International Review of Education (2019) 65:213–231
https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-018-9757-3

ORIGINAL PAPER

Lifelong learning challenges: Responding to migration and the Sustainable Development Goals

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Published online: 1 January 2019
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Abstract

The 21st century, not yet two decades old, has already seen massive migration of peoples escaping the degradation of the environment, effects of war, threats to security and lack of opportunity in their countries of origin. Those who survive, some having to come to terms with the trauma of losing loved ones along the way, enter host countries as migrants, refugees and temporary workers. This article examines the plight of these vulnerable migratory populations in light of the global responsibility for attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Special attention is given to the support necessary for a lifelong learning (LLL) response to enable this population to live a life characterised by dignity. The authors argue for a LLL process that addresses the particular politics of "disposability" surrounding many migrants' lives.

Keywords inclusion · lifelong learning · migration · poverty · refugees · Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) · work

Résumé

Défis de l'apprentissage tout au long de la vie: traiter la migration et les objectifs de développement durable – Âgé d'à peine deux décennies, le XXIe siècle connaît déjà une migration massive de populations qui fuient la dégradation de l'environnement, les conséquences des guerres, les menaces d'insécurité et le manque d'opportunités dans leurs pays d'origine. Ceux qui y survivent, dont certains doivent affronter le traumatisme d'avoir perdu des proches pendant leur parcours, arrivent dans les pays d'accueil avec un statut de migrant, de réfugié ou de travailleur temporaire. Les auteurs se penchent dans cet article sur la détresse de ces populations migratoires vulnérables, à la lumière de la responsabilité mondiale d'atteindre d'ici 2030 les objectifs de développement durable (ODD). Ils insistent en particulier sur le soutien indispensable à une intervention sous forme d'apprentissage tout au long de la vie, qui permette à ces populations de vivre leur vie dans la dignité. Les auteurs plaident pour une démarche d'apprentissage tout au long de la vie traitant les politiques spécifiques de « jetabilité » qui entourent la vie de nombreux migrants.

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Introduction

One could be forgiven for thinking that the nation state no longer matters, given the amount of migration from country to country in the first two decades of the 21st century. Even a casual glance through international publications such as the *New York Times* shows that migration, especially the decades of illegal migration of Mexicans into the United States, is at the top of citizens' minds. The same applies to migrants in Europe, where their "illegality" and their being "Sans-Papiers"[1] (Badiou 2008, as cited in Nail 2015, p. 109) renders migrants Third Country Nationals (TCNs), the term for people in transit from their home country and in the process of moving to another (in the European Union [EU], non-EU citizens). They are potentially exposed to exploitation by traffickers[2] throughout the journey and, if their odyssey is successful, potentially exposed to exploitation by unscrupulous employers at the other end. These employers capitalise on migrants' lack of choice in having to work. They pay them a pittance, regarding them as "disposable" beings (Bauman 2006, p. 40) who have the threat of deportation constantly hanging over them. Yet, in the face of these odds, in the first ten months of 2018, more than 119,986 migrants entered Europe (IOM 2018).[3] Despite the differences among migrants, refugees and temporary workers[4] in terms of the reasons for the precarious situation they are in, we see great similarity in their issues – the quest for decent work and lifelong learning (henceforth LLL) opportunities – and address them collectively with a particular focus on the integrated efforts necessary to facilitate improvement in their living conditions.

The right to dignified basic living, essentially entailing full access to those rights that are the bedrock of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),[5] is severely limited in non-legalised and vulnerable migrant populations,

[1] The French term *sans-papiers* [without (identification) papers] refers to immigrants without legal status.

[2] *Traffickers,* often referred to as *coyotes* in Latin America, are criminals who smuggle migrants across borders for exorbitant sums of money.

[3] Europe and Central Asia are among the most important destinations in terms of migratory flows – with Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom and France hosting the highest numbers of the estimated 31.9 million non-EU nationals residing in Europe. The two sub-regions combined host 72.5 million migrants, representing 8.7 per cent of the total population. Despite the economic crisis, net migration remains positive in the major migrant destination countries. All figures taken from IOM (2018).

[4] The International Office of Migration defines a *migrant* as "any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person's legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is (IOM 2011). A *refugee* "is someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion" (UNHCR 2010, p. 3, referring to UN 1951). A *temporary worker*, in this context, is defined as someone who enters another country, albeit temporarily, to fill immediate labour needs, as in harvesting seasonal foods.

