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LIFELONG LEARNING AND
LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Dr Ronald W. McQuaid
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Department of Economics
Napier University
Sighthill Court
Edinburgh EH11 4BN
FAX 0131 447 3475

ABSTRACT

Lifelong learning is increasingly seen as being important for the future well-being of local economies. The paper considers the macro-context for lifelong learning and local economic development by reviewing what is meant by lifelong, or lifetime, learning, and argues why lifelong learning is important for local economies in terms of: improving the skill base; helping to promote equality and reduce social exclusion; developing the 'learning' industry; and providing for wider social, economic, democratic and cultural benefits. The current broad EU and UK policy frameworks are then considered. The paper then sets out issues that key actors in local economics should consider in order to effectively promote lifelong learning.

It concludes that major improvements in the level and type of support for all types of learning, from informal learning to more formal mentoring, training and education, are required. Also a consistent and proactive approach by local and wider agencies would make greater integration of lifelong learning into local economic development policies easier and more effective. To be successful the key actors in a local economy will need a shared understanding of the role of lifelong learning in the future, and a willingness to develop an understanding and co-ordinated action among themselves and with wider organisations.

I INTRODUCTION

Links between economic development and education, skills and learning have generally emphasised formal education and training (for example, Layard *al*, 1994; Prais, 1989; Stevens and Walsh, 1991; Robinson, 1995). However, lifelong learning with its emphasis upon the integration and mutual reinforcement of all forms of learning throughout a person's life, is increasingly seen by policy makers as being important for the future well-being of local economies, in terms of improving the skill base, helping to promote equality and for wider social, economic, democratic and cultural benefits (see for example: CEC, 1995; HMSO, 1995; OECD, 1996a, b). In part this is a response to technological and socio-economic changes which increase the demand for people equipped with the skills to deal with non-routine situations and with a number of jobs or careers over their lifetime, and which have reduced the number of unskilled jobs (Wilson, 1995). It is also a response to the need for greater opportunity for those with redundant or inadequate skills to remain in or re-enter the labour market, particularly in an era of high long-term unemployment.

This increased emphasis on lifelong learning policies relating to economic development raises a number of issues concerning the implications for local economies and local economic development policies. This paper considers what is meant by lifelong learning, why lifelong learning is important for local economies and the current policy framework. In so doing the paper seeks to review some of the key issues in the macro-context for developing local and regional policies. The paper then considers some of the issues that key actors in a local economy should consider when seeking to promote lifelong learning as part of the economic development of their area. It concludes by discussing policy issues related to local economic development.

II WHAT IS LIFELONG LEARNING?

II.1 Definitions and related issues

Various terms covering the concept of 'lifelong learning' are sometimes used, such as 'lifetime learning' (HMSO, 1995) or 'lifecycle learning' (Committee on Economic Development, 1990). One broad view of lifelong learning is that it encompasses all learning experiences rather than solely those involving formal education and formal training (Maguire *et al*, 1993)¹. Such a view therefore includes learning in the home, workplace, school, social or leisure settings, and mentoring and learning from colleagues in addition to the more formal academic and vocational education and training.

It also incorporates both vocational and non-vocational adult education (focused on the self-development of the individual), and more general transferable and social skills together with 'learning how to learn' skills (Berkeley, 1996; NIACE, 1993). This could include an infinite range of learning activities, so when considering economic development it is useful to follow the OECD (1993a) usage and limit the term "learning", to refer to education, training and *identifiable* informal learning-orientated activity. It therefore includes aspects such as formal and informal mentoring and other learning within organizations in addition to traditional forms of education and training activity.

The concept of lifelong learning also incorporates wider dimensions such as the values and purposes of learning, how the learning is applied, the learning 'culture' within which it takes place and the types of skills and knowledge included. The importance of incorporating knowledge and values and purposes of learning and how it is applied is stressed in the EU's 'European Lifelong Learning Initiative' (CEC, 1995). Their definition of lifelong learning proposes the development of human potential through greater knowledge, values, skills and understanding applied with

¹ The concept has developed over time beyond the relatively narrow perspective of adult education or lifelong education used in the 1970's and 1980's (Wain, 1993).

confidence, creativity and enjoyment in all roles and circumstances throughout a lifetime.

An OECD (1993a) report on lifelong learning and cities similarly takes a broad perspective and defined a “lifelong learning culture” to be an ideal whereby conscious learning continues as a matter of course throughout people’s lives, rather than being seen as completed when initial full-time education comes to an end (p. 8).

In terms of skills and knowledge, the UK Government’s consultation document on Lifetime Learning (HMSO, 1995) concentrates upon employment related post-initial education and training within its discussion of ‘lifetime’ learning. They argue that adult lifetime learning involves three kinds of skills and knowledge: general educational attainment (educational standards and knowledge which enables individuals to function effectively in a wide variety of economic and social contexts); job-specific skills (which tend to be of value only to people doing particular jobs with particular employers and which have limited use elsewhere on the job market); and transferable vocational skills (which are skills relevant to particular jobs but which have uses in other jobs or with employers elsewhere, and so are of particular importance to individuals) (para. 1.12).

