the development of active citizenship, by providing learning facilities in the community that could be accessible for every member of the community. While there are certainly economic goals in lifelong learning, an equally fundamental concern should be the development of an equitable and democratic environment that ensures learning for all and the right of access to learning. The European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) stresses that lifelong learning not only contributes to economic development, full employment, and the modernising of the labour market, but it also enables individuals and groups to participate in democratic, civil, and cultural life, to combat racism and xenophobia, to enjoy diversity, and to build social cohesion. The EAEA calls for the eradication of the "learning divide" between the advantaged and the disadvantaged. It asserts that a holistic and comprehensive approach must be adopted for lifelong learning:

> A strategy for lifelong learning must have a holistic, comprehensive approach. Lifelong learning must not be restricted to an instrument to raise the competence of the workforce and stimulate economic growth in the EU. Lifelong learning is just as important to provide a bridge to cross the educational divide; to create active citizenship; and develop an integrated Europe with solid democracies. This includes the new democracies of Eastern and Central Europe. . . . Politically literate citizens will require not only the knowledge and understanding of human rights, but also opportunities to participate and to effect changes. Learning active citizenship has two inter-related and equally important components, namely a structural/political one and a cultural/personal one; in other words cognitive and affective elements. (European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) 2001)

In examining the relationship between democracy and lifelong learning, Bizea (2000) has identified two models of learning society:

- Learning Society = social capital + human capital = economic prosperity
- Learning Society = new "societal semantics" = collective goals reconciled with individual identities

Although the first model is obviously economically oriented, in both models new citizenship qualities are required. In the latter model, a new kind of democratic

citizenship quality is specified. It signifies "post-corporatist societal citizenship" and requires "a democracy of sympathetic citizens".

While conventionally citizenship is more perceived in terms of the right to participate, regarded as a rather static and institutional perspective and focused on homogeneity in ethnicity, culture, and language, Europe today demands active practice and supports the right of citizens to be different, with increased denizens living in the Member States of the European Union. Thus the concept of citizenship has become more fluid and dynamic and is like a method of social inclusion. The questions related to the values and practice of active citizenship in this context are:

- Whether the citizens are empowered to handle the practice of a democratic culture
- Whether the citizens feel a stake in getting involved in the community where they live
- Whether the citizens have a sense of attachment to the societies and communities to which they belong
- Whether they possess the information and knowledge upon which they can take action
- Whether they can gain the experience to do so

In the light of developing active citizenship as a goal of lifelong learning, we have to ask a number of questions to review whether the lifelong learning provisions in our communities are facilitative of the development of active citizenship:

- Are the provisions integrated in programmes of activities rather than education/training alone?
- Are the provisions encouraging greater participation in local communities and promoting the building of social networks?
- Are the provisions helping people get back to employment and freeing them from social exclusion?
- Are the provisions integrating learning for active citizenship with work?
- Are the provisions encouraging young people to take part in citizenship and governance?
- Are the provisions cultivating a greater understanding of the multifaceted nature of the society?
- Are the provisions accessible to various social and cultural groups?

To facilitate a democratic environment is no doubt the role of the government. The Fryer Report on continuing education and lifelong learning argues that lifelong learning should engage the whole of government:

If a learning culture for all is to be achieved, responsibility for its development will need to rest with all departments of government. . . . Government should also . . . secure the development of a learning culture for all, including funding and resource allocation, legislation and statutory intervention, according to their likely effectiveness in furthering its strategy (Fryer 1997, Art 5).

The discussion of democratic citizenship arising from the lifelong learning agenda illustrates concern for and attention towards equality, access, and rights, not

only in terms of knowledge and status, but in terms of practice, participation, and inclusion. In particular, the notion of inclusion acknowledges respect towards diversity and supports the right to be different. The realisation of these ideals can only take place in a democratic environment that supports the values and implementation of tolerance and requires active participation of the citizens. There are both challenges to the government and the individuals. To the government, the challenge is whether the government can link up the various sectors of the society and utilise resources to ensure that the ideals be implemented throughout the communities. To the individuals, it requires citizens to take up the responsibilities of learning throughout and acquiring the literacy for them to exercise active citizenship.

8 Conclusion: Implications for Values Education

Lifelong learning has become a keyword in Asia's educational reform agenda, being formulated as a package of educational reform. It is always justified in terms of globalisation and expressed in terms of the inevitable emergence of the knowledge economy. With the worry of losing out in the global economic competitions, whether the knowledge economy has come about or not, Asian governments are determined to promote lifelong learning, and use it as a catalyst to bring about the knowledge economy. Lifelong learning is therefore always characterised among them by centralisation in their promotion strategies, and by being a core part of the reform package, as against the growing emphasis on decentralisation in educational administration. This centralisation of lifelong learning promotion is a reflection of the felt need of Asian governments to ensure that the global policies will be used to meet the local agendas. Lifelong learning is henceforth developed and promoted by notable governmentality.

The concept of lifelong learning has certain ideological implications. The term emerges needing to be distinguished from the older concepts of lifelong education, continuing education and adult education, with a stronger emphasis on meeting the learner's needs, individual responsibility in pursuing learning that fits their own needs, and the encouragement of community/private participation in the provision of learning. The concept is therefore associated with a sense of the values of neo-liberalism and/or neo-progressivism that enhance individuals' liberty in their pursuit of learning.

However, despite these humanitarian ideals, it has been noted by various analysts that the major focus of lifelong learning is obviously economically oriented, and to ensure the economic agenda to be met, the Asian governments tend to adopt a centralised approach to promoting lifelong learning, and thus focus on governmentality, and is always programmes oriented. This has paradoxically defeated the neo-liberal and neo-progressive ideals, making lifelong learning not different from the earlier concepts of lifelong education, continuing education, and adult education. Concepts of lifelong learning in Asia have thus become rather eclectic. However, the eclecticism is also restricted to the economic agenda.

Whilst there is some mention of humanitarian values in the discussion of lifelong learning, the function of lifelong learning to enhance democracy and active citizenship is largely neglected, as compared with its function to bring about the knowledge economy.

The question that Asian governments – and indeed all of us – need to consider is whether economics can be an isolated component of society, and whether lifelong learning can be achieved without equally emphasising the values of culture change, and the encouragement of active citizenship in a democratic social environment.

The values inherent in the lifelong discourse in the Asian countries (rhetorically neo-liberal/neo-progressive, realistically economic and a subtle negligence of democratic and citizenship values) will have significant implications for values education. As Aspin and his associates argue:

> [V]alues are neither private, nor subjective. Values are public: they are such as we can all discuss, decide upon, reject or approve.

Many teachers are now concerned for the ways in which learning and activity in their subjects can provide their students with an understanding of the ways in which individuals, societies, and cultures look at themselves, consider their origins, and project their visions for the future (Aspin et al. 2001, pp. 129–139).

Education is never value-free. What is more, the socialisation function of education transmits the dominant societal values to the younger generation both explicitly through the formal curriculum and implicitly through the hidden curriculum. The task in front of values educator has never been easy, given increased pluralism and diversity in values in today's world. However, it will become a harder job both for the teachers and students if one kind of values is promoted (say neo-liberal), but another kind of values actually function (say economic), yet there are no supporting societal values (say democratic) to empower the citizens to pursue a better society in the making. Lifelong learning can be an excellent opportunity to bring about human ideals, but the inattention to the self-conflicting values or the inconsistent values promoted will certainly create difficulties for the teachers and students. More importantly, the more attractive or powerful the notion of lifelong learning, the more value confusions it will create, and making its contribution to values education overshadowed by its dysfunctionality.

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