[5] For detailed definitions of each of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), visit the Sustainable development knowledge platform at https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs [accessed 6 November 2018].

who are the focus of this article. The 17 SDGs, especially SDG 4 for "quality education" and SDG 8 for "decent work" (the two goals most directly related to the lives of migrants) are unlikely to be achieved by the proposed United Nations (UN) deadline of 2030, in part due to the inability to effectively address migration. This article argues for the centrality of lifelong learning policies and practices in the global effort to respond to increased migration. We draw on reports and other material published by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), academic literature and examples from select countries to make the case for LLL, used in its all-embracing meaning of education and learning at all stages of life, and policy approaches that might lead to migrants being gainfully employed. In our view, LLL's intersectoral principle should lie at the heart of a pedagogical effort to contribute towards attaining sustainable development.

We draw here on the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) definition of LLL as:

> 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 (families, schools, community, workplace and so on) and through a variety of modalities (formal, non-formal and informal) which together meet a wide range of learning needs and demands. Education systems that promote lifelong learning adopt a holistic and sector-wide approach involving all sub-sectors and levels to ensure the provision of learning opportunities for all individuals (UIL 2015, p. 2).

The holistic approach speaks to the economic, cultural and other resources needed to make learning a reality both in formal learning environments, such as schools, and in the community at large. This definition of lifelong learning guides our discussion of the needs of vulnerable migrants in this article.

The UN's International Office of Migration (IOM) prepares quarterly reports on migration, including the surge of peoples leaving sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) for the EU, entering through access points on the Mediterranean coast. Often displaced and disenfranchised from conflict zones, some migrants (including those who come from the Middle East, especially Syrian refugees) first cross the Sahara trying to pass through Libya alive (a place where they can become victims of modern slavery) and then attempt the dangerous Mediterranean crossing (Younes 2017). Some 22,394 people of all ages lost their lives crossing the Mediterranean during the last two decades (Brian and Laczko 2014, p. 20). There is no sign of such a carnage abating, the toll being 3,283 in 2014; 3,782 in 2015; 5,143 in 2016; 3,139 in 2017 and 1,989 in the first ten months of 2018 (IOM 2018). Yet, this is not exclusively a Western phenomenon, as South–South migration also creates tensions; witness the reception of Zimbabweans who move to South Africa (Claassen 2017).

Even more than a "Social Europe" or a "Social America" (see Worth 2006) – where governments provide for the social welfare of citizens – there is need for a social world. This should be based on a general awareness that practices in one part of the globe have consequences in other regions and continents, as everything is

interconnected: politics in the Global North have repercussions in the Global South and vice versa. The relationship between the two, however, often remains a colonial one, characterised in the Global South by inequality and often also by a lack of social support in terms of, for example, housing and medical services for all. This is far from a Social World where provision is made in all respects for the well-being of peoples, regardless of citizenship. There is a particular need to echo the SDGs' emphasis that LLL should be an integral part of this vision: the stakes are high. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) notes "if all adults completed secondary school, the global poverty rate would be more than halved" (UIS 2017, p. 1). Achieving the 2030 Agenda requires addressing several component goals simultaneously, because they are interdependent, especially quality education (SDG 4) and decent work (SDG 8).

There are, however, few comprehensive and effective policies in place in the EU and elsewhere to coordinate the migrant surge or to welcome newcomers. Thus far, most policies regarding migrants are left to the nation state, a point which calls into question the allegedly receding importance of the nation state in a context of globalisation (see García Augustín and Bak Jørgensen 2016). As a result of the allocation of responsibility to national governments, solidarity between member states on this issue is absent (Mallia 2012). Understandably, therefore, there are few if any policies promoting a LLL approach to address these issues. The European Commission's *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* (CEC 2000, 2001), for instance, does not reference migrants.

Low-income countries, mostly located in the Global South, "are home to a disproportionately large share of the global out-of-school population" (UIS 2017, p. 9). The creation of adequate LLL policies in these low-income countries would constitute a massive paradigmatic shift and could be a catalyst for preventing migrants and refugees from risking their lives in their quest for better prospects in the Global North. By inference, a migration policy that focuses on LLL should constitute one of the *contributory* means to bring about a humanitarian change in this aspect of cross-border mobility. We stress the keyword "contributory" here, since we recognise that education cannot change things on its own, as it is not an independent variable. It can, however, *contribute* to change, together with other variables such as poverty reduction and access to decent work. Despite the fact that an inclusive LLL policy would focus both on the migrants' country of origin and the receiving country, this article focuses on the latter only.

International response to the flow of migrants: policy gaps

Globally there have been variable responses to the flow of migrants. Though the EU countries, for instance, have agreed on the so-called "Dublin Regulation" (EU 2013), which addresses TCN immigration and asylum in a specific and, to some, problematic manner, there still remains a large gap in implementation and compliance, and hardly any attention has been given to lifelong learning in this Regulation. This mixed reception contrasts sharply with the EU's trumpeting of a "Social

Europe" or the notion that these countries cater effectively for the social welfare of citizens though policy and benefits (Mayo 2017a, b; Worth 2006).