In summary, lifelong learning is a broad concept encompassing all types of formal and identifiable informal learning throughout one’s life, and carried out within a wider socio-economic and cultural context.

11.2 Some theoretical issues

The previous UK government set out in their Lifetime Learning consultation document (DfEE, 1995, para 1.16) their perspective was based upon the principles of:

the learning market should be driven by customers and their choices, not by providers or other organisations;

demand for learning should be well informed, and the result of considered plans;

the Government should intervene only where it can effectively lower the barriers that prevent the learning market working properly, or accelerate the introduction of good practice. It should not seek to distort decisions on learning. Public expenditure needs to be justified in terms of wider economic or social returns;

and education and training providers should continue to improve outputs and ensure the effective use of public or private resources allocated to learning.

These government policies appear to largely follow the neo-classical labour market model with its role as a facilitator for the easing of market frictions (Snower, 1995). Education and training is seen as an investment in human capital which increases skills and so raises marginal productivity, helping the competitiveness of employers, leads to higher income for the employees (Adnett, 1996). The human capital theory does not distinguish fundamentally between training and education but rather concentrates on their impacts upon skills. By stressing learning generally, lifelong learning as outlined in government policy can be interpreted as being consistent with this lack of distinction between education and training and even extends it to other forms of learning (e.g. mentoring or informal learning) and hence to increased skills.

A major concern of the theory are the impacts of who pays and who benefits, and the transactions costs of identifying the post-learning marginal productivity of the employee and any distortions in the market resulting from, for example, training subsidies. The consultation paper raises this a significant issues, and argues that “the cost of training should be met by those who benefit from it” (HMSO, 1995, para. 1.13) hence, arguably, reducing possible distortions.

However, there are criticisms of this model in terms of endemic market failure in local labour markets. Becker (1992) highlights the importance of past choices, particularly habits and traditions, in preferences and labour market behaviour and these may be linked to the opportunities for, and take-up of lifelong learning. Others criticise the basis of neoclassical approaches and stress the importance of demand, institutional forces

and internal labour markets (e.g. Campbell and Duffy, 1992), Also, a purely human capital model approach takes a limited view of lifelong learning as being solely concerned with the development of skills and hence income rather than identifying wider benefits or utility functions. Wider views of individual and societal benefits of lifelong learning are taken by many organisations (and indeed the education policies of the UK government) and, of course, individuals as in the case of much adult education.

An alternative to the economic model for education and training is the socialisation model which emphasises congruence between the individual's self-image and educational values. This would entail close, long-term links between the home and educational institutions (including nursery schools) so that a socially acquired attitude of self-improvement becomes a cultural norm. Such a model has been said to provide the 'push' factors in an individual's decision to undertake training and has considerable relevance for the development of self-sustaining programmes such as lifetime learning.

Hence there remains considerable theoretical research to be carried out on lifelong learning at different levels (national/supra-national, regional/local, the firm and individuals levels).

III LIFELONG LEARNING AND LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Lifelong learning has a potentially significant role in helping the development of local economies through the overlapping areas of: assisting improvements in the competitiveness of firms, and making the area more attractive for inward investment and business start-ups; helping individuals improve their lifetime career prospects and have more control over their lives; achieving greater social cohesion through integrating all parts of the population into the economy; and providing a demanding market for learning providers.

III.1 The local economy

The importance of education, training and skills to local economies is widely recognized (see above; Kanter, 1995), and they need to respond to a changing environment. However, little research has considered the impacts at specifically the local level. A firm benefits from the increase in productivity of the trained employee and the employee benefits from the increase in income that his training commands (although if the supply of trained people increases wages could go down). Therefore it would seem that both parties have an incentive to pay for training. However, there are a number of circumstances where the market functions imperfectly and government policy is directed to other prescriptions.

The current policy prescriptions emphasise the partnership between Government, employers and individuals. However where the work-force fails to achieve the educational standards which ensure economic success there is a case for government to finance industrial education and training so that the nation gains a competitive advantage over its economic rivals (Porter, 1990). Further, Kanter (1995) argues:

“Whatever their core skills, localities face five challenges:

To nurture their core capabilities and create inspiring visions of quality and excellence, uniting business and government across jurisdictions to remove obstacles to excellence and build on the strengths of the area.

To increase business-to-business collaboration helping small and midsize enterprises join industry forums, find partners, tap international markets, transfer best practice, and become connected to wider networks.

To develop a world-ready, foreign friendly environment that attracts new outside investment, increases exports, and uses international connections to help locals become globally skilled.

To spread employability security and build the workforce of the future - one that is learning orientated, performs to high standards, and finds opportunities even in the face of continuing corporate change,

To use models for civic engagement and leadership development, in which community service is an integral part of a business career and social capital is developed by teams of diverse people working together on community projects.”

The 'knowledge explosion' in the world economy requires individuals to continually achieve higher levels of skills and/or (formal or informal) qualifications across a broader range of complex competencies, and to learn and re-learn quickly and continuously as knowledge becomes obsolete. Indeed the European Commission's Bangemann report and their White Paper on "Teaching and Learning" (CEC, 1995) argue that Europe is in a new industrial revolution and major upheavals in technology, globalisation of trade and the information society, which makes new demands upon the knowledge, skills and competencies of all citizens, and which alter the workplace context, job tasks and occupational profiles.

There has been rapid organizational change with greater flexibility demanded, fewer core staff being retained etc. and hence changing requirements for those in work. It is hence not possible for all relevant knowledge and skills to be learnt in formal education before people enter the workforce, so knowledge on technology, social and economic issues etc. must be also learnt while people are in the workforce. Indeed, Senge (1990) argues that successful organisations will be learning organisations, i.e. those that that continually expand their capacity to create their future rather than organisations which learn simply so they can adapt to outside changes. However, there is, to date, only limited evidence of the link between lifelong learning and productivity at the level of local or regional economies'. Bodies such as ASCETT have, however, sought to identify evidence of such learning and productivity at the firm level.

Taking a wide historical perspective Florida (1995) suggests (see also: Drucker, 1993; Nonaka, 1991) that capitalist economies are moving from an era where the basic source of productivity, value and economic growth has been physical labour and manual skill to an area where knowledge-intensive organizations, intelligence and intellectual labour replaces such physical labour as a fundamental source of value and profit. Increasingly the nexus of competition has shifted to ideas and in this new economic environment regions build economic advantage through their ability to mobilize and to harness knowledge and ideas. There is thus a growing importance of learning at all levels of the workforce.

Hence regions which provide an underlying infrastructure or environment which facilitates the flow of knowledge, ideas and learning are becoming focal points for knowledge-creation and learning in the new age of global knowledge-based capitalism. Such regions are increasingly important sources of innovation and economic growth, and are vehicles for globalisation. Also jobs increasingly require updating and upgrading of skills as the wider technological and socio-economic environment changes. A key policy area is how to increase demand from employers so that they support increased learning by staff, through their support of activities such as training, mentoring or education. Such policies may involve incentives, promotion of the benefits of learning or potentially an employee tax linked to spending upon training, although this should be widened to incorporate other forms of defined learning. Lifelong learning is a key way of responding to these changes and assisting in improving the prospects of a local economy.

II.2 Individuals

The nature of job opportunities is also changing, with more flexible requirements in terms of time (part-time or differing hours) and function, self-employment, and perhaps moving towards a portfolio of careers both over time and at any one time. There is evidence that most developed countries are increasingly polarizing between skilled (often well paid core jobs) and unskilled jobs (with poor pay and conditions and few prospects). In the developed countries high skilled jobs grew much faster than low skilled jobs in the decade to the early 1990's (OECD, 1996a). Wages also grew much faster for the skilled workers partly explaining the widening wealth inequalities in the UK (Rowntree Enquiry into Wealth and Inequality, 1995). If local economies wish to move up to higher value added activities (for indigenous employers and inward investments) then higher and continuously improving skills are likely to be required.

For individuals, lifelong learning is important for getting, changing or improving their jobs, gaining better pay, and achieving greater control over their own careers as more emphasize is placed on self directed learning, career development and indeed multi-

careers. Insecurity and uncertainty in the job market, the apparent end of a 'job for life' and requirements for change within jobs all indicate that individuals will need to alter occupations and jobs within their lifetime. Of course, the learning required to move from one job or occupation to another will vary according to the characteristics of the job and the individual.

However, many barriers to lifelong learning remain in terms of individuals having adequate motivation and awareness of the need for increased learning; information and advice or learning needs and opportunities; adequate access to learning opportunities; recognition of learning by others; funding; limited support (including time) from employers; personal restrictions (including childcare etc.). Participation and the motivation for individuals to participate in learning activities varies greatly between individuals and by age, gender and social class (Department of Employment, 1989; Park, 1994). Many have multiple motives with adult participation (especially among younger adults and men) mainly for work-related or vocational reasons (Maguire *et al*, 1993). Those of a higher social class and education were much more likely to participate in training with 42% of social class AB reported themselves as learners, 37% of C1, 29% of C2, and 17% of DE reported themselves as learners (NIACE, 1993). Those with recent education or training experience participate more in education and training, as do younger (Edward *et al*, 1993) and a similar cycle may occur for other types of learning.