The issue has been exacerbated by terrorist attacks in Paris, Nice, Madrid, London, Brussels, New York and other cities, linked to particular regions and religions such as radical Islam. Some European countries such as Slovakia and Hungary have deepened their resistance to immigration and heightened the degree of Islamophobia by stating a preference for migrants who are Christian rather than Muslim. Of course, the insidious issue here is the distorted conflation of the terms Muslim, migrant and refugee with "terrorist". Migrants are left foundering as a result of these reactionary policies and practices, including the xenophobia which has been documented in South Africa (Claassen 2017). These factors are causing insufficient attention being devoted to lifelong learning strategies.

Along with Europe, North America has been deeply affected by the rise in migrants and asylum seekers. Canada, for instance, has received migrants throughout its history. It has a complex ethnic makeup and defines itself as multicultural; so immigration, migrants and refugees have been part of its history and its composition for a long time. Its strict immigration policy, however, prioritises skills and employability. At the time of writing, Canada's issue of concern is the wave of migrants who have entered the United States (US) and are breaching Canada's borders both west and east, aware of their limited potential for full US integration, especially among first-generation migrants. They reckon that entering Canada and staying there appears to be their best hope. This system has its weaknesses, since even professionally educated migrants are suffering unemployment or underemployment in their new host country, Canada (Slade 2015, p. 67). Though basic education is provided to all citizens free of charge in Canada, just as it is throughout the EU, where "every foreign minor even if undocumented has the right to be enrolled in public schools" (Tarozzi and Torres 2016, p. 107), access to public higher education is not. Yet, a comprehensive national policy that stresses legal entitlement to decent work and education for all citizens, or to sources for lifelong learning for migrants, including those who have become the backbone of the service and food production industries, is virtually absent. Critics such as Hongxia Shan (2015a) point to the ways in which existing and partial policies and practices focus on migrants' deficiencies instead of their assets.

Even within specific countries, the response to the arrival of migrants, including a willingness to provide basic services such as education, is mixed. While major US cities such as New York City, Los Angeles and Chicago have declared themselves sanctuary cities willing to take in migrants, this has not been an international trend, nor has it necessarily been well received by those opposed to hosting migrants and tolerating increased migration. How are different countries responding to migration in the context of realising the SDGs by 2030? Have they developed a lifelong learning response? This is difficult to ascertain, as even agencies such as IOM report only numbers, not actual policies.

Closer to the heart of the humanitarian crisis in Europe, the countries of Malta and Greece provide strategic entry points to Europe through the Mediterranean Sea (Mayo and Pisani 2017). Both countries have been reached by undocumented arrivals from North Africa, the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa; a situation that has

long been constructed as an ongoing crisis (see Mainwaring 2012). Yet, the Dublin Regulation (EU 2013) makes it imperative that each country retains the non-legalised migrants (they are fingerprinted lest they move to some other country), because it assigns responsibility for examining a request for asylum to that member state which marks the individual's first point of irregular entry into the EU. The talk of European "responsibility sharing" and "solidarity" is thus bypassed by the Dublin Regulation, which plainly and simply keeps migrants grounded in the countries of entry, subject to other countries' willingness to share some of what politicians problematically call the "burden", although only a few countries have shown such a commitment to date. There have been cases of resettlement in the US, recognised by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as the major resettlement country in the world. UNCHR reported that, in 2017, 53,716 refugees were relocated to the US, of which 40 per cent were from "South and Near East Asia" and 37 per cent from Africa (UNHCR 2018). We have recently witnessed the announcement of the first EU relocation exercise (EC 2017). The EU's plan to distribute 120,000 refugees among different EU Member States met with resistance (especially from Poland, Slovakia and Hungary), with only Malta and Finland on course to fulfil their obligations (Mayo and Pisani 2017). Outside of this specific EU relocation exercise, some other European countries not immediately adjacent to the Mediterranean Sea, such as Germany, have taken in more than their share of refugees. Meanwhile, the processing of asylum applications takes a long time, leaving migrant futures dangling without protection or access to rights, work and education.

The MDGs, the SDGs and lifelong learning

The UN, in an effort to provide leadership, has worked across and with states to provide guidance, in terms of both the 8 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set in 2000 to be met by 2015,[6] and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) scheduled to be met by 2030. The articulation of these goals reflects the hope of the global community to orient the world to issues which are interconnected and problematic for sustainability on the planet, and which underscore basic human rights. In SDG 4, the UN proposes to "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all." This seems innocuous for many, yet it is the goal that is most entwined with not only SDG 1 (poverty reduction) and SDG 8 (decent work), but also with SDG 5 (gender equality) to render possible such goals as good health and well-being (SDG 3). The ten targets *within* SDG 4 are also instructive here. Specifically, the ninth target (referred to as target 4.B) aims to

> substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island develop-

[6] The eight Millennium Development Goals were concerned with (1) eradicating extreme poverty and hunger; (2) achieving universal primary education; (3) promoting gender equality and empowering women; (4) reducing child mortality rates; (5) improving maternal health; (6) combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; (7) ensuring environmental sustainability; and (8) developing a global partnership for development. Achievements were evaluated in a final report (UN 2015).