II.3 Social exclusion

As well as helping to maintain or expand the local economy and assist individuals generally, lifelong learning has a crucial role in reducing social exclusion. As mentioned above, low income groups participate less in post-school learning and so are likely to find even fewer future employment opportunities. Those groups among the population who are currently (or in the future may be) only loosely tied to or excluded from, the local economy may face extreme difficulties in entering into or remaining in the labour force (other than in poorly paid, low skilled jobs) as the skill and experience requirements for better jobs rise. Lifelong learning is essential to provide the opportunity to bring in, keep in, or allow the return of people who may

otherwise be excluded from the local economy and perhaps from society more generally.

In policy terms this is explicitly recognized by the European Commission (CEC, 1995) as they identify certain groups (especially the unqualified young, those over 45, women with family responsibilities, members of minorities and migrant families, the disabled and those with special needs) as being particularly vulnerable to being left out of the mainstream labour market.

II.4 The learning system

Finally, changes in the learning system and suppliers of education and training will affect and be affected by a growth in lifelong learning. The system is large with an estimated 10% of the UK's GDP (£64bn pa) invested in the learning system each year, so it is crucial to ensure that this is expanded and spent effectively (TEC National Council, 1994). Of this some 56% is from the state, 31% from employers, and 13% from individuals (including income forgone).

The supply of support for learning, education and training is changing in many ways. These include technological changes (especially interactive, information technology) which may allow: opening of access to a wider range of individuals and groups; organizational changes leading to increased flexibility (e.g. accredited prior learning, easier transfer between institutions, more open or distance learning etc.); new learning methods (e.g. forms of accelerated learning, EU support for new language training etc.); and provide potential economies of scale and new 'learning' suppliers. Growth in lifelong learning will increase the demand for suppliers, will require new types of learning and modes of delivery and offers the possibility of expanding and developing new markets outside the area, based partly upon a strong and demanding local market.

However, the local economy will need suppliers who provide high quality, good value and relevant to employers, individuals and society and to compete with potential outside competitors. New suppliers may increasingly include firms that have already become significant learning centres training their own and others' workforces,

although they may not develop the learning material themselves (Davis and Botkin, 1994). When combined with new technologies it may lead to new institutional structures with firms pledging an increasing role as training and learning providers, but it is crucial that these are accessible by all parts of society.

However, beyond initial schooling there is no single “system” conveniently managed by a centralised public structure. It is therefore important to create coherence among the very large number of actors now involved in the planning and delivery of education and training and to provide a well trained and educated population. A lifelong learning system must be more than just a collection of discrete programmes targeted at different age groups such as: pre-school children, youth, workforce adults, and trainees and it is essential that learning systems cut across age groups and join people of diverse ages in shared or collaborative learning activities (Perelman, 1992).

Training schemes for the unemployed are an important part of the learning system. However, the OECD (1993b) found that training schemes broadly targeted at all unemployed had little or no effect, although Chapman (1993) suggests that different training schemes do have positive effects which vary according to different groups and training schemes. Similarly LaLonde (1995) suggests that many US government training schemes have limited impacts, partly as the actual investments in training are quite small and so the returns in terms of, say, lifetime earnings are unsurprisingly small. The scale of investment in learning needs to be great in order to generate significant benefits. This suggests that to have a significant impact, substantial investments in an individual’s learning are needed and lifelong learning enables greater investments to be made and updated on a continuous basis across the person’s life cycle rather than being concentrated predominantly at the start of a career.

Forrester *et al* (1995) argue that the major interventions by education institutions, TECs, employers etc. in the UK lack an overarching policy direction with respect to lifelong learning. Yet Grubb (1995) argues that the most successful programmes work because of a combination of mutually supporting practices, linking job training to the more successful educational system. He suggests that these two domains should be consolidated so student centred teaching methods are used as the basis for work based

instruction. This illustrates the importance of basic and later education and the potential role of lifelong learning in bring education and training together and helping vocational training and academic education to reinforce each other.

Lifelong learning has therefore many potential impacts upon the economic (and social and cultural) development of local economies. The next section considers the broad Lifelong learning policy frameworks within which local economies and local economic development agencies operate.

IV THE CURRENT POLICY FRAMEWORK

Although broadly similar, there are some differences in the broad policy frameworks at the European Union, UK and regional levels. The European Union's White Paper on "Teaching and Learning: Towards the Learning Society" (1995) set out possible areas for future Community initiatives in education and training under articles 126 and 127 of the Treaty on European Union and built upon previous Commission responses to the problems of economic and social change, particularly the White Paper "Growth, Competitiveness and Employment" (CEC, 1993). It suggested promoting employment-intensive growth and enhancing social cohesion through measures at European and national level to foster the development of a "learning society", a key component of which would be lifelong learning. Indeed, European Commissioner Edith Cresson (1996) stated that the European Commission "supports lifelong learning as a mainstream element of the concept and practice of education and training at all levels" and that there is an obvious link between unemployment, economic exclusion and educational levels.

UK Government training policies have covered a wide range of issues such as promoting employer based training (e.g. Investors in People) with financial support focused largely on the unemployed, especially the young and the long-term unemployed, while education policies have focused more on emphasis on educational provision, standards and information. Since at least the early 1990's the UK government has been placing greater emphasis upon the role of lifelong or 'lifetime'

learning in economic policy. They argued that direct links between economic success and the entire system of education and the attainment of vocational skills and attitudes of enterprise by the workforce were necessary to assure the UK of economic prosperity (Department of Employment/DTI, 1992). Emphasis has been placed on the need to recognise that 'it pays both business and individuals to gain skills and to go on building upon them *throughout working life*' (Department of Employment, 1993, p. 2). A partnership of employers, providers of vocational education and training, industry training organisations and Enterprise Companies were to be the key elements in development of vocational education and training policy.

The White Paper 'Competitiveness: Helping Britain to Win' (HMSO, 1994) set out Government policies for a sustained improvement in the competitiveness of the UK economy, with education and training of the workforce identified as an essential component, including: equality of access to education for all, 'from the very first day at school to the end of their working lives'; parity of esteem 'for vocational education and training as well as for academic study'; development of public awareness of the importance of continual educational effort; improvement of services which facilitate the transition from school to work; as well as promoting of higher standards of teaching, learning and assessment and employer participation in the training and development of the workforce. This approach towards a self-sustaining system of lifelong learning which would satisfy the needs of industry and individuals was seen as being important in meeting the targets set by the National Advisory Council for Education and Training Targets (NACETT) for England and Wales and the Advisory Scottish Council on Education and Training Targets (ASCETT) for Scotland (HMSO, 1995).

Lifelong learning has become more central to policy with recent Consultation and proposals. 'Lifetime Learning - a Consultative Document' (HMSO, 1995) indicates a clear intention to expand the government's area of policy interest to the whole working population in an effort to sustain the growth and momentum of learning improvements. Also financial support has been provided to TECs to develop local TEC-led strategy projects to support individual commitment to lifelong learning (see also: DfEE, 1996). Nevertheless the earlier policy prescription of partnership between

government, employers and the individual is reinforced with an emphasis that 'lifetime learning is paid for by those who derive the greatest benefit' (p. 57 Policy Issue One).

In the consultation document the Government also set out their perspective (para. 1.16) as being based upon the principles of: the learning market should be driven by customers and their choices, not by providers or other organisations; demand for learning should be well informed, and the result of considered plans; the Government should intervene only where it can effectively lower the barriers that prevent the learning market working properly, or accelerate the introduction of good practice; it should not seek to distort decisions on learning; public expenditure needs to be justified in terms of wider economic or social returns; and education and training providers should continue to improve outputs and ensure the effective use of public or private resources allocated to learning.

Hence, as with other Government education and training policy, this remains within the neo-classical model of labour markets with Government's role as a facilitator for the easing of market failures (Deakin and Wilkinson, 1991; Snower, 1995). Similarly the TEC National Council (1994) recommendations for lifelong learning concentrate upon increasing the efficiency of the learning market; improving the responsiveness of learning suppliers to customer needs through: increased motivation and awareness by individuals on the benefits of lifetime learning; incentives for individuals to fund their own learning rapid expansion of information, advice and guidance services at all ages (see Table 1).

TABLE 1: Recommendations from the TEC National Council (1994) Report on Lifelong Learning.

These are:

- a) Increased motivation and awareness by individuals on the benefits of lifetime learning:
 - A major PR campaign to increase awareness of the benefits of individual learning for both individuals and employers; the use of role models (and such examples of success with e.g. Investors In People); possible use of the model such as the Health Education Authority's

model targeted at different market segments (which could be adapted to translate into the particular stages in the lifetime learning process); and the management of this campaign by the TEC National Council, though funded initially by the Government and then also by major commercial providers.

- b) Incentives for individuals to fund their own learning:
 - The introduction of special tax-free vehicles to help parents, individuals and employers to save for future learning; tax-free individual learning accounts for recognized Investor In People companies; more readily available and flexible Career Development Loans.
- c) Rapid expansion of information, advice and guidance services at all ages, to increase the efficiency of the learning market:
 - A network of open-access centres with a strong common identity ("learning one-stop shop") could be set up by TECs if they were given core funding, aimed particularly at adults to provide *initial* information, signposting and advice; *customised* guidance for individuals should be provided on a commercial basis, although the market would only be pump primed through a subsidy or initiative such as Skill Choice; and suitable quality standards for advice and guidance would need to be drawn up by TECs.
- d) Improved responsiveness of learning suppliers to customer needs:
 - TECs would need to work with funding agencies to review existing customer charters for colleges etc. to extend coverage to their own training provision and training providers used by TECs; TECs should work with relevant funding agencies to encourage greater responsiveness to customer needs whilst maintaining quality; and TECs should work with NCVQ to improve general understanding of employers and individuals of NVQs and to encourage the development of common options approach to qualifications as a way of reducing unit costs for individuals and increasing flexibility.