> ing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries (UN 2016, target 4.B).

Despite the potential of the SDGs to improve the situation of a migratory population, the stateless, the landless and the dispossessed, the goals remain somewhat illusory. As the UIL definition of LLL notes, any approach to provide "learning opportunities for *all individuals*" (UIL 2015, p. 2; emphasis added), i.e. for these migrants, and specifically implementing measures to meet the targets of SDG 4, has to be inclusive and holistic, and is of necessity interdependent on others, as this section demonstrates.

Devoting specific attention to adult learning and education

Although SDG 4 is broad and encompasses learning throughout the life course, what is needed in particular for adult migrants is adult learning and education (ALE). UNESCO sees ALE as crucial in working with those who are in a precarious state:

> To promote access and broader participation, Member States should consider … devoting special attention and action to enhance access to quality learning for disadvantaged or vulnerable groups such as individuals with low levels of, or no, literacy and numeracy and schooling, vulnerable youth, migrant workers, unemployed workers, members of ethnic minorities, indigenous groups, individuals with disability, prisoners, the elderly, people affected by conflict or disasters, refugees, stateless or displaced persons (UNESCO 2015, p. 11, paragraph 23c).

UNESCO's attention to adult education is attuned to the need to assist those who are migrating, as they have indeed been "affected by conflict or disaste[r], [or are] refugees, stateless or displaced persons" (ibid.). In providing dedicated education programmes, and especially ALE, receiving countries are better able to help individual migrants and their whole or extended family. UNESCO is strategic in drawing attention to these countries' needs and their ALE agenda, providing a holistic approach as opposed to exclusively emphasising vocational skills and assimilation.

Verstehen[7]: Understanding the causes of migration

One important target for LLL in general is the fostering of a general understanding worldwide of why migrants leave their place of origin and come knocking at the gates of countries perceived to be prosperous. Countries in North America and

[7] The German verb ***verstehen*** means to understand. In this particular context, we refer to the sense it was used in by philosopher Hannah Arendt (1906–1975), namely as a deep understanding of the human condition (Arendt 1998, p. 6, 1964).

Europe are not without blame in terms of their contributions to scenarios in Africa and other areas forming part of the Tricontinental world (Africa, Latin America and colonial Asia)[8] that lead to mass migration. People might be fleeing indigenous practices such as female genital mutilation and tribal wars fuelled by a Western-based arms industry. But they are also fleeing legacies of centuries of colonialism – including educational legacies as a result of which the West is presented as the "Eldorado" for the good life in contrast to the underdevelopment of their own countries brought about by European colonial powers and their networks of beneficiaries (see Rodney 1973). Then there is the issue of climate change and the precarious state of Planet Earth, to a great extent induced by the ravaging efforts of Western-based corporations, wreaking havoc among the lives of impoverished peoples in both the Global North and the Global South.

Migration from South to North, and from South to South, will rise exponentially in the coming years as corporations continue to place profit before people and seek short-term gratification. This rise in voracious capitalism contributes immensely to the "greenhouse effect" which dwarfs the impact of individuals' efforts at sustainable living when contrasted with the efforts that are expected of corporations and other powerful entities. Climate change will become increasingly unbearable for people in the Global South: the year 2016 was the hottest thus far (NASA 2018), and the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicts an increase of 1.5 degrees centigrade (IPCC 2018). In the consecutive summers of 2015 and 2016, southern Africa faced calamitous droughts that were unprecedented, with millions facing starvation. As climate change gets worse, millions of people will face famine, extreme weather, floods and heatwaves; wars over resources will occur and diseases like malaria will hit countries hitherto unaffected by them (Empson 2016, pp. 1 and 2). Many people will risk life and limb to evade their situation, desperate to escape from threats of war over resources, from droughts and diseases. Populations affected by droughts are often not assisted by appropriate famine relief from Western powers and corporations lest the market prices become destabilised. This is a capitalist practice of long standing, including historical tragedies such as the Irish potato famine in the 19th century (Empson 2016, p. 17).

This situation continues to prevail in many places today[9] (e.g. hoarding of rice in India; see Young 2003). Influential politicians who fail to provide relief defend their inaction on the grounds that starvation is a result of the overpopulation already predicted in the 18th century by Robert Malthus (1798).[10] Malthus's theory that plentiful food would initially fuel overpopulation, but run out eventually, resulting in

[8] The tem *tricontinental world* was coined by Che Guevara and Fidel Castro in the wake of the Cuban Revolution in 1959. They envisioned a "solidarity [of these regions] against forces from the economic and military powers of the Global North" (Elam 2017, p. 2).

[9] This is also reflected in *Come on! Capitalism, Short-termism, Population and the Destruction of the Planet* (Von Weizsäcker and Wijkman 2018), the most recent in a series of reports to the Club of Rome published since *The limits to growth* (Meadows et al. 1972).

[10] Thomas Robert Malthus (1766–1834) was an English political economist.

famine was debunked in the 19th century by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels[11] and others (Empson 2016, p. 17). Martin Empson, writing from a Marxist perspective, reminds us that there is enough food to feed each person on Planet Earth almost twice over,[12] but he argues that unscrupulous "profit before people" considerations prevent it from reaching those who need it most (ibid., p. 17). The same applies to other detrimental effects on the climate situation caused, for example, by favouring the use of polluting cars over weakening public transport (ibid., p. 23).

Harnessing LLL to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs should therefore not simply constitute efforts to help migrants survive in their new environment, but include a widespread process of conscientisation,[13] initially based on a process of *verstehen* (understanding) of some of the real causes of mass migration from South to South (e.g. from Mogadishu to Libya; see Lutterbeck 2012) and, for those who manage to survive the ordeal, South to North. This process of *verstehen*, once again, in Hannah Arendt's sense of the word (Arendt 1998, p. 6, 1964) as a deep understanding of the human condition, is the initial step to making people act as global citizens by putting pressure on the institutions of capitalism to change their modus operandi. In other words, understanding and advocacy should be regarded as features of LLL. Mass mobilisation is needed to save Planet Earth and therefore prevent people from forcibly being uprooted in search of survival far away from home. What is needed is a social world consisting of people whose sense of identity includes their being rooted in and not standing apart from Nature (Empson 2016).

LLL, generating awareness and understanding of the larger issues and providing the tools for advocacy, should co-exist with, if not be an integral part of, down-to-earth processes of learning involving a variety of survival and empowerment skills and strategies. One of these concerns second-language acquisition, a specific lifelong learning task that is important here for the success of SDG 4. Migrants may or may not have the language or indeed the literacy skills necessary to succeed in the new environment. In most countries, language proficiency is required for participation in the labour market, and all too often this proficiency is determined by test-taking that may or may not correspond to the job being sought. Drawing on

[11] German political philosophers Karl Marx (1818–1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) engaged in virulent critiques of Malthus' population theories in *Capital, Vol. 1* (Marx 2015 [1867], p. 357), *Theories of Surplus Value,* 1861–1863 (Marx 1951), and *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844* (Engels 1987 [1845]). For a critical commentary on these trenchant criticisms, see Yves Charbit (2009), especially Chapter 5.

[12] A recent report on *Food security and nutrition in the world* (FAO 2018) does not consider whether a redistribution of all available food resources worldwide would, theoretically, be sufficient for more than the current world population. However, the report provides data which demonstrate the imbalance: "The absolute number of people in the world affected by undernourishment, or chronic food deprivation, is now estimated to have increased from around 804 million in 2016 to nearly 821 million in 2017. The situation is worsening in South America and most regions of Africa; likewise, the decreasing trend in undernourishment that characterized Asia until recently seems to be slowing down significantly. Without increased efforts, there is a risk of falling far short of achieving the SDG target [this refers to SDG 2] of hunger eradication by 2030" (ibid., p. xiii).

[13] The online *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *conscientisation* as "the action or process of making others aware of political and social conditions, especially as a precursor to challenging inequalities of treatment or opportunity; the fact of being aware of these conditions" (OED 2018).

her extensive research on skills and economic policies, Tara Gibb notes that in this "global knowledge economy, the 'new work order' involves a 'novel word order'" (Gibb 2015, p. 251). Language can be used to exclude people – it can be a way of strengthening national identity and building exclusionary borders for those found deficient, thereby disregarding migrants' many strengths, potentially a source of social enrichment. Rather than assisting with immigration, stringent language policies and lack of instruction are thus in fact supporting the continued dominance of Western colonial powers and the economic and social stratification of newcomers, with migrants being constructed as deficient. Gibb (2015) points to the need for those language assessors and tests for assessment to be held to high standards of training and review; failing this, they further reduce the complexity of language to a written test and ultimately short-change newcomers.