Generally, there are similarities between EU and UK government approaches in terms of: the use of the term 'learning' indicating a shift towards individuals, their needs and demands, hence emphasizing that education and training systems and practices should respond to participants rather than the other way around; a need to improve access and raise individual commitment which demand more open and flexible education and training contexts, learning processes and forms of accreditation and progression. However, some differences can be seen, for example, in their approaches to the European Year of Lifelong Learning in 1996 which had the aim of raising awareness among Europeans (based upon a relatively trivial 8 million ECU budget) of the concept of lifelong learning and to develop, through initiatives which were to be set up at European, national, regional and local levels, a global reflection on the role of education and training on the eve of the twenty-first century. UK government guidance for the Year (DfEE, 1995) emphasized the responsibilities of the individual and aspects of training delivery (e.g. part-time study, links to SMEs, adult careers) and, in contrast to EU statements, made little direct reference to excluded groups, except age groups.

The EU perspective appears wider than the UK government perspective, incorporating educational and cultural aspects, and less focused upon the economic implications of lifelong learning. However, this difference is smaller when the wider UK educational policies (such as the national curriculum) are included.

From a regional and local perspective, local economic development bodies have concentration upon those aspects of learning likely to have a significant impact upon the local economy and on those aspects of the learning system upon which they may have influence (generally post-initial schooling). For example, Scottish Enterprise (1996) argues in their Skills Strategy that "the concept of lifelong learning is all about acquiring new or higher skills, capabilities, insights and knowledge as a continuous 'whole life' process" (p.2).

Education and training policy forms judgements about who benefits and who pays and these judgements entail particular courses of action. However, the position of those who cannot make choices (due to lack of knowledge, resources etc.) needs to be fully considered.

From 1st April 1994 the Secretary of State for Scotland's was formally given new and direct responsibility for training policy, and specifically excluded the regional development agencies (Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise) from matters relating to the educational infrastructure (SCOTTISH OFFICE, 1994, p. 6; 1995a) but gave them a major role in developing and maintaining a partnership of Government, employers and individuals to meet the education and training needs of industry as laid out in the 1994 White Paper (HMSO, 1994). In a drive to focus the attention and direct the efforts of the participants in the education and training partnership, the Secretary of State has endorsed a series of learning targets devised by the Advisory Scottish Council on Education and Training Targets (ASCETT).

The emphasis throughout Training for the Future is that 'learning must be a lifetime activity' and Local Enterprise Companies (LECs) as the local representative bodies of SE and HIE are charged with developing initiatives which facilitate market solutions. The consultation paper, while identifying the broad thrust of policy as well as designating priorities and specific areas for action, leaves LECs themselves to develop an overall local strategy for Lifetime Learning. Such initiatives may be justified in terms of the economic rationale of government policy which is discussed in the following section.

However, as is discussed above, the concept of lifelong learning leads to overlapping between education and training at all levels and between learning for those in work and those out of work. This requires changes to the entire 'learning infrastructure' involving close co-operation between and within organisations (such as between local authority Economic Development and Education departments) and across functions such as adult careers guidance and suppliers of courses. It also raises a number of potential conflicts, in particular between education and training and the remits of relevant bodies, and between training policies focusing upon the unemployed and the need for lifelong learning to encompass the entire labour market. This was explicitly dealt with in Scotland (see above) where the Government specifically excluded Scottish Enterprise (SE) and Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) from matters relating to the educational infrastructure (Scottish Office, 1995a, b) but allocated to

these institutions a major role in developing and maintaining a partnership of Government, employers and individuals to meet the education and training needs of industry (see McQuaid, 1993).

The emphasis was that 'learning must be a lifetime activity' and Local Enterprise Companies (LECs) as the local representative bodies of SE and HIE are charged with developing initiatives which facilitate market solutions. The consultation paper, while identifying the broad thrust of policy as well as designating priorities and specific areas for action, left LECs themselves to develop an overall local strategy for lifetime learning. Four broad areas for action were identified: assessing training and educational needs; stimulating Company investment in training; motivating the workforce to learn; propagating a 'Learning Culture'.