What is often forgotten in work with migrants is the need to incorporate difference: experience has shown that societies that are inclusive, not assimilative,[14] work better for migrants (Shan 2015b) and citizens in general. The homogenisation of cultures works against the SDGs which advocate biodiversity, relational-beings, partnerships, and equality for citizens rather than centralisation and reproduction. Inclusion of citizens must be about what Yan Guo (2015) calls "pluralist citizenship" (Guo 2015, p. 49) or one that is about diversity and difference, rather than homogeneity. Writing about the situation of adult immigrants in Canada, Guo sees ethno-cultural diversity as being essential for bringing about change and accepting difference.

Moving to redress the deficit approach to skills

SDG 8, which strives to "promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all", is central to the migrants' ability to succeed economically and contribute to the new society. To assist with this, and ultimately serve the needs of the labour market, some receiving countries have developed elaborate systems of educational transfer known as Recognition, Validation and Accreditation (RVA). It is designed for use in many spheres, as it tries to provide qualification credits and recognition of acquired skills and abilities, including those from everyday life (UIL 2012). The intent is primarily to facilitate migrants' integration into the labour market, regardless of where they were trained or gained their qualifications or where they previously worked (Singh 2015, p. 2). RVA allows the marginalised to be recognised for their non-formal and informal learning. RVA is premised on the notion that all learning is social and needs to be evaluated in its social sphere. In documenting best practices around the world, in developed and so-called developing contexts, Madhu Singh observes that some countries have been more effective than others in implementing the systems

[14] An *inclusive* society welcomes diversity, regarding newcomers who bring their own cultures to their host community as an enrichment. By contrast, an *assimilative* society expects newcomers to adapt to its social and cultural norms.

of RVA or Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR), as it is variously known.

Indeed, according to a rigorous analysis of sixteen National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs), Stephanie Allais (2011) has shown that despite the promise, RVA practices have not been fully integrated, either due to lack of support or lack of implementation policies. In Europe, RVA is especially important to EU citizens travelling across different countries in the Union, especially students at university level. RVA is implemented in the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) within what is known as the Bologna Process.[15] A number of countries outside the EU, such as Morocco, Egypt and Turkey, are seeking to align their system with the EU process. Thus the Bologna process seems to become a source of internationalisation, enticing students from outside the EU to study at higher education institutions within it. There was also an attempt, through the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM),[16] with its secretarial base in Barcelona, to create a Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education Area, which, one assumes, would allow for knowledge and qualifications transfer, although little thus far has come of it (Mayo 2019). EU countries also assess qualifications of migrants, formal and non-formal, through their respective NQFs. The study of RVA makes clear that, to decrease barriers to entry to education, the workplace and social networks, each country needs mechanisms that provide equivalencies and ease of access. They are essential to the SDGs' achievement.

Yet, often those RVA systems that exist are ad hoc and need to be more robust (Kahanec et al. 2013) and seen as trustworthy if they are to be usable and practical. Clearly, RVA is complex, multifaceted and affects movement of migrants between provinces and countries. Ultimately, however, what these programmes propose to do is move migrants from the world of deficit to the world of assets. Instead of focusing on what migrants do not know, such systems focus on what they do know and try to support and accentuate that.

Attending to professional knowledge in practice

SDG 8, promoting decent work and economic growth, is entwined with the goals to end poverty (SDG 1) and world hunger (SDG 2). All of these goals are important, given the practical reality that professional knowledge and skills are migrating steadily across borders, carried by vulnerable people. These migrants include professionally educated individuals, who may be forced to prioritise survival by avoiding environmental disasters, war and inhospitable living conditions over a

[15] The *Bologna process* was designed to ensure comparability in the standards and quality of higher education qualifications. It enables university students in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) to choose from a wide and transparent range of high quality courses. It is based on the *Bologna Declaration* (EHEA 1999) which was signed by Education Ministers from 29 European countries in 1999.

[16] According to its own website, "the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) is an intergovernmental Euro-Mediterranean organisation which brings together all 28 countries of the European Union and 15 countries of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean" (https://ufmsecretariat.org/who-we-are/ [accessed 9 November 2018]).

career in their own profession and language. Adult educator Bonnie Slade (2015) has looked critically at the movement of knowledge in the context of migration, pointing to the need to attend to the flow of skills, professional competences and abilities. Depending on the kinds of education and qualifications policies in place in respective countries, this professional knowledge in areas such as engineering, law and medicine, for instance, may or may not be fully utilised. Many migrants have problems, as Slade points out, arising from the fact that their overseas experience and education are often undervalued and misused, resulting in deskilling, underemployment and alienation.

Countries like Canada and the US, with a long history of immigration, have not negotiated transfer of skills well, resulting in a broken immigration system that says it values these skills, diplomas and competencies, but fails to do so in most cases.

In Europe, many countries, including those most affected by the flow of undocumented migrants, have at least tried to use the qualifications credit system. But in Malta, for instance, the slowness of the bureaucratic process in recognising diplomas and other qualifications has the effect of discouraging people from applying for recognition of academic and professional qualifications; this jeopardises their employment prospects (Slade 2015). The European Network Against Racism (ENAR) indicated, in a shadow report about Malta in 2014, that lack of recognition of foreign qualifications is a "critical problem", forcing asylum seekers and other migrants into underemployment (Attard et al. 2014). The report states that

> asylum seekers and other migrants are often forced to undertake employment which they are overqualified for. There is an underlying assumption that migrants' capabilities are limited to certain jobs, an attitude which is often coupled with a charity instinct of thinking that "at least they're doing something and earning something". This failure to recognize qualifications must also be considered within the context of a labour market which has been geared to attract higher value added activities (ibid., pp. 20–21)

This attention to skills and knowledge is important for the recognition of professional knowledge, acquired through years of education and training (Slade 2015). It is a way of attending to the information and knowledge that come into a country, mostly untapped and under-utilised. Slade notes that all too often there is lack of recognition and uptake for the skills and knowledge which professionals bring from their home country. The translation of skills and abilities across borders is especially problematic for immigrant women. Slade sums up the ALE responsibility:

> Professional migrants are often shocked to experience deskilling; they do not imagine migration to be a transition from professional practice to labour jobs. But although deskilling is experienced individually, it is structurally accomplished and adult education has become a vital part of the institutional response to deskilling through provision of courses geared at helping immigrant professionals get back into their professions. (Slade 2015, p. 72).

Slade's point is that working to keep professionals in jobs they are trained for and to help migrants, both documented and undocumented ones, move into these kinds of work is a priority for adult educators. In many ways, her argument upends the debate that ALE should be dedicated to social purposes and reform rather than to serve government or the needs of the labour market. We believe that ALE should include both. The labour market and its needs constitute an adult education issue because it is a "people issue" that involves meaningful (and "decent") work (SDG 8) needed to help solve a very complex social issue. People moving across borders, irrespective of how voluntary their movement is, represent capital being moved across borders, including cultural capital. In the context of migration, the roles of the people who are moving *include* and *extend beyond* those of workers. This is why adult educators, conscious of a holistic view of persons' education and lives, need to be involved in facilitating migrants' transition from a precarious situation to one where they are empowered to draw on the full scale of their skills – they need to recognise that these flows across territories represent a portability of cultures, knowledge, learning traditions and wisdom.

Challenges for LLL, SDGs and migration

Receiving nation states are struggling with migration and with the basics of providing support for those streaming across their borders. The conundrum they face is how to continue leading a nation of citizens while integrating new citizens in a meaningful manner that advances the quality of life for all. The UN expressed the need for governments to engage in the long process and struggle of achieving the SDGs, not only for their own citizens, but for the global community. From a lifelong learning perspective, the task is daunting, especially in light of the immediacy of the 17 SDGs slated to be achieved by 2030.

What is unaccounted for here is the way that migrants resist systems that oppress them, such as finding underground sources of employment. Migrants have always learnt and will always learn to resist oppression and lack of opportunity (Mirchandani et al. 2010). For all migratory populations, there are challenges but also resistances that need to be traced and accounted for, even if they are hidden.

Given the unprecedented scale of several waves of migration in the 21st century, the global community is facing issues of enormous import for social cohesion and the strengthening of the economic and social systems in which societies are embedded. While there has been a coordinated effort internationally to identify the SDGs and to articulate the world we want, there has not been a coordinated international response with respect to learning, education and decent work. The timely achievement of the SDGs is impossible without active government, citizen support and advocacy for migrants. Those concerned with LLL are in a key position to address the SDGs not only through assisting migrants to become integrated through language and housing efforts, but also through addressing government policies that affect the health and well-being of peoples (SDG 3). In the next section, we offer

some key points to consider with regard to policy making, curriculum development and "face-to-face practice" in LLL, bearing sustainable development in mind.

Key points for consideration

It is clear that any efforts to harness LLL to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs need to address the issue of "disposability" or unworthiness of humans and other species (Tarozzi and Torres 2016, p. 106 refer to "quasi-human beings"). Migrants have for a long time been victims of what Zygmunt Bauman called the "human waste disposal industry" (Bauman 2006, p. 36) which also incorporates other elements in the cosmos, all seen as things to be bought and sold as objects of commodification. The issue of educating against disposability, in its broadest biodiverse sense, becomes an urgent issue for all education, not just adult education. It would build on the premise that we are all relational beings, living and acting in relation to other species/beings, fostering the idea that we are rooted in a larger cosmos entailing healthy intra-human and human–earth relations.