Lifelong learning can expose conflicts between education, training and wider economic development policies, although it can also potentially offer a 'bridge' potentially leading to better co-ordination and operation between these various policy areas. The UK has a reactive system when the nature of the linkages between education and training and economic development strategies are considered with: short term initiatives where policy is subject to frequent revision and change of direction;

no overall framework of government policies between education and training and economic development objectives; and lack of consensus amongst the stakeholders (ASCETT 1995). Countries having proactive approaches (such as Germany, Japan, Singapore, Ireland, Finland) have: long term objectives; integration of aims, objectives and targets between various agencies and government departments; high levels of consensus between the partners; and stable systems. Such a consistent and proactive approach would make the greater integration of lifelong learning into local economic development policies easier and more effective.

V ISSUES THAT ACTORS IN LOCAL ECONOMIES SHOULD CONSIDER

This section considers some questions and issues that key actors in a local economy should consider in order to effectively analyse and promote lifelong learning. Local economies need to take a holistic view of the learning needs of their area. The recent ASCETT (1996) report on our competitors commented that there was no one best system of education and training but that it was the whole system nature, clear, long term objectives and partnership that created the foundations for success. This may mean some hard decisions for partners and the cessation of some projects which appear to be performing well but which may be counter-productive to the overall goal of lifelong learning. The limitations of the likely impacts of existing main training programmes upon the participants and upon the level of lifelong learning in society must be recognized.

For a local economy to move towards a lifelong learning then: there should be acceptance that a number of agencies and groups have an important role which should be coordinated where possible; current activities need to be reconsidered and developed; effective individual and employer demand for lifelong learning must be stimulated; access to a 'world class' supply of learning support is needed; and access must be promoted and available to all in the community.

Local economic development agencies with competence in the education, training and learning areas will need to consider whether 'lifelong learning' is a 'fad' or is (as this author believes) a significant aspect of the future development of local economies and societies. There is then a need to get commitment to a long term partnership to make it a reality, although the nature of the partnership is important. It is important that initiatives do not simply demonstrate how it can work in a public relations sense but then do not actually deliver the desired outcomes. For example the partnership must:

- identify the key actors (including the education authority, the wider community, suppliers, employers etc.);
- agree exactly what is meant by lifelong learning, what does it include and exclude and what are the implications of the definition;

- agree who does what - clear policy objectives, strategies and roles for different key actors. Important will be the recognition of key roles (statutory or otherwise) of certain actors (e.g. education authorities and Scottish Office in the case of school education; Universities and Colleges in FE and HE etc.) with others only providing relatively minor supporting roles where appropriate. It will also be important to recognise that a range of separate, but interconnected, activities and policies will be needed and not everyone needs to be involved in every issue;
- avoid battles over whose ‘turf’ particular issues are (for most policy areas there will be clear ‘lead’ bodies, but all can support one another for the benefit of all to increase lifelong learning);
- avoid policies sinking into bureaucratic quagmires or where energies are wasted on positioning rather than on achieving clear demonstrable results;
- a clear model of how the lifelong learning system should operate, which is easily understood by all who will use it. This would involve increasing the demand for learning by individuals (in- and out-of-work), improving access for all sectors of the population and increasing the demand from employers;
- care that lifelong learning does not become a ‘flavour of the month’ topic soon forgotten or a ‘Cinderella’ issue sidelined from mainstream services and support.

It is crucial to increase demand from individuals and employers. Although many of the main mechanisms are at the national level, much can be done locally and to develop ways to overcome barriers to lifelong learning for all segments of society, to improve competitiveness and to combat social exclusion etc. This will require considerable effort particularly to include those traditionally not involved in lifelong learning.

Learning provision and the responsiveness of suppliers should increase. For example, they may improve direct access through extending opening hours and increasing part-time opportunities; or they may increase access through overcoming indirect problems that relate directly to the individual such as transport, childcare, job constraints etc. Physical and non-physical infrastructure to support learning, new ways of learning, and communication in a variety of places, ways and situations (from family to

workplace etc.) are needed as are clear and new roles for different key actors (including communities, the individual, employers etc.).

The potential increase in new 'learning providers/suppliers' such as employers (at one extreme employer universities), or community based centres needs to be fully considered. The accreditation or recognition system is being reconsidered, although it must be credible and meaningful to all users. There should be careful consideration given to the creation of new learning structures and the adaptation of existing structures to effectively move towards achieving a lifelong learning society.

This will take time, as the regions and countries who have made significant progress in education and training and are delivering the economic benefits have been at it a long time - 20 to 30 years. Dunbartonshire should therefore not enter into lifelong learning as a 3 year project but at a minimum as a 20+ year project. Also, different geographic and population scales (and the resources and opportunities within the different scales) may be appropriate for different functions and policies. Local economies or indeed regions are small in global terms. This has particular implications for the ability to carry out leading edge research and development in education and training. They must therefore create strategic alliances with whoever, wherever they are who can help them make lifelong learning a reality. They will need to must draw globally the best intelligence there is on learning. It is not necessary to be innovative and first as the worlds most successful companies have been followers rather than leaders. The costs of being first sometimes outweigh the benefits.