As we envisage it, harnessing LLL to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs would develop in a manner that regards human beings as having a range of subjectivities that extend *beyond* those of being migrants, members of the indigenous population, workers etc. Adult educators, or any other educators for that matter, would do well to keep in mind that although the work factor weighs heavily on migrants' minds, the notion of citizenship ascribed to them would extend beyond that of being producers/consumers; hence, the education to be provided needs to help migrants obtain secure employment. This should be commensurate with their qualifications and life experience, albeit more holistic to enable them to become critically active citizens with basic human rights. For this reason, we state that harnessing LLL to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs should extend beyond *asistencialismo* (welfarism).[17] The educators involved would treat migrants as assets to their host country instead of regarding them as a burden. LLL would, drawing on Paulo Freire's (1970) approach to education, provide space for people to act as *subjects* and not *objects* in history.

In practice, this would entail providing learning environments that treat migrants as active beings and not simply as passive consumers of knowledge being fed from above. It would engage their own strengths and cultures and build on them, taking into account their perspectives on things. It would allow them co-ownership of the programme through democratic participation and a dialogical approach through which all knowledge is at the centre of epistemological co-investigation. It would entail *praxis*[18] or the means for all participants in the group setting, including the official educator, to be able to step back from their past and present environments

[17] The Spanish word *asistencialismo* refers to a political attitude oriented towards solving social problems by way of external assistance (charity) instead of making efforts to generate structural solutions.

[18] In this context, the term *praxis* refers to learning through "reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed" (Freire 1970, p. 126).

to perceive them in a critical light. In this regard, harnessing LLL to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs would project the value of migrants not as deficient, empty receptacles to be filled with information, but as active citizens who have the potential to participate in the making of history and contribute to changing society into a more socially just one. Harnessing LLL to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs would be premised on the valorisation of the many roles of migrants, including, but not exclusive to, the role of their labour in the smooth functioning of some of their host country's essential services – health and transport services, child and elderly care, etc. LLL can also foster an understanding of the richness of the cultures that migrants bring with them, indicating these cultures' contributions to, and often appropriation by, "Western civilisation". This is all part of the cultural capital that travels with migrants across borders.

To threaten with deportation people who have contributed to the community, in this and other ways, is one of the worst kinds of discrimination, often fuelled by racism.[19] For this reason only, LLL programmes and policies for sustainable development need to have a strong anti-racist, inter-ethnic dimension targeting people working or in contact with immigrants: the army, police officers, people in the entertainment industry, teachers, journalists, members of the judiciary etc. Trade unions and agencies of workers' education can also provide an understanding of the nature of 21st-century workers' solidarity. Social classes need to be perceived as being *international* and not *national* in scope. A LLL programme demonstrating cognisance of this would help counter the danger of misplaced alliances. These misplaced alliances would involve people of opposed class interests, host country workers and business people, combining efforts against the economic competition (Marshall 1997) of foreign companies and foreigners threatening local workers' jobs (Mayo 2016).

The disproportionate burden of movement on people from the Global South is a centuries-old colonial policy that has had the effect of segmenting the working class along lines of ethnicity and national origin. This suggests that an anti-racist approach to harnessing LLL to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs can be rooted in discussions concerning colonialism in all its forms. This consolidates the view expressed earlier in this article that LLL has an important role to play in the struggle to generate an understanding of the *causes of migration* and, we would add, *their derivation* from the unequal relation of exchange on which some Western countries thrive.

Conclusion

The above discussion underlines the complex nature of implementing lifelong learning in the 21st century. In the context of integral and sustainable development, one cannot engage in work and learning with migrants without addressing the related

[19] This racism consists of a labelling that erases the multifaceted identity and name of the person concerned – well captured in Woody Guthrie's classic folk song "Deportee" (Guthrie 1948).

policies and issues in receiving countries. In this article, we have raised issues of government regulation, struggles to recognise qualifications, and misinformation about migratory populations. The challenges are many. Educators operating in the context of LLL can work with learners, including apparently vulnerable, albeit often resilient, migrant learners, to create a *safe space* for them to overcome the fear of their oppressors, especially, but not only, with regard to the labour market and the threat of deportation. The issue of genuine trust is key in any educational encounter, especially with people who are differently located in social, cultural and geographic spaces.

The search for genuine democratic intra-human relations is an integral part of achieving the SDGs by 2030, especially in achieving goals related to decent work (SDG 8), education (SDG 4) and the alleviation of poverty (SDG 1). We have much to learn about human relations from our encounters with, and inclusion of, migratory populations.

We reiterate that all is related and connected in this world. There can therefore be no carefully delineated social context (e.g. region, country or continent: “Social Europe”) unless it exists in harmony and in solidarity with a social world. We are invited to embrace this challenge in the context of an increasingly complex world characterised by ever-increasing human mobility and portability of cultures across and around borders.

Acknowledgements We are grateful to Maria Pisani (University of Malta and Integra Foundation), for helpful comments on a first draft of this manuscript.

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