Agencies must consider the socio-economic characteristics of their areas - to what extent does the learning provision support and reflect the social issues that have to be tackled. Is the ability to access equitable? Does the provision recognise the multiplicity of factors that will affect an individuals ability to participate in learning? Are the different agencies acting in a complementary fashion? It is important that all the costs to society across all relevant departments or organisations (e.g. increased crime, welfare payments, wasted output etc.) are considered when analysing policies to promote lifelong learning.

There are also many issues to do with learning. For instance are those at the front-line of delivering education and training knowledgeable and able to bring the appropriate approaches to ensure effective learning. How effective is the current learning system? What are its development needs? How could these approaches be integrated or brought into the learning infrastructure in a local economy? There are many lessons to be learnt from across the globe, be it lifelong learning initiatives in Venezuela or Finland. Also what is the role of technology can make learning more accessible but more importantly can also accelerate learning? Can we use technology to make lifelong learning a reality faster? As motivation and achievement are closely linked. Lack of achievement is generally the cause of poor motivation rather than the result. Is it possible to create a culture of achievement in a local economy?

Other sets of issues that a local economy must consider cover sever issues. They include the need to try to anticipate demand and monitoring progress - does the labour market intelligence available help forecast labour market change? Do the measurement systems identify the progress towards lifelong learning for all or by individual projects? Despite a plethora of reports at local and national level there is no clear picture of the changing labour market in most regional and local economies.

Finally, the OECD (1993a) provide useful points on implementation issues and argue that:

““While every city is distinct in socio-economic structure, culture, institutional and political structures, learning traditions etc. there are lessons for promoting lifelong learning that can be drawn from these city case studies. The main lessons are:

- the development of city-wide coalitions co-ordinating all relevant actors in both the public and the private sectors;*
- the co-ordination of work-orientated and general/leisure-orientated education and training, in a way that allows citizens easily to relate their development as individuals to their development as workers;*
- the co-ordination of learning at different ages, for example by encouraging different generations to learn together and to learn from each other;*
- the use of the local media both as teaching tools in themselves and to raise awareness of learning opportunities;*

the promotion of a “learning city”, in which communities attempt to learn collectively as a means of changing their own futures.”

Specific recommendations of the study are that each city should ask itself:

does your city effectively bring together all actors with an interest in lifelong learning (and avoid duplication, rivalry and misunderstanding)?

how can learning for work, for leisure, for personal development and for intellectual interest be better integrated (and can arbitrary divisions in the city be removed and also the status of different types of learning be removed as a barrier)?

can learning at different stages of the life-cycle be co-ordinated (and how can older people be used as a more effective resource)?

does learning reinforce or reduce inequality within the city (and can it better reach those parts of the population that have had limited access)?

is the public well informed about the range of learning on offer in the city?

are there ways in which the city can learn to influence its future (which may depend on the identification of clear objectives for the development of the city)?”

V1 CONCLUSIONS

Lifelong learning is an ideal whereby conscious learning continues as a matter of course throughout peoples’ lives, rather than being seen as complete when initial full-time education comes to an end. It encompasses informal as well as formal learning and training and brings wide social, economic and cultural benefits. It also encompasses the wider community and economy and not just the individual. This paper concentrated upon lifelong learning as a key factor in: the development of local economies; allowing people to have more control of their lives and to influence their futures; helping to reduce the exclusion of groups from full participation in the economy; and developing the ‘learning industry’.

Local policies linked to wider national education and training policies can seek to influence demand for lifelong learning among individuals and employers through motivation, information, a culture of support for lifelong learning, a desire for

continuous improvement, reducing costs (in the widest sense), and taking a long term view of investment and societal and personal benefits. A wide range of pilot projects might be useful to identify options and to promote involvement in learning by all key actors. Major improvements in the level and type of support for all types of learning, from informal learning to more formal mentoring, training and education, are required. The increased use of new forms of supply of learning opportunities, such as computer-based open (including distance) learning, and the development of employers as major centres of learning offer many opportunities to increase lifelong learning, but also measures must be taken to ensure that people or groups are not excluded. This will involve close working and co-operation between many bodies at both national and local levels and may involve bodies covering different geographical coverage for different types of learning.

While there are many similarities in approaches from the EU and UK government, the latter has arguably had a greater emphasis upon economic implications and less on implications for social exclusion. The newly elected labour government in the UK has stated that it will be further developing lifelong learning policy. The local economic development agencies considered have focused upon the direct implications of lifelong learning. Unless effort is made to develop integrated and effective strategies between education and economic development bodies, then necessary changes to the learning system are likely to be piecemeal and there is potential for conflict. To be successful as a local economy, the key actors in a local economy will need a shared understanding and vision of the role of lifelong learning in the future, and a willingness to develop an understanding and co-ordinated action among themselves and with wider organisations.